



THE Hans India



'Returning to Kolkata feels like coming home'
Nearly two decades after she was forced to leave Kolkata following protests over her controversial book 'Dwikhondito', exiled Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen on Thursday said returning to the city for her first public appearance.

New generational job opportunities for Gen Z
India is heading towards "Viksit Bharat@2047," but achieving this ambitious goal in a short timeframe depends on persistent reforms, the correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and the management of geopolitical challenges.

PM reviews West Asia crisis, moves to secure supply chains
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday discussed with a group of senior ministers the prevailing geo-political situation in West Asia and measures to keep supply chains uninterrupted despite conflicts surrounding the Strait of Hormuz, the Black Sea.

Shraddha Kapoor stuns in minimalist look
Bollywood actress Shraddha Kapoor once again made her fans go crazy after sharing the latest clicks on her social media site. As per her usual attitude, the actress shared some of the best pictures of hers by keeping the looks.

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WINDOWS

Chhota Rajan gets 7-yr jail in passport case

CHENNAI: A special CBI court in Chennai on Thursday sentenced gangster Chhota Rajan to seven years' imprisonment for obtaining a passport on the basis of forged documents, officials said. The agency achieved the conviction of Rajan, who assumed the identity of Vijaya Kadam by submitting false documents such as a transfer certificate from school, ration card, etc., after a 22-year protracted legal battle. "The convict, Chhota Rajan, is presently lodged in Tihar Jail, New Delhi, where he is already undergoing rigorous imprisonment for life," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement.

Two held for assaulting official on SIR duty

BENGALURU: Two men were arrested on Thursday for allegedly assaulting a government official engaged in the ongoing SIR of the electoral rolls in Bengaluru, the police said. The accused were identified as Yarab (21) and Dastagir (22), they said. According to the FIR, the 37-year-old official, a superintendent with the Karnataka Slum Development Board, had been deputed as the supervising officer for 11 BLOs carrying out Special Intensive Revision-related work in Ward No 47 of D J Halli. He had been working under the supervision of the Pulakeshinagar Revenue Officer for about a month.

Landlord rapes tenant's minor daughter

MATHURA: A 10-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her landlord in the Goverdhan area here, police said on Thursday. According to the complaint by the victim's mother, the 42-year-old accused had been assaulting the girl for some time and also stored pictures and videos. On Wednesday, the accused again raped the minor, following which she told her mother about it. The accused is a native of West Bengal. Additional SP (Rural) Suresh Chandra Rawat said. The police have registered a case under various relevant sections of BNS and POCSO upon receiving the complaint on Thursday.

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SMALL SAVINGS GROW BIG WITH KAPIL

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

I don't believe he authorised the use of the pellet guns. They're far too mild for him

25% names set to be deleted from Delhi electoral rolls

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

NEARLY 20 to 25 per cent names may be deleted from Delhi's existing electoral rolls during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR), with election officials attributing the estimate to Delhi's highly mobile population, frequent transfers of government employees and people shifting homes without updating their

'Delhi has a very large migratory population. Migrating labourers keep shifting from one address to another -- sometimes in Delhi, sometimes outside. Government employees are posted here, and then move out. There are also new residential clusters'



voter registration. A senior official in the office of Delhi chief electoral officer said

the figure is only a broad estimate and the actual number would become clear only

when the draft electoral rolls are published on August 17. "Delhi has a very large

migratory population. Migrating labourers keep shifting from one address to another -- sometimes in Delhi, sometimes outside. Government employees are posted here, and then move out. There are also new residential clusters. "That is why there will be a substantial number of deletions in Delhi. But the exact figure will emerge only after the draft rolls are published," the official told

PTI on Thursday. While the citywide figure remains an estimate, some booth level officers (BLOs) deployed across Delhi have told PTI that the exercise largely involved tracing voters who no longer live at addresses where they are registered. In many cases, the voters have not necessarily left Delhi but have moved elsewhere in the city without transferring their enrolment. Deployed in New

Delhi assembly constituency's Ansari Nagar area, BLO Manish Meena said his polling booth presents this very challenge. The booth covers AIIMS residential quarters, servant quarters and seven student hostels, where the electoral rolls change constantly as doctors are transferred or retire, students complete their courses and government accommodation is allotted to new occupants.

Top Ministers attend PM's high-level meet

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, Ministers J P Nadda, Piyush Goyal, Hardeep Singh Puri, Sarbananda Sonowal and P K Mishra, principal secretary to the PM were present

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

A high-level meeting of Union ministers, including Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, S Jaishankar and Nirmala Sitharaman, was held at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's office in Parliament on Thursday.

The meeting was also at-



tended by National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. Other ministers who attended the meeting were J P Nadda, Piyush Goyal, Hardeep Singh Puri and Sarbananda Sonowal.

P K Mishra, principal secretary to the prime minister, was also present at the meeting. Earlier, Parliament witnessed another politically charged day on Thursday as the Rajya Sabha took up the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026.

In the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State Jitendra Singh introduced the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 for consideration and passage. The Bill, which was approved by the Lok Sabha a day earlier, proposes to tighten the country's anti-paper leak framework by enhancing punishment for offenders, creating a Special Task Force (STF) to investigate examination-related offences and setting up special fast-track courts

PIB debunks as fake 'PM's resignation'

NEW DELHI: A fake resignation letter claiming that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stepped down from his post has been circulating on social media, prompting the Centre to issue a clarification and dismiss the claim as false. The Fact Check unit of the Press Information Bureau (PIB) rejected the claim and said that no such resignation letter had been issued by the PM.

for the timely disposal of such cases. The Upper House is also expected to deliberate on the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, with Home Minister Amit Shah scheduled to move the motion for its consideration.

Delhi govt closes cases against CJP protesters

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi police will not take any legal adverse action against individuals who participated in the Cockroach Janta Party-led protest in the national capital, but those with criminal background will have to face action, according to a Delhi government order.

In its order, the home department said that with regard to arrests or detentions, if already made, in these cases, the process for reviewing the arrests and releasing the arrested persons will be undertaken expeditiously. "Government of NCT of Delhi does not propose to take any further adverse action against the individuals involved in the protests, and the matter shall be treated as closed without any

THE PROTECTION SHALL NOT EXTEND TO PERSONS HAVING CRIMINAL ANTECEDENTS, AS MANDATED IN THE RECENT ORDER OF SUPREME COURT



future proceedings on this account," the home department said in its order.

It stated that no adverse legal action will be taken by any of the police authorities within NCT of Delhi against those persons who have been involved in these protests.

The protection, however,

shall not extend to persons having criminal antecedents, as mandated in the recent order of Supreme Court, the order said.

The Delhi Police has registered 13 FIRs in connection with violence during 'Chalo Sansad' march by the Cockroach Janta Party on July 20.

AAP-BJP face off: E20 fuel row brings MCD House to a standstill

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

THE Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) House witnessed high drama on Thursday after Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillors turned the civic body's meeting into a protest venue over the Centre's E20 fuel policy. Carrying posters and pamphlets inside the House, AAP members demanded the rollback of the policy, triggering repeated sloganeering, heated exchanges with BJP councillors and multiple disruptions that forced Mayor Praveesh Wahi to adjourn the proceedings.

The protest began immediately after the House assembled, with AAP councillors alleging that the E20 petrol policy would impose an additional financial burden on vehicle owners and could adversely affect older vehicles. According to the party, the Centre should withdraw the decision as it would negatively impact the public.

Odisha PG exam paper shared online



BHUBANESWAR: Amid nationwide outrage over the NEET leak, a question paper of the Odisha medical PG examination was allegedly shared on social media during the test, officials said on Thursday. Photographs of a question paper of the All Odisha Medical PG Examination was found forwarded on a social media platform on July 27, when the theory exam of a subject of the 2023-26 batch PG students was underway, they said.

The photographs of the question paper (second) for General Surgery of the MS/MD course for the 2023-

26 batch were allegedly shared on WhatsApp groups formed by some postgraduate students. Some also claimed that answers were circulated from certain numbers while the test was underway, they said. The matter came to light when a student of a private medical college in Bhubaneswar allegedly possessing the photographs of the question paper flagged the issue and disclosed that he had received it from a WhatsApp group formed by a student of MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur, an official said.

Strait of Hormuz is our territory, Iran warns US

TEHRAN: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) announced that two oil tankers attempting to leave an 'unsafe route' south of the Strait of Hormuz turned back after a fire broke out on one of the vessels, according to Iran's state broadcaster IRIB.

In a statement, the IRGC said, "Last night, two oil tankers, provoked by American birds, attempted to leave the unsafe route south of the Strait of Hormuz. After a severe fire broke out in one of them, both vessels quickly turned back."

The IRGC asserted control over the strategic waterway, saying, "The Strait of Hormuz is our land, and the IRGC's navy sailors have full control over it, and a stranger who has come from thousands of kilometres away will not be allowed to interfere." With the help of God Almighty, the



aggressor will be punished today," it added. The IRGC also issued a warning to countries supporting the alleged aggressor [US]. "Countries involved in aiding the aggressor will receive a harsh response if they do not correct their behaviour," the statement said. On the continued status of the Strait of Hormuz, the IRGC said it could not be reopened while American authorities continued 'exaggerations and threats' and interference in maritime movements in the region.

RAM TEMPLE DONATION ROW

Wife of accused gets notice over illegal construction

AYODHYA: The Ayodhya Development Authority (ADA) has granted Supriya Mishra, wife of Luv Kush Mishra, who is accused in the Ram temple donation case, an additional week to provide documents for her under-construction house in Ayodhya's Saadatganj area, police said.

ADA Secretary Rajesh Mishra told PTI that Supriya had been given until July 29 to submit the required documentation to prove the legality of the house. However, on Thursday, she requested an extension as she needed more time to gather the necessary papers.

On July 2, the ADA issued a notice to Supriya regarding the alleged unauthorised construction of the house in her name. According to ADA sources, the house being



constructed is located in Banvirpur village in the Sohawal tehsil.

The land was purchased in Supriya's name, but the construction began without obtaining the mandatory approval from the development authority. The issue of embezzlement related to Ram temple donations came to light in early June. Subsequently, the Uttar Pradesh government established a Special Investigation Team (SIT) on June 13 to investigate the allegations, initially giving them 15 days to complete the probe.

Water bill over Rs 25L: DJB may attach commercial properties

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

IN a strict stand against pending water bills, the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) has started issuing notices to commercial property owners where the due amount is more than Rs 25 lakh, Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh said on Thursday.

The Delhi government has given time till August 15 this year for the defaulters to pay the bill after

which action will be taken. "DJB has powers to attach and seal properties of water bill defaulters. Till now, we have identified 1025 commercial properties where water bill is due over the years of Rs 25 lakh or more. If they do not pay up on time then appropriate action will be taken as per the rules," Singh added.

Last year, the Delhi government introduced the late payment surcharge (LPSC) waiver scheme for

domestic consumers, which was later extended to the commercial category also. "Under the LPSC scheme the commercial properties do have the facility to get a waiver from surcharge, government is expecting a satisfactory revenue from collecting these pending bills over the years," the minister added.

The government aims to recover Rs 5,000 crore of revenue in pending dues of DJB from both domestic

and commercial categories, waiving late payment surcharge amounts to the tune of Rs 11,000 crore.

"After the LPSC scheme's deadline is over, people who do not pay their bills, we will take action against the defaulters," Singh further said.

The LPSC waiver scheme is active till August 15 this year, whether it will be extended further, is yet to be decided, the water minister said.

The government aims to recover Rs 5,000 crore of revenue in pending dues of DJB from both domestic and commercial categories, waiving late payment surcharge amounts to the tune of Rs 11,000 crore

Under the LPSC, a 100 per cent waiver on late payment charges was granted on outstanding principal water

dues, if settled by January 31, 2026, after which only a 70 per cent waiver is given on later payment charge.



CJP protesters used AI tools to counter police measures: Probe

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

INVESTIGATION into the July 20 clashes during the 'Chalo Sansad' protest organised by the Cockroach Janta Party has revealed that some protesters may have used AI tools to learn methods of countering police crowd-control measures, including use of wet jute bags to minimise effects of tear gas, police sources said on Thursday.

According to the source, the

ongoing investigation has indicated that some participants may have searched artificial intelligence (AI) platforms for information on mitigating the impact of tear gas, and preparing for confrontations with security personnel.

"The investigation is being carried out through multiple methods. We have reasons to believe that some protesters used AI tools or other generative AI platforms to search for ways to immediately reduce the effects of tear gas, includ-

Cops are also probing the alleged distribution of hard hats, face masks and protective goggles among protesters before and during the demonstration, with the source claiming these items may have been intended to help participants withstand police action during the violence

ing use of wet jute bags, and to prepare themselves with hard hats, masks and goggles," the source told PTI.

He said police are in the process of collecting evidence, which is a time taking process.

Police are also probing the alleged distribution of hard hats, face masks and protective goggles among protesters before and during the demonstration, with the source claiming these items may have

been intended to help participants withstand police action during the violence.

The source said investigation is underway and police teams were collecting digital and other evidence to substantiate the findings.

Police have not disclosed names of any AI platforms allegedly accessed, nor have they said whether any digital devices have been forensically examined to establish such searches.

The July 20 protest wit-

nessed clashes between protesters and security personnel at multiple locations, including Parliament Street, Connaught Place and Jantar Mantar in the New Delhi district after demonstrators allegedly attempted to breach police barricades.

According to the police, several incidents of stone-pelting were reported during the violence, forcing security personnel to resort to repeated use of lathi-charge, tear gas, and even pellet guns to disperse the crowd.



Cop held for girl's murder, thrashed by hospital staff

HANS NEWS SERVICE
GORAKHPUR

A police constable arrested for the abduction and murder of a 10-year-old girl was allegedly assaulted by doctors, nurses and hospital employees when he was brought to the district hospital for a medical examination on Thursday afternoon, officials said.

Police said they took the accused, Abhishek Yadav (35), who was posted with Dial-112 in Gorakhpur, to the hospital around 2:30 pm. Upon seeing him there, agitated hospital staff allegedly chased and beat him before police personnel intervened and escorted him to safety, officials said.

According to police, the girl had gone to the district hospital on July 28 to deliver

Police suspect she may have been sexually assaulted before being killed. Her body was recovered on Thursday morning from a river



from a river on the accused's disclosure, officials said.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Kaustubh said investigators examined more than 200 CCTV clips. He said Yadav, a 2018-batch

constable, allegedly confessed to his crime during questioning. Police said they recommended his dismissal from service and said action under the National Security Act (NSA) will also be initiated.

ated. They said Yadav had earlier been suspended and jailed in a molestation case involving a woman from West Bengal in 2025 before being reinstated later that year.

Pb sanitation workers' bandh call hits normal life

HANS NEWS SERVICE
OSHIAIRPUR/FEROZEPUR

NORMAL life was affected at most places in Punjab on Thursday with markets and commercial establishments remaining shut following a state-level 'bandh' call by sanitation workers against the Barnala lathi-charge incident. Sanitation workers also held protests at several places against the state government, demanding action against police officials involved in the lathi-charge incident.

On July 22, police resorted to a lathi-charge on sanitation workers after they allegedly hurled stones and garbage bags at police in Barnala in an alleged attempt to thwart a cleanliness drive undertaken by the local municipal corporation and district authorities. Almost all shops and business establishments remained closed in many parts of Punjab.

However, hospitals, medical stores, ambulance ser-



vices and other emergency services remained functional. Main markets in many places, including Barnala, Hoshiarpur, Sangrur, Tarn Taran, and Samana in Patiala, remained shut due to the 'bandh' call.

In Hoshiarpur, workers of the Municipal Corporation Safai Karamchari Union, including a large number of

women workers, led by the union's president, Karanjot Adiya, assembled at the Municipal Corporation complex before taking out a protest march through the city's main bazaars on two-wheelers. The protesters carried black flags and brooms, wore black armbands and raised slogans against the Punjab government.

Channi conspicuous by his absence in Parliament

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH

CONGRESS MP from Jalandhar, Charanjit Singh Channi, was conspicuous by his absence when party leader Rahul Gandhi spoke in a debate in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, bringing to the fore the recent rift within the party's state unit. Instead, the former Punjab chief minister was in Faridkot on Wednesday to take part in a protest to demand the resignation of the state's health and education ministers over the alleged paper leak in the recent pharmacy officers' recruitment examination.

Notably, after meeting



Congress general secretary K C Venugopal in Delhi on July 16, Channi had said that "all is well", asserting that he and the leaders in his camp would abide by whatever decision the party high command takes.

Yet, when Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, participated in the debate on The Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill-2026 on Wednes-

day, Channi was the only one among the seven Punjab Congress MPs who was absent. It is learnt that the Congress MP from Amritsar, Gurjit Singh Aujla, even sent a message to the state's MPs to remain present in the House from 12 noon onwards on Wednesday.

The development comes at a time when the Congress' Punjab unit recently witnessed an internal rift. The infighting was triggered after the Congress decided to retain Amrinder Singh Raja Warring as its Punjab unit president, while Channi was appointed the chairperson of its campaign committee.

Kinnaur Kailash Yatra begins with a batch of 90 devotees

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA

KINNAUR Kailash Yatra commenced on Thursday with 90 pilgrims beginning their trek from Tangling village on the first day, officials said. About 375 people will embark on the yatra that will culminate on August 10. The pilgrimage was originally scheduled to commence from July 1 but was postponed due to safety hazards and opposition from the local deity community.

Praveen Bhardwaj, the Kalpa SDM and chairperson of the Kinnaur Kailash Yatra Organising Committee, said the risk of landslides and falling stones at some places forced the yatra to be postponed earlier.

"A reconnaissance team was

sent again on July 10, which submitted its report on July 16. Based on the report, safety and repair works are being completed at sensitive locations, after which the decision to start the yatra has been taken," he said.

Online registration for the pilgrimage began on July 28, while offline registration will commence on Thursday. Of the total 375 devotees, 175 slots will be allotted online, 125 offline, and 75 through the Kinnaur Adventure Tour Operators Association. The yatra will be conducted via the Tangling-Maling-Khata-Gufa route.

Kinnaur Kailash, locally known as Kinner Kailash, is situated at an elevation of 6,050 metres above sea level in Kinnaur Panchayat.

Oppn turns up heat on paper leak; AAP govt trashes charge

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH

THE opposition parties have been turning up the heat on the AAP government in Punjab, alleging multiple examination paper leaks in the past four-and-a-half years following the detection of a cheating racket in the pharmacy officers' recruitment examination recently. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, however, has stood his ground, claiming that not even a single exam paper was leaked in the state during the AAP's tenure.

The AAP also claimed that the Congress, SAD and BJP are trying to create a fake narrative to mislead people as they do not



have any issue against the Mann government.

The opposition parties are cornering the Mann government in poll-bound Punjab ever since police on July 19 unearthed a cheating racket in the pharmacy officers' recruitment exam, pressing for the resignation of Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains and Health Minister Balbir Singh. On July 19, Punjab Police dismantled a sophisticat-

ed, inter-state cheating racket operating during the pharmacy officers' examination and arrested 10 candidates along with an 11-member gang. Police detected the use of pen cameras and real-time dictation during the exam.

The investigation revealed that the cheating racket charged desperate candidates sums ranging between Rs 3.5 lakh and Rs 13 lakh to guarantee passing marks.

Gehlot alleges scam in plantation drive in Raj

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR

FORMER Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday alleged a scam in the state government's plantation drive and demanded an inquiry into the matter. He also claimed that the BJP government has failed to carry forward the legacy of the previous Congress regime in increasing the state's green cover.

Citing figures presented in the Lok Sabha, Gehlot said the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023 of the Ministry of Environment,



Forest and Climate Change showed that Rajasthan's forest and tree cover increased from 26,995 sq km to 27,389 sq km during the previous Congress government's

tenure, registering a rise of 394.46 sq km.

The veteran Congress leader also claimed that Rajasthan ranked fourth in the country in terms of increase

in forest and tree cover during the period. The achievement was significant for a state where nearly two-thirds of the geographical area is covered by the Thar desert, Gehlot said.

He also claimed that Rajasthan accounted for more than 27 per cent of the country's total increase of 1,446 sq km in green cover during the period. Madhya Pradesh, which is ruled by the BJP, recorded the country's largest decline in green cover, while Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab together could not match Rajasthan's increase, the former chief minister claimed.

Rivers in spate as rain batters U'khand

Char Dham Yatra remains suspended, 109 roads shut

HANS NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN

MAJOR rivers across Uttarakhand, including the Ganga, swelled after incessant rain on Wednesday, forcing authorities to suspend the Char Dham Yatra and battle landslides that blocked 109 roads. According to the State Emergency Operation Centre, 109 roads are currently closed across the state, and restoration work is underway.

The Tyuni-Mussoorie-Maletha National Highway has been blocked near Nagthad due to a landslide. The pedestrian route from Janakichatti to Yamunotri was also damaged near Ram Mandir after the river swelled, although alternative arrangements have been made for movement in the area. In Haridwar, the Ganga was flowing at 292.90 metres, just 0.10 metres below the warning level and 1.10 metres below the danger mark.

In Rudrapur, both the Alaknanda and Mandakini rivers crossed their warning levels.

The Alaknanda was recorded at 626.18 metres against the warning mark of 626 metres, while the Mandakini was flowing more than half a metre above its warning level of 625 metres.

In Pithoragarh district, the Kali River touched 888.90 metres, just 0.10 metres below its warning level of 889 metres. Authorities have advised people to stay away from riverbanks and urged residents living in low-lying areas to move to safer locations as a precaution. Meanwhile, the Char Dham Yatra remained suspended due to incessant rain and landslides.

MP raises moong procurement to 60%, suspends fertiliser etoken system

The government also extended the last date for procurement from August 10 to August 20 and the slot-booking deadline from July 30 to August 10

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHOPAL

THE Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday agreed to procure 60 per cent of the moong crop from eligible farmers, extended the procurement deadline and suspended the e-token system for fertiliser distribution pending a review, prompting agitat-

ing farmers to call off their protest in Bhopal. The announcement came after talks between representatives of the state government and farmer leaders at the state secretariat, hours after thousands of protesters marched to within about a km of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav's residence after staging a demonstration outside Union Agricul-

ture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's house.

In an official statement, the government said it had decided to increase procurement from each eligible farmer from the existing 25 per cent to 60 per cent of the moong crop in the larger interest of farmers. The decision will take immediate effect for farmers producing around

three quintals of moong per acre in districts such as Narmadapuram, Sehore and Harda, it said, adding that efforts would be made to extend the benefit to the maximum number of cultivators.

The government also extended the last date for procurement from August 10 to August 20 and the slot-booking deadline from

July 30 to August 10. State Agriculture Minister Aidil Singh Kansana said a committee would be constituted to examine complaints and practical difficulties relating to the e-token system for fertiliser distribution and recommend improvements. Till the committee submits its recommendations and necessary changes are carried out, the e-token-based

fertiliser distribution system will remain suspended with immediate effect, he said. Some farmer leaders initially maintained their demand for procurement of 100 per cent of the moong crop at the minimum support price (MSP) and said a final decision would be taken after consulting all stakeholders and that the agitation would continue.



Pellet guns can't be banned as long as advisory permits use: SC

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Thursday said that pellet guns cannot be banned as long as the existing advisory permits their use for crowd control in exceptional circumstances by security agencies, while making it clear that allegations of specific misuse can be examined on a case-by-case basis.

The top court took note of a plea on the use of metallic pellet guns during the recent students' protests against the NEET paper leak in Delhi and asked the Centre to preserve the ammunition log of the Rapid Action Force (RAF) deployed at the Jantar Mantar.

Observing that police, as

per the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) advisory, are empowered to use pellet guns in exceptional situations, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joy-malya Bagchi and V Mohana termed "vague" the prayer in the plea seeking a complete ban on such usage.

"Prayers are not to use pellet guns. In exceptional cases, police regulations permit the use of pellet guns. If you are interested in phasing out pellet guns, you will have to challenge that very provision as ultra vires to Article 21 (right to life)," Justice Bagchi said.

The bench took note of the submissions of senior advocate Vrinda Grover, appear-

'Prayers are not to use pellet guns. In exceptional cases, police regulations permit the use of pellet guns. If you are interested in phasing out pellet guns, you will have to challenge that very provision as ultra vires to Article 21 (right to life)'

ing for the petitioners, and asked the Delhi government to provide the best treatment to Prashant Kumar, Sheikh Irshad Mansoori and others who suffered pellet gun injuries during the July 20 protest here.

Former Central Information Commissioner and retired IPS officer Yashovardhan Azad and the two victims had moved the court seeking a complete ban on the use of metallic pellet guns to deal with law and order situations.

to place them on record. Singh and Mansoori reportedly suffered pellet injuries during the 'Sansad Chalo' march called by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) on July 20.

Grover said as regards the petitioners, metallic pellets were used, and they were recovered from their bodies. "I am not saying pellet guns should not be in the armoury of the RAF or not. Here it is different. They have used metallic pellets," she said.

The bench said it was not averse to examining the use of pellets in a particular incident and the petitioners must show if it was permissible under a "graded approach". The senior lawyer said she was confining her reliefs to metallic pellets.



BJP demands Pb Edn Minister's resignation

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi BJP on Thursday staged a protest at the AAP office near Mandi House here, demanding the resignation of the Punjab education minister over alleged exam paper leaks in the state.

The protesters, led by Delhi BJP president Harsh Malhotra, gathered near AAP headquarters at Ferozshah Road and demanded the resignation of Education minister Harjot Singh Bains and other ministers, alleging six exam paper leaks under the four-and-a-half-year-old government in the state.

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal recently claimed that no paper leaks happened in Punjab in the past years under the party government. He, however, said that some students in an exam at two centres tried to use digital pens for cheating but were immediately caught and the paper was not leaked.

The BJP protesters, in-



cluding several party MPs, MLAs and state office bearers, alleged that papers of six exams were leaked, impacting the future of 30 lakh students in the state.

The AAP had supported

the recent Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest held at Jantar Mantar here, which led to the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over NEET paper leak.

IYC protests police action, seeks Shah's resignation

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE Indian Youth Congress (IYC) on Thursday staged a protest in the national capital against the alleged use of force on students during the July 20 'Sansad Chalo' march to Parliament, demanding the resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Carrying the tricolour and placards reading "Amit Shah Must Resign," several IYC workers marched from Kerala House to Jantar Mantar, raising slogans against the BJP-led government and alleging police excesses against students who had participated in the march.

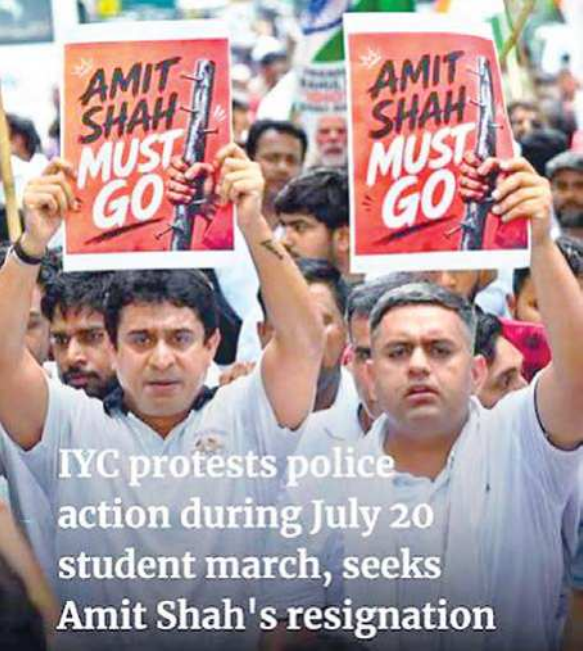
Addressing the gathering, IYC national president Uday Bhanu Chib questioned who had ordered the police

The country's Home Minister lacks the courage to come and sit in the Lok Sabha. Amit Shah must answer - who gave the order to attack the students? Union Home Minister Amit Shah

action and demanded accountability.

"The country's Home Minister lacks the courage to come and sit in the Lok Sabha. Amit Shah must answer - who gave the order to attack the students?" Chib claimed. He said the issue was not merely about students but about fixing responsibility.

"If pellet guns and lethal force were used against students on the Home Minister's orders,



responsibility must be fixed. If it happened without his knowledge, it raises serious questions about the country's internal security apparatus. In either

scenario, accountability must be established," he said.

Chib demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi dismiss Shah, order an independent high-level inquiry under the supervision of the Supreme Court and ensure accountability for the alleged police action.

The protest comes days after the July 20 'Sansad Chalo' march held by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), during which students attempting to march towards Parliament said that police used lathis, tear gas and pellet guns to disperse them near Jantar Mantar, leaving several protesters injured.

The Delhi Police has maintained that only minimum force was used to control the situation.

Police rejects claims of Jantar Mantar being closed for protests



HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

DELHI Police on Thursday dismissed social media claims alleging that the Jantar Mantar has been locked or closed for protests as "false and misleading", saying the site continues to remain available for authorised and peaceful demonstrations. In a clarification, the police said rumours circulating on various social media platforms claiming that protests were no longer allowed at Jantar Mantar were completely baseless and not supported by facts.

Jantar Mantar remains an active and authorised venue for peaceful protests in accordance

with the directions of the Supreme Court and the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by Delhi Police in compliance with the court's order, they said.

Under the existing SOP, permission can be granted for a gathering of up to 1,000 people at the protest site, subject to approval by the competent authority, they said.

The clarification comes amid social media posts claiming that the iconic protest venue had been shut for demonstrations. The police also urged citizens not to believe or circulate unverified information and advised them to rely only on official communications for authentic and accurate updates.

Life convict who jumped parole held after 15 yrs

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A life convict, who had been on the run for more than 15 years after jumping parole in a murder-cum-ransom case involving the kidnapping and killing of a 10-year-old boy, was arrested here, an officer said on Thursday.

The accused, Narender Chauhan (48), was convicted in a 2002 case registered at Shalimar Bagh police station under charges including murder, kidnapping for ransom and criminal conspiracy.

He was sentenced to life imprisonment, police said. Police said the Delhi High Court granted Chauhan one month's parole in April 2011, but he did not surrender to jail authorities after the parole period ended and remained absconding.

Acting on specific intelligence, a Delhi Police Crime



Branch team tracked him to a rented accommodation in Chhaprola village in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, and arrested him on Wednesday, they said.

According to police, Chauhan frequently changed his residence, living at various locations in Ghaziabad and Greater Noida to evade arrest. He allegedly earned his livelihood by providing tuition to children while on the run. Police said the case relates to the kidnapping of a boy, and the child was allegedly murdered after his family failed to pay a ransom of Rs 20 lakh. All the accused were later convicted in the case.

Army personnel robbery case: Hotel tout held after 8 months

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

AN alleged hotel tout, accused of luring an Indian Army personnel into a robbery trap near the New Delhi Railway Station, has been arrested after evading police for nearly eight months, with all four accused in the case now in custody, police said on Thursday.

The case pertains to an incident reported on December 3, 2025, in which the serving Army personnel from Sikkim alleged that he was robbed after being lured to a budget hotel in Paharganj while waiting to board a train to Punjab.

According to the police, the victim was approached by a tout who offered him a room at a hotel for Rs 600. After checking in, the tout allegedly kept offering the services of a woman, which the soldier repeatedly declined.

"Despite his refusal, a



woman entered the room and allegedly alerted her associates. Three men then barged into the room, wrongfully confined and assaulted the Army personnel, and forced him to transfer Rs 7,500 through UPI after linking his SBI bank accounts," a senior police officer said.

The accused also searched his belongings for cash before fleeing. The victim alleged that he was threatened by the hotel manager when he informed him about the inci-

dent while checking out.

Police registered an FIR at Paharganj police station and arrested hotel manager Sohail Akhtar, waiter Chote Lal and sweeper Sanjay on December 4, 2025.

"During interrogation, the trio allegedly disclosed that travellers arriving at the railway station were lured to the hotel on the promise of cheap accommodation and later extorted on the pretext of payment for sexual services," the officer said.

Child pornography case

Delhi court says missing mobile can't shield accused from trial

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has upheld an order directing the framing of charges against a man accused of uploading child sexual abuse material on Facebook, saying that the non-recovery of the mobile phone allegedly used in the offence cannot be a ground to stifle a prosecution when digital evidence links the accused to the account.

Additional Sessions Judge Hargurvarinder Singh Jaggi was hearing a revision petition filed by Aditya Biswas, who challenged a trial court order directing framing of charges under Section 67B of the Information Technology Act against him.

The section deals with publishing or transmitting sexually explicit material involving children. In the order dated July 27, the court said, "The physical recovery

The case stems from an FIR registered by the South Delhi cyber police station in December 2022 following a complaint received from the National Crime Records Bureau based on a CyberTipline report generated by the US-based National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children

of a mobile phone is not an absolute sine qua non for framing a charge when the digital trail, particularly IP logs and subscriber data, securely links the transmission to the accused's control over the social media account."

The case stems from an FIR registered by the South Delhi cyber police station in December 2022 following a complaint received from

the National Crime Records Bureau based on a CyberTipline report generated by the US-based National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

According to the prosecution, a Facebook account named 'Neem Biswas' uploaded a 17-second video depicting a child engaged in a sexually explicit act. Investigators traced the account through an IP address and mobile number and al-

leged that Biswas had created and operated it using a friend's phone.

The accused challenged the charge-framing order, arguing that no Facebook or NCMEC official had been examined, making the CyberTipline report inadmissible hearsay. He also contended that no mobile phone was recovered from him and that the prosecution's case relied heavily on his disclosure statement.



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More tech-enabled startups tap equity market as concerns ease

INDIAN startup ecosystem is maturing at a rapid pace. This is reflected as increasing number of startups are tapping the public market for raising funds through IPOs (Initial Public Offering). Last year was an exceptionally good year in the startup listing space. A total 18 startups raised a total of Rs 41,248 crore in 2025 from public markets.

Notable listings last year included Groww, PhysicsWallah, Meesho, Lenskart, Ather Energy, Urban Company, and Pine Labs among others. After such successful listings last year, it can be safely assumed that Indian investors' reluctance to invest in startups has been subsided to a great extent. After a strong listing momentum by Indian startups last year, 2026 so far has seen tepid listing.

So far, seven new-age tech companies have already made their market debut. But, barring a few, most of these listings remained lacklustre. Only SEDEMAC and Kissht have been listed with market gains. While listing momentum remained tepid but the pipeline remains strong. Notably, 28 startups have already filed their draft red herring prospectus (DRHPs) with the market regulator, SEBI. Out of these 28, more than 24 are in various stages of finalising their IPO plans.

Established startups in the unicorn league such as Zepto, OYO, InMobi, PhonePe and Zetwerk have already filed their prospectus with SEBI. If they go ahead with their listing plans and market response remains sound, this has the potential of becoming one of the

biggest years of fund raising for Indian startup ecosystem. It has to be seen how many of these startups hit the market given the volatile environment.

Whether they go for an IPO this year or not; one thing is becoming clear that Indian startups are increasingly feeling confident to opt for public listing as they reach profitability threshold or are in the vicinity of it. Moreover, many of these startups are now in operations for more than a decade and have successfully scaled their operations with proven revenue model. Therefore, investors see them as companies that will grow rapidly in coming years after their public listing.

Secondly, the nervousness among investors, especially retail investors, is slowly going away

as they have already seen several listed startups growing rapidly in recent years. This gives the confidence that startup promoters are not dumping their companies on public through listing. Rather, they see public funding as a way of accelerating growth. Another notable feature of these startup listing is that most of these new age companies can be categorised as tech startups.

This is a resounding change in the listing landscape. One decade back, majority of companies coming for public listing were operating in traditional domains. Now, a significant chunk of new listing is happening in the tech startup space. Definitely, this is good news for the India Inc. Because as global economy becomes more technology-enabled with AI rul-

ing the roost, it is important that Indian market should have public listing of companies that are tech startups.

This way, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) will be keen to invest in Indian market because any company that leverages technology, has the potential of scaling up very fast and in many cases, has the ability to reach a global audience. In this respect, increasing number of startups coming up for listing is a sign of Indian economy that is leveraging technology pretty fast.

While startup listing is definitely a good news, startup founders and investment bankers have to take care of the fact that their price band is reasonable and they are able to deliver of their promises in a time-bound manner.

DIGITAL REVOLUTION

New generational job opportunities for Gen Z



DR KARNATI KIRAN KUMAR

INDIA is heading towards "Viksit Bharat@2047," but achieving this ambitious goal in a short timeframe depends on persistent reforms, the correction of macro-economic imbalances, and the management of geopolitical challenges. The implementation of digital reforms in 2015 resulted in significant changes to the Indian economy, as India's work culture underwent structural restructuring, producing new types of jobs across many sectors.

Moreover, youth thought process is changing in line with structural transformation from waiting for government notifications to technical driven startups establishment, from playing video games to sharing knowledge, skills and talent through reels and shorts, promoting a product local to national and international recognized and there are many other. Especially, Gen Z now finding opportunities in emerging fields, partly driven by the digital revolution and contributing significantly to the nation's economy.

Digital Revolution

India's current growth story began with the 2015 Digital India scheme, which paved the way for new-generation earnings and a significant contribution to the economy. Until

2014, the telecom sector was in turmoil, and the price of 1 GB of data was between Rs. 250 and 300, with an unreliable network. **Accessibility:** the breakthrough India achieved in upgrading internet speeds from 2G/3G to 4G and 5 G. Since 2016, 4G network service has reached every corner of the country. Since 2022, 5G networks covered 99.6 per cent of the districts by establishing 4.74 lakh towers.

Affordability: Along with the high-speed network, the Government of India has made network services available at an affordable price for all sections of society. According to information from bestbroadbandsdeals.co.uk, in 2023, India was among the top 10 countries out of 237 offering the cheapest 1 GB of mobile data at \$0.16 (Rs. 13.32). As we compare the average price of 1 GB data with the world's top 10 largest economies (Based on nominal GDP).

Among these, except Italy (0.09%), all other countries have an average price of 1 GB more than India, for example, in France (0.20\$), in Russia (0.25\$), in China (0.38 \$), in Brazil (0.40\$), in the UK (0.62\$), Germany (2.14\$), Japan (3.48\$), and the USA (6 \$). The average price of 1 GB further declined in India as of 2026 July.

Simply, anyone who has a smartphone can observe that while recharging their mobile phone with Paytm/G Pay and other recharge apps, various recharge data plans will appear. As per that information, at the (Dollar to rupee exchange rate, such as 1\$ = 95.68), Airtel is providing 1 GB per day at 0.06\$ (Rs. 6.31), BSNL at 0.03\$ (Rs. 3.8) and Jio at 0.06\$



(Rs. 6.28). Further, Broadband Fibernet services are available at the lowest price (between Rs. 1 and 3) for 1 GB.

Utilisation: The people of the country are efficiently utilizing the low-price network facility for their daily activities. According to the PIB 2025 data, internet connections in the country rose from 25.15 crore in March 2014 to 96.96 crore in June 2024. At the same time, indispensable high-speed network connections are being penetrated in the 2.18 lakh gram panchayat through Bharat Net.

According to the NSS 80th round (CMS 2025) data, smartphone usage in the country has increased significantly. In the 15-29 age group across India, 93.8 per cent of persons own a smartphone. In rural areas, 93.0 per cent, and in urban areas, 95.3 per cent of people own smartphones. The digital economy's contribution to the national GDP has risen from 5.8% in 2014 to 8.58% in 2019 and 11.74% in 2022-23, with projections to reach 20% by 2030.

Spillover effects

The digital revolution in India paved the way for lakhs of jobs and business opportunities for the country's youth. Especially during the lockdown, people

continued their services online without losing income due to uninterrupted internet access. It has opened the door to new kinds of jobs in the private sector for the younger generation living in rural and urban areas, such as gig economy work, freelance jobs, and intraday trading, making the shorts, reels, and travelers within and outside the country. The digital revolution amplified gig-platform-based work, including delivery services, logistics, ridesharing, and professional work.

As of 2025 August, 3.37 lakh platform gig workers are registered in the e-Shram portal, and NITI Aayog projected that the sector will provide employment opportunities from 1 crore to 2.35 crore between 2024-25 and 2029-30. Furthermore, youth are actively involved directly in stock market investment and intraday trading as a profession. As of January 2026, data from the National Stock Exchange (NSE) show there were 12.7 crore unique registered investors. The SEBI investor survey 2025 indicates that 9.5% of Indian families invest in the stock market.

Social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram have enabled youth and women from various fields to showcase talents and gain steady incomes, notably

through reels and shorts. Creating digital content is now a widespread profession. Many have turned travel into work, earning money by sharing their videos of various places on social media platforms. Social media further globalizes local products (handicrafts, handlooms, ayurvedic medicine, fisheries, and organic goods) and supports exports.

Moreover, Sunil Patil (Dolly Tea Stall) from Nagpur gained major attention including a visit from Bill Gates and other celebrities to his tea shop. Now Dolly Tea stalls have become a brand, on that name many tea shops are opening across the country. Overall, these shifts in employment trends and economic sectors reflect how India is leveraging new opportunities to achieve the Viksit Bharat@2047 vision.

Reduction of unemployment

The data on unemployment provided by the World Bank's development indicators, estimated using the ILO model, show that over the past few years, India has reduced its unemployment at a reasonable rate. The unemployment trends from 2014 to 2025 among the countries are as follows: the reduction in unemployment is paramount in India, from 7.65% to 4.22%, and was lower than in China, the United Kingdom (UK), and Brazil.

Financial inclusion and seamless transactions

The uninterrupted internet connectivity and network speed led to the financial inclusion of all sections of society. People with smartphones are conducting UPI-based financial transactions regardless of their education level. Digital literacy

enhanced seamless transactions and saved people valuable time. Until 2015, every bank was crowded and had long queues; people used to wait hours for a small deposit or a withdrawal.

However, now people can send and receive a maximum of 1 lakh per day without any strain or bank officials' involvement via UPI platforms such as PhonePe, GPay, Paytm, and BHIM, and others via banks' offered apps such as ICICI iMobile Pay, Canara a.i, SBI YONO, HDFC Bank app, Axis Mobile, etc. In 2025, approximately 65 million merchants and 460 million people used UPI for transactions.

According to the Minister of Finance, over the ten years of the UPI digital revolution, the annual transaction volume increased from just 2 crores in FY 2016-17 to over 24,162 crores in FY 2025-26. Between FY 2016-17 and FY 2025-26, the transaction value increased significantly from ₹0.07 lakh crore to around ₹314 lakh crore.

There are some negative repercussions of digitalization that need to be addressed and raise awareness, in addition to the beneficial spillover benefits. People are now using digital payments for all transactions, which is causing problems like financial loss and psychological stress due to cybercrime and digital arrests by fraudulences.

Some social media influencers promote contentious information, fake news, etc. to boost views on their channels and earn money. Additionally, young people who lack financial literacy are engaging in online trading, which is causing them to lose money and mental equilibrium.

(The writer is Assistant Professor, School of Economics, University of Hyderabad)

LETTERS

Using students as part of toolkit

THIS is further to Dr Hyma Moorthy's article "Protest Is A Right ,Violence Is Not ". It is a timely reflection of the recent student protests at Jantar Mantar .The right to protest peacefully to get your voices heard is a democratic right but what Jantar Mantar witnessed ,as protests was unconstitutional . It was sheer hooliganism and carried out by mobs .As rightly pointed out by Dr Moorthy ,the protesters who used filthy and abusive language and involved in mob violence never looked like they were students .The protests came at a time when the NEET re exam was conducted successfully and results were announced just a few days earlier. So ,the students who cleared the re exam were never a part of the protests . One can say ,without a doubt that the mobocracy that we witnessed at Jantar Mantar was not student protests but a politically-motivated agenda by some anti nationalists and anti social elements, who used students as tools and pawns to try and create an atmosphere of tension and instability .

Parimala G Tadas, Hyderabad

Govt holiday to watch 'Jana Nayagan'?

THE recent release of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay's final film, Jana Nayagan saw numerous TVK ministers and MLAs leave the Secretariat and head to theaters for the first-day screenings, leaving government offices largely deserted and sparking intense political backlash. Is it proper for responsible ministers and elected representatives spending hours in cinema halls during a working day, abandoning core administrative tasks at the secretariat? Elected officials should prioritize public service and State issues over celebrating a political leader's cinematic swan song. For TVK ministers, work at the office is infinitely more important since real governance requires administrative files, not cinematic applause. Treating public office like a box-office collection will only reduce the state to a tragic script.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai

A case of 'economic bunker-buster'

THE proposed US legislation threatening upto 100% tariffs on India and China is officially framed by Washington as a measure to cut revenue to Russia from oil sales to India and China for funding war on Ukraine. But then it is also a likely strategy to defend the Petro-Dollar dominance in oil trade. However, this measure could also be viewed as a powerful tool of economic leverage that intersects with broader monetary and global dominance concerns. The proposed rules include exemptions or lighter scrutiny for certain European nations still buying pipeline gas or alternative Russian energy, fuelling accusations of double standards. But a good number of leading US senators call out Asian importers as the main targets, implying India and China, which are the fastest growing economies in the world today threatening the Petro-Dollar dominance in world trade. The proposal of 100% tariff against India in particular is an aggressive "economic bunker-buster", for this developing country (India) to alter vital energy procurement strategies under threat of losing access to Western consumer markets. As such, safeguarding dominance of US Dollar in commodity trading remains a foundational pillar of American financial hegemony.

Govardhana Myneedu, Vijayawada

thehansreader@gmail.com

RAISE YOUR VOICE

Do you have any civic issues? Are any roads in your locality damaged? Do you have any complaints against govt departments? Are any private companies taking you for a ride regarding sales and service? *The Hans India* will publish your complaints, concerns and grievances in these columns on every Wednesday. Mail the details along with relevant photographs if any, to hanspeoplesvoice@gmail.com -Editor

BENGALURU ONLINE

HIV cases rise in capital; Health Department steps up awareness campaigns

BENGALURU: A rise in HIV infections in Bengaluru, particularly among young adults, has prompted the Health Department to strengthen awareness campaigns in colleges, universities and workplaces. Health officials say changing social behaviour and increased use of online dating platforms have contributed to the growing number of infections in certain high-risk groups.

According to official data, 4,795 people tested HIV-positive in the last five months across the state. Health authorities said a significant proportion of the newly detected infections were reported among men who have sex with men (MSM), a recognised high-risk group for HIV transmission.

Officials also noted that a sizeable number of new cases involve unmarried individuals, accounting for nearly 20-25 per cent of infections. The Health Department has expressed concern over the increasing number of infections among students residing in college hostels and paying guest (PG) accommodations in Bengaluru. As a preventive measure, awareness programmes are being planned in educational institutions to educate young people about safe sexual practices, HIV prevention and the importance of early testing. Responding to the trend, Karnataka State AIDS Prevention Society Project Director Padma Basavanthappa said awareness remains the most effective tool in preventing the spread of HIV.

She said outreach programmes are being intensified among college students, IT employees, migrant workers, drivers and truckers, who are considered vulnerable groups because of mobility and behavioural risk factors. She also pointed out that men who have sex with men and commercial sex workers continue to be among the identified high-risk categories, making focused intervention programmes essential.

Read more at <https://epaper.thehansindia.com>

Congress stands by the aspirations of India's youth



RACHAMALLA SIDDESHWAR

THE twelve years of BJP rule at the Centre have pushed India's education system into deep crisis. Students patiently waited for years in the hope that the government would introduce meaningful reforms, but the NEET examination paper leak proved to be a devastating blow to those expectations. Instead of acting firmly against those responsible for the leak, the Union Government allegedly attempted to suppress student protests through police action, including baton charges and the use of tear gas

When we speak of a nation's future and development, the first thing that should come to mind is its youth. The greatest asset of any country is its young population. Providing quality education, equal opportunities, and secure employment to young people is the foremost responsibility of any government. However, the growing controversies

surrounding India's education system, repeated examination paper leaks, delays in recruitment, and rising unemployment have severely shaken the confidence and aspirations of the country's youth.

As the protests intensified across the country, the Narendra Modi government eventually bowed to mounting public pressure, leading to the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. With the Centre accepting the key demands of protesting students, the Congress describes the outcome as a moral victory for India's youth. It also credits Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi for playing a significant role in supporting the student movement.

Under the authoritarian rule of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's education sector has been pushed into an unprecedented crisis. The BJP government's policies have encouraged excessive corporate influence in education, transforming learning into a commercial enterprise. The increasing corporatization of education, coupled with repeated leaks of entrance and recruitment examination papers, has seriously eroded students' faith in the system. As education becomes increasingly expensive, quality learning is no

longer seen as a fundamental right but as a commodity that only those with financial resources can afford.

The 2026 NEET controversy has become the defining symbol of this crisis. Following the alleged paper leak, more than two million students were thrown into uncertainty. The decision to reconduct the examination imposed enormous emotional, financial, and psychological burdens on thousands of families. Students, the Congress, and several opposition parties demanded that the Union Government accept moral responsibility and sought the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. Instead of addressing these concerns constructively, the government, prioritized suppressing the protests.

The NEET paper leak triggered widespread anxiety among students, with reports suggesting that some candidates took the extreme step of ending their lives. As nationwide protests gathered momentum, Delhi's Jantar Mantar emerged as the focal point of the student movement. Protesters demanded transparency in examinations, stringent action against paper leak networks, and fairness in recruitment processes.

Rather than engaging in dialogue, the Centre allegedly

responded with police action, including baton charges and tear gas, provoking further public anger. Ultimately, however, the resilience and determination of the students compelled the government to respond to their demands.

Rahul Gandhi, as Leader of the Opposition, actively supported the student movement. Even before the NEET controversy reached its peak, he had launched the nationwide "Chhatron Ki Goon" campaign in June to amplify the voices of students and expose what he described as the failures of the Union Government. His effort sought to transform student grievances into a national conversation and push for structural reforms rather than political gains.

Educational standards have steadily deteriorated during the BJP's twelve years in power. It claims that more than 150 major examination papers have been leaked across the country during this period, affecting nearly 75 million students. Central Government of reducing allocations for school education and higher education while allowing corporate interests to dominate the education sector.

More than 100,000 government schools have shut down while over 43,000 private schools have been established.

The ideological considerations have influenced curriculum revisions and appointments in educational institutions. Rahul Gandhi's campaign for educational reforms has awakened young people across the country, causing discomfort within the government. Rahul Gandhi and several Congress Members of Parliament were detained while attempting to question the Prime Minister over these issues.

Employment remains another area where, the Union Government has failed India's youth. The BJP's 2014 election promise of creating two crore jobs annually has, it argues, remained unfulfilled. Millions of educated young people continue to struggle with unemployment, while many others are forced to accept jobs unrelated to their qualifications because of the widening gap between education, skills, and employment opportunities.

Young people are central to India's nation-building process. Their confidence can only be restored through transparent examination systems, quality public education, timely recruitment, and equal opportunities for all. To ensure that students' dreams are not destroyed by paper leaks, unemployment, and corruption, comprehensive reforms in the education system have become imperative. The

Congress maintains that it will continue its struggle until fairness in examinations, credibility in recruitment, and accessible quality education become a reality for every student.

The Congress also believes that young people should not merely participate in politics but should have the opportunity to shape it. In this context, Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has proposed that the minimum age for contesting elections to legislative bodies be reduced to 21 years and announced his intention to move a resolution in the Telangana Legislative Assembly to that effect. The proposal has generated considerable enthusiasm among young people.

Safeguarding the aspirations of India's youth is not the responsibility of any one political party alone; it is a national obligation essential to securing the country's future. Congress will continue to champion the cause of students and young people. The resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan as a political victory for the Congress, but rather as a victory earned by the students themselves.

(The writer is Chairman, Rajiv Gandhi Panchayati Raj Sangathan, Telangana)

Bhogapuram Airport set to propel north Andhra growth

- PM to inaugurate Bhogapuram International Airport on tomorrow
- Project is expected to boost investment, tourism, exports and employment
- Aerocity, logistics hubs and future expansion planned to drive long-term growth

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE state government on Thursday said the upcoming inauguration of the Bhogapuram International Airport will mark a major milestone in the state's infrastructure development and is expected to accelerate economic growth, investment, tourism and employment opportunities in north Andhra.

In a statement, the government said the project, to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 1, Saturday, is the realisation of a vision conceived more than a decade ago by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to meet the



region's future aviation and infrastructure needs.

According to the government, the airport, located near Visakhapatnam, is expected to transform the Visakhapatnam-Bhogapuram corridor into a major investment destination on India's east coast. It said the region is likely to attract investments in information technology, manufacturing, logistics,

tourism, healthcare and hospitality.

It said a world-class Aerocity is planned around the airport, featuring IT and ITES parks, industrial parks, logistics hubs, warehousing and cold storage facilities, business centres, retail and commercial complexes, convention centres, educational institutions, corporate hospitals and star hotels. It added

that industry estimates suggest these developments could attract private investments worth thousands of crores of rupees over the next decade.

The statement said the airport's connectivity with Visakhapatnam Port, Ganavaram Port, national highways and the railway network would strengthen North Andhra's logistics ecosystem by improving cargo movement and reducing transportation costs. This, it said, would support exports of pharmaceuticals, marine products, agricultural and horticultural produce, fresh fruits, flowers, handicrafts and electronics.

Improved air connectivity is expected to boost tourism by providing easier access to destinations such as Visakhapatnam beaches, Araku Valley, Borra Caves, Bheemunipatnam, Yarada Beach, Kailasagiri, Thotlakonda, Bavikonda and the Simhachalam temple. It said the increased tourist flow would benefit hotels, resorts, transport operators, travel agencies, restaurants and local artisans. The airport project is expected to create significant employment opportunities.

Besides direct jobs in airport operations, ground handling, cargo services, aviation engineering, maintenance, security and air traffic management, it said indirect employment would be generated in hospitality, tourism, logistics, retail, warehousing, transport and event management.

According to the government, the airport is being developed over about 2,200 acres at an estimated Phase-I cost of Rs 4,500 crore to Rs 5,000 crore. It said the airport will initially have the capacity to handle six million passengers annually, with future expansion planned to increase capacity to 18 million passengers.

Describing the project as a landmark in Andhra Pradesh's development journey, the government said the Bhogapuram International Airport would strengthen the state's global connectivity, attract investments, promote industrial growth, boost exports and tourism, and contribute to its vision of building a prosperous and investment-friendly 'Swarna Andhra.'

Centre sanctions 61,084 PMAY houses to state

- To provide Rs 882 cr assistance
- 12,370 houses approved for 107 cities in latest sanction meeting
- Says Amaravati land-pooling farmers not covered under special beneficiary category

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THE Centre has sanctioned 61,084 houses for Andhra Pradesh under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) 2.0, with a Central assistance of Rs 882.32 crore, the Union ministry of housing and urban affairs informed Parliament on Thursday.

Replying to a starred question by MP Maddila Gurumoorthy in the Lok Sabha, Union housing and urban affairs minister Manohar Lal said that 16.20 lakh houses have been sanctioned nationwide under PMAY-U 2.0 with Central assistance of Rs 23,383 crore. Of these, Andhra Pradesh received approval for 61,084 houses.

The minister said that in the latest Central Sanctioning and



Monitoring Committee (CSMC) meeting held on June 17, 2026, Andhra Pradesh was sanctioned 12,370 houses across 107 urban local bodies, with Central assistance of Rs 185.55 crore.

Providing details of the scheme's implementation in the State, the Centre said that 19.07 lakh houses had been sanctioned under the earlier PMAY-U programme. Of these, 3.71 lakh were non-starter houses, while 15.36 lakh houses were taken up for construction. So far, 11.38 lakh houses have been completed, and 10.75 lakh houses are occupied, the Minister informed.

Under PMAY-U 2.0, 43,947 houses have already been grounded in Andhra Pradesh, while 1,980 houses have been completed

and handed over to beneficiaries, according to the reply.

On the demand to extend PMAY-U 2.0 benefits to Amaravati land-pooling farmers, the Centre clarified that they are not included in the Special Focus Group identified under the scheme.

The Minister explained that PMAY-U 2.0 gives priority to beneficiaries belonging to categories such as PM SVANidhi street vendors, Safai Karmis, PM Vishwakarma artisans, Anganwadi workers, construction workers, and slum residents. Since land-pooling farmers do not fall under these notified categories, they are currently not eligible for benefits under the special focus group provisions of the scheme.

Jagan denied meeting with Appalaraju in jail

- Former minister's request rejected after visiting hours ended
- Prison authorities cite jail manual; refuse to relax rules
- YSRCP chief accuses the state govt of pursuing 'vindictive politics'; vows support to Appalaraju's family

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

YSRCP president Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy and former minister Seediri Appalaraju were unable to meet in jail on Wednesday after prison authorities denied permission, citing prison regulations.

According to prison officials, YSRCP leaders sought permission for Appalaraju to meet Jagan after 5 pm. However, the request was rejected as prison rules permit visitors only during the prescribed visiting hours, which end before 5 pm. After consulting higher authorities, the jail administration decided that no exception could be made and denied the meeting.

The development comes days after Appalaraju was arrested by the Kasibugga police in Srikakulam district on July 22. He was named as an accused in a case alleging that he conspired to tamper with evidence and cover up



YSRCP president Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy with wife and son of former minister Seediri Appalaraju at district jail in Srikakulam on Thursday

his son's involvement in a road accident. The refusal to allow the meeting has triggered political discussion, with the YSRCP seeking to facilitate interaction between its chief and the former minister, while prison authorities maintained that the decision was taken strictly in accordance with jail rules. Later, speaking to media along with family members of Appalaraju, Jagan Mohan Reddy accused the Chandrababu Naidu-led government of conspiring against the family of former minister. He alleged that an accidental case involving Raju's son was deliberately turned into a murder charge to target the family.

Jagan said the incident reflected "vindictive politics" in the state. He claimed Raju's son, an 18-year-old student aspiring to become a doctor, was involved in an accident but tried to help the victim by calling

emergency services and performing CPR. Despite this, the case was twisted into a murder conspiracy, Jagan alleged.

He questioned whether similar action would have been taken if the accident had involved ruling party legislators. Jagan accused the government of sowing divisions among communities and misusing the system to harass political opponents. He also criticized Naidu for failing to support fishermen and BC communities, alleging that welfare schemes were being neglected while false cases were filed against rivals.

Jagan asserted that the YSRCP stood firmly with Appalaraju's family and expressed confidence that justice would prevail. "Appalaraju will soon walk free," he said, condemning what he described as attempts to destroy the career and reputation of a leader from a humble background.

Rs 2,714.78 cr released for Aug Bharosa pensions

- Rs 514.42 crore will be disbursed early in north Andhra in view of PM visit to Bhogapuram

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THE state government released Rs 2,714.78 crore towards NTR Bharosa pensions for 62,07,573 beneficiaries across the state for the month of August, according to minister for MSME, rural poverty alleviation Konnapalli Srinivas.

In a statement here on Thursday, the minister said that pension payments in the six districts of north Andhra would be made a day in advance, on July 31, in view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to dedicate the Alluri Sitarama Raju International Greenfield Airport to the nation on August 1.

A total of 11,98,044 beneficiaries in the

six north Andhra districts will receive Rs 514.42 crore on Thursday. The remaining 50,09,529 pensioners across the rest of the state will receive Rs 2,198.31 crore on August 1, he said.

The minister said that since the coalition government assumed office, it has spent a record Rs 70,907.41 crore on pension payments, reflecting its commitment to the welfare of senior citizens, persons with disabilities, widows, and other vulnerable sections of society.

Srinivas reiterated that the government is committed to ensuring the timely disbursement of NTR Bharosa pensions, with beneficiaries receiving their pensions on the first day of every month.

He said the initiative reflects the coalition government's focus on social security and the welfare of the poor, elderly, and underprivileged families across Andhra Pradesh.

Be vigilant amid heavy rains, CS Jaju directs Collectors and police

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

IN view of heavy rains lashing Telangana, Chief Secretary Sanjay Jaju has directed district Collectors to take all necessary precautionary measures to prevent any loss of life or property.

The Chief Secretary ordered that tourists should be prevented from visiting waterfalls, picnic spots, and other hazardous tourist destinations during the period of heavy rains.

Collectors in the Godavari river basin districts were asked to closely monitor river conditions and alert residents in low-lying areas.

The CS held a video conference on Thursday with Collectors, Police Commissioners, and Superintendents of Police to review preparedness, as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast heavy rainfall for another two days.

He said that since heavy rainfall is expected to continue through Thursday night in several districts, coordinated action must be taken by all departments, particularly the police and district administration. He instructed Collectors to establish control rooms in every district headquarters and continuously monitor the situation.

He stated that National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) teams have already been deployed and assured that any additional assistance required would be provided immediately.

Referring to the anticipated impact of El Niño, the Chief Secretary noted that rainfall is expected to remain below normal even in September.

Govt rolls out 'Nethannala Sevalo', weavers to get Rs 25K annual aid

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THE state government has launched 'Nethannala Sevalo' scheme, under which Below Poverty Line (BPL) handloom weaver families will receive Rs 25,000 per household annually from the 2026-27 financial year to strengthen the handloom sector and improve the livelihoods of traditional weavers.

According to officials, the financial assistance will be provided to all active handloom weaver households irrespective of the age of the beneficiary or the number of looms owned, with one benefit per eligible family.

The scheme is intended to help weavers meet expenses on yarn, dyes, chemicals, loom modernization, replacement of worn-out equipment and repairs, enabling them to

improve productivity, increase income and compete more effectively with the power loom sector.

The government approved detailed implementation guidelines submitted by the commissioner of handlooms and textiles for rolling out the scheme across the State.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Suresh sharma alias Suresh bhardwaj So Sh. Kishori Lal Rio A-29, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi do hereby declare that I have three sons namely Ashok sharma, Ishwar sharma and Hariom Sharma with whom I have cordial relations and all are married and settled in their life. I have my own personal business and I am independent in life. Neither I have any interference or financial dependence on them nor they have any. I do hereby declare that whatever I have social, financial, moral or any other liability in future would be solely belonging/ confining to myself. My sons as above mentioned would not be responsible or liable for my actions and deeds in any manner whatsoever in future.

DELHI
DATED - 30 JULY 2026
Sd/- AJAY KUMAR PIPANIYA
(Advocate)
551-553, Aggarwal Metro Heights, Netaji Subhash Place, Pitampura, Delhi- 110034

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
TENDER NOTICE	
(Through e-tendering)	
Name of work with its location	Provision of CCTV Camera at Station Master Room / Panel Rooms and Relay room over Delhi Division.
App. Cost of the work (₹)	₹ 3,94,38,763.35/- only
Earnest Money Deposit (₹)	₹ 7,88,800.00/- only.
Address of the office	Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3 rd Floor, Annex-1, DRM office, New Delhi-110055.
Date & Time for upload the tender/closing of tender	Tender uploading / closing date & time- 21.08.2026 up to 15.00 hrs.
Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.	See the Northern Railway website www.ireps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3 rd Floor, DRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055.
Tender No. 558-Sig-16-Tele-OT-1042 Dated: 30.07.2026 2628/2026	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

Rains revive agriculture, fill reservoirs across Karimnagar

THIRUNAGARI
VENKATESHWARA SWAMY
KARMINAGAR

AFTER weeks of uncertainty caused by a prolonged dry spell, widespread rainfall over the past three days has brought much-needed relief to farmers across the united Karimnagar district. The showers have accelerated paddy transplantation and other kharif operations while replenishing reservoirs, tanks and streams across the region. Farmers have resumed cultivation of paddy, cotton, maize and horticultural crops after delayed monsoon rains had slowed agricultural activity during June.

Against the kharif cultivation target of 9.51 lakh acres of paddy, 2.02 lakh acres of cotton, 50,000 acres of maize and 1.72 lakh acres of horticultural crops, only a small area had been cultivated due to poor rainfall. Farmer Koppula Satyanarayana from Kishitampet village in Peddapalli district said the recent rains had restored hope after the prolonged impact of El Niño conditions and encouraged farmers to restart field operations.

The rainfall has improved storage in the Lower Manair, Mid Manair, Upper Manair and Shanigaram reservoirs, while water from the Sri Ram Sagar Project has



started reaching the united Karimnagar district through the Kakatiya and Flood Flow canals. Meanwhile, heavy rainfall has disrupted coal

production in Ramagundam due to waterlogging in open-cast mines.

Authorities remain on alert as the IMD has forecast

more rain, while Karimnagar District Collector Chitra Mishra declared a holiday for schools on July 31 as a precautionary measure.

KIND ATTENTION RAIL PASSENGERS!
IMPORTANT INFORMATION
EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY OF SUMMER SPECIAL TRAINS
This is notified for the information of Rail Passengers that Railways have decided to extend the Periodicity of the run of following Summer Special Trains as under:-

Train No.	Station		Frequency/ Days of Run	Earlier Notified Upto	Extended Period	Trips
09309	Indore Jn	Hazrat Nizamuddin	Bi-Weekly (Fri & Sun)	31.07.2026	Upto 30.08.2026	9
09310	Hazrat Nizamuddin	Indore Jn	Bi-Weekly (Sat & Mon)	01.08.2026	Upto 31.08.2026	9
09093	Udhna Jn	Ayodhya Cantt	Weekly (Fri)	31.07.2026	Upto 28.08.2026	4
09094	Ayodhya Cantt	Udhna Jn	Weekly (Sat)	01.08.2026	Upto 29.08.2026	4
09097	Udhna Jn	Ayodhya Cantt	Weekly (Tue)	28.07.2026	Upto 25.08.2026	4
09098	Ayodhya Cantt	Udhna Jn	Weekly (Wed)	29.07.2026	Upto 26.08.2026	4
09451	Gandhidham Jn	Bhagalpur Jn	Weekly (Fri)	31.07.2026	Upto 28.08.2026	4
09452	Bhagalpur Jn	Gandhidham Jn	Weekly (Mon)	03.08.2026	Upto 31.08.2026	4

Note: Rest of instructions will hold good.
For any other information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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SREESHANKAR'S DOUBLE DELIGHT

MURALI Sreeshankar added another chapter to Indian athletics history on Wednesday, becoming the country's first long jump double medallist in Commonwealth Games with a silver here.

Having claimed silver in Birmingham in 2022, the 27-year-old added another medal to his collection after producing a best leap of 8.09 metres, capping an emotional comeback from the career-threatening knee injury that had nearly derailed his career.

Before Sreeshankar, the country's only medallists in the event were: Suresh Babu (men's bronze, 1978), Anju Bobby George (women's bronze, 2002) and M Prajusha (women's silver, 2010).

Former world champion Tajay Gayle of Jamaica clinched the gold with a best jump of 8.15m while local favourite Stephen Mackenzie grabbed the last spot on the podium with an 8.08m effort.

The medal was especially sweet considering where Sreeshankar stood just over a year ago. A ruptured patellar tendon in April 2024 forced him to undergo surgery, and miss what was expected to be his maiden Olympic appearance in Paris and raising doubts over whether he could ever return to his explosive best. But here, he gave another emphatic statement of his comeback.

Competing in only his second Commonwealth Games after missing the 2018 edition, Sreeshankar opened confidently with a leap of 8.03m before stretching it to 8.09m in his second attempt to move into the lead.

Commonwealth Games 2026



Sprinters Dilip Mahadu Gavit, Mohammed Basil sprint ahead in men's 100m T47

Historic 1-2 finish by Gavit-Basil

GLASGOW

INDIA'S para-athletes remained an inspiring and unstoppable force at the Commonwealth Games as sprinters Dilip Mahadu Gavit and Mohammed Basil scripted another story of grit with a gold-silver finish in the men's 100m T47 final here.

Gavit clocked a Games record and his season's best time of 10.71 seconds to take the top spot, while Basil produced his season's best of 10.83 seconds to finish second in a closely-fought race on Wednesday.

England's Kevin Santos completed the podium taking 10.85 seconds to win bronze.

The men's 100m T47 is a para athletics sprint event covers arm impairment or absence, affecting strength, movement or coordination on one side.

Gavit's gold was India's third at the Games, following Mirabai Chanu's victory in the women's 48kg weightlifting event and Sharmila Dhankar's triumph in the women's shot put F57 para athletics category.

Hyderabad Black Hawks to hold U-21, PVL Open Trials

VIJAYAWADA: Hyderabad Black Hawks will conduct U-21 Selection Trials and Open Trials for its Prime Volleyball League (PVL) main team on August 6 at the V R Siddhartha Engineering College Indoor Stadium in Vijayawada, aiming to identify emerging and experienced volleyball talent from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The U-21 Selection Trials, beginning at 8 am, are exclusively for registered players under 21 and are linked to the inaugural Guardians Trophy, an invitational tournament to be held in Goa from August 14 to 16. Registration has already closed following a strong response. Selected players will attend a training camp until August 12 before travelling to Goa and will also have the opportunity to register for the PVL Auction. The Open Trials for the Hyderabad Black Hawks' main PVL squad will commence at 5 pm and are open to experienced men from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Participation is subject to mandatory prior registration for the PVL Auction through the official league portal.



Osmania Professor represents India at Int'l sports conference

HYDERABAD: Prof. Rajesh Kumar, Senior Professor and Head of the Department of Physical Education at Osmania University, represented India at the Thailand National Sports University International Conference 2026, held in Bangkok from July 29 to 31.

He presented a research paper titled "The Role of Traditional Indian Practices for Promotion of Physical Literacy in India: A Review", highlighting the significance of India's traditional knowledge systems in promoting physical literacy and holistic well-being. In recognition of his scholarly contribution, Prof. Kumar received a Certificate of Appreciation.

The conference also provided opportunities for international academic collaboration and enhanced Osmania University's global academic profile.



INDIA'S JAVELIN TRIO INTO FINAL

OLYMPIC hero Neeraj Chopra, along with two other Indians, advanced to the Commonwealth Games men's javelin throw final after finishing among the top 12 in the qualification round as strong, shifting winds foiled every athlete's attempt to achieve the automatic qualifying mark here on Thursday.

Chopra, who won the javelin throw title in 2018, was fifth with a best effort of 79.61m, while Rohit Yadav (78.37m) and Yashvir Singh (78.36m) ended the qualification in ninth and 10th positions respectively to ensure a full Indian contingent in the medal round.

The 28-year-old Chopra, who was the last thrower in each round, did not take



his third and final attempt as he had already made it to the final by that time.

With a steady headwind and a temperature of 18 degree Celsius making conditions difficult throughout the event, none of the competitors was able to breach the automatic qualification mark of 84m, leaving the top 12 athletes to progress to the final round to be held on Friday.

Rahane retires from int'l cricket

MUMBAI: Senior batter Ajinkya Rahane, who famously led an injury-ravaged Indian team to an improbable Test series win over Australia in 2021, announced his retirement from international cricket on Thursday, saying that the time is right for him to "move on".

The 38-year-old played 85 Tests, 90 ODIs and 20 T20Is for India in a career which began in 2013. However, he has not turned up for India since the 2023 away Test series against the West Indies but maintained even until this year's IPL that he would not give up on the dream of a comeback.

"The reality of life is that everything has a beginning, and everything has an end. When that time comes, you simply have to respect it and move forward. I always relied on timing in my batting, and I've always understood its important," Rahane said in a video message on his Instagram account.

"Today, I feel the timing is right for me to move on and announce my requirement from international cricket, and all formats," he added in the clip that was captioned 'Cap number 278, signing off'.



Pargat questions hockey jersey 'safronisation'

NEW DELHI: Former India captain Pargat Singh on Thursday questioned the decision to make saffron the Indian hockey team's primary jersey colour ahead of the upcoming World Cup, alleging that "everything in the country is being saffronised", while legendary forward Dhanraj Pillay said the blue jersey has been the sport's identity for decades.

The controversy erupted after Hockey India unveiled saffron as the primary jersey for the men's and women's teams for the World Cup, beginning August 15 in the Netherlands and Belgium.



While former India captain Viren Rasquinha has also expressed reservations over the move, Hockey India has maintained that the decision was taken considering both the technical feedback received from the coaches and players and the symbolic value associated with the colour being part of the National Flag.

Dhanraj, who represented India in 339 international matches, including four Olympics, four World Cups and four Champions Trophy tournaments, said the blue jersey has remained synonymous with Indian hockey for generations. "The blue jersey has become the identity of Indian hockey. Being one of the colours of our national flag, saffron is important and auspicious but it has never been the traditional colour of Indian hockey. I don't understand why this has suddenly changed after so many years," Dhanraj told PTI.

Winged ants force closure of two OTs at Durg hospital

RAIPUR: Two operation theatres (OTs) at a government hospital in Chhattisgarh's Durg district have been shut for the last 10 days after swarms of winged ants entered the facilities following heavy rains, officials said on Thursday. The operation theatres in the mother-child unit of the district hospital were closed as a precautionary measure after a large number of flying ants were found inside the OTs, Civil Surgeon of the hospital Dr Ashish Minj said. "The winged ants entered the operation theatres due to the ongoing heavy rains. To ensure patient safety and maintain sterile conditions, both OTs were temporarily closed," he said.

Dr Minj said no surgeries have been affected by the closure as the hospital's emergency operation theatre is being used to carry out all required procedures. "No patient has been referred to another hospital because of the closure of these OTs. All surgeries are being managed through the emergency OT," he said. Repair and pest-control work is underway, and both OTs are expected to become operational again within the next two to three days, the official added.

Amit Shah should quit: Abhijeet Dipke

'Union Home Minister must have issued orders to use force on students on July 20 in Delhi'

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

COCKROACH Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke on Thursday claimed orders to use force against students during the July 20 "Sansad Chalo" march must have come from Union Home Minister Amit Shah and sought his resignation over the police crackdown.

Talking to reporters at his residence in hometown Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar in central Maharashtra, he said democracy was in "danger" in the country and questions were being raised even on judiciary, while central probe agencies were being used to break political parties.

"Saving democracy is not merely an Opposition issue now. The people of the country will have to come together (to save it)," Dipke insisted on his return home after more than a month-



long CJP-led protest in New Delhi's Jantar Mantar over the NEET exam paper leak, which culminated in the resignation of then-Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. "There is a question mark even on judiciary. We all have seen how ED and CBI were used to break parties like the Shiv Sena and the NCP. The big institutions in the country had a duty to keep democracy alive and not create dictatorship of a single man. They let it happen. To stop this, not only

ple like Ram Rahim (a rape convict) come out on parole during their tenure. This government supports goons and rapists," he alleged.

The CJP founder insisted his outfit's protest over the NEET paper leak was constitutional. "We have fought for our rights against the paper leak in a constitutional way. If agitating with photos of Mahatma Gandhi and B R Ambedkar in a legal way is defaming culture, we have done it. Baba Ramdev should look into Patanjali about which the Supreme Court has made adverse comments in the past," he maintained.

"Gen Z can handle the country and its culture well. He (Ramdev) should concentrate on Patanjali else it may go out of business," Dipke remarked. He supported the demand for Shah's resignation made by Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi. "Amit Shah should definitely resign.

SC permits Friday prayers on Dargah land

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday permitted Muslims to offer Friday prayers at the premises of a dargah adjacent to the disputed Bhojshala complex at Dhar in Madhya Pradesh. The top court directed the state government to ensure that Muslims are allowed to offer namaz at the site between 1 and 3 pm on Fridays.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, however, said that the instant direction does not preclude the state government and the Muslim side from exploring another site for Friday prayers with mutual consent. On July 14,



the bench had directed that a separate open space be provided adjacent to the disputed site in Dhar for namaz on Fridays between 1 and 3 pm till the case is decided.

Later, the Muslim side led by Haji Muneer Ahmad moved the top court alleging non-compliance with its directions to provide an alternative site, saying that the Dhar administration was

providing the place which was 1.3 km away from the disputed Bhojshala complex. They said that the site should be close enough from where Muslims can sight the mosque while offering prayers. After hearing arguments from senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, appearing for the Muslim side, and Additional Solicitor General K M Natraj, on behalf of the state government, clarified its earlier order of July 14. "The earlier order is clarified to the extent that the Muslim community be permitted to offer namaz on Fridays between 1-3 pm at the land bearing Khassra No. 596 which is stated to be Dargah land.

Flood-hit Assam still in dark

DISPUR

NEARLY 13,000 households in flood-affected areas of Assam still do not have any electricity connection, almost 11 days after several districts were ravaged by an unprecedented mud-filled deluge.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the administration is continuously evaluating the flood situation in Upper Assam and accordingly taking decisions to restore power connections in the households.

"Consumers without electricity have declined by a further 30 per cent. As water levels recede, we are continuously assessing safety conditions and will restore more transformers to the grid wherever it is safe to do so," he said in a post on X.

The flood impact and power supply status report for Sivasagar electrical circle, prepared by Assam Power



Distribution Company Ltd (APDCL) and shared by Sarma, showed that a total of 12,756 consumers are still affected or without electricity.

The affected areas are Gaurisagar, Sivasagar, Nazira, Amguri and Demow, it added.

On July 24, Sarma had said that around 40,000 households did not have electricity supply although power had been restored to 75 per cent

connections.

Heavy rains in Nagaland and Upper Assam districts wreaked havoc in three districts from wee hours on July 19.

The flood situation in Assam remained grim on Thursday even as water receded from most parts of the state, with the death toll rising to 78 and over three lakh people continuing to reel under the deluge. (PTI)

'Returning to Kolkata feels like coming home'

KOLKATA: Nearly two decades after she was forced to leave Kolkata following protests over her controversial book 'Dwikhandito', exiled Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen on Thursday said returning to the city for her first public appearance felt like coming back to "my own country".

She expressed hope that the visit would reaffirm the importance of freedom of expression and protection of dissenting voices.

Nasreen is scheduled to take part in a programme here on August 1, which is also likely to be attended



by West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari and renowned author Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay.

This will be Nasreen's first public appearance in Kolkata since 2007, when protests against her memoir

forced her to leave the city she had made her home after fleeing Bangladesh a decade earlier.

Nasreen's book 'Dwikhandito' (Split in two) was banned by the West Bengal government in 2003 for allegedly hurting the sentiments of the Muslim community.

Speaking to PTI, Nasreen said Kolkata was not merely a place where she lived but a city that gave her a sense of belonging, and that the years away had not weakened her connection with West Bengal.

"I feel as though I am returning to

my own country. Bengal has never been divided in my heart by a border or a barbed-wire fence. The door to the eastern part of Bengal remains closed to me, so for now, this part of Bengal is my home," she said.

"I am returning with joy, but also with pain. Kolkata was not merely a city where I lived; it was where I had a home, friends, readers and a sense of belonging. Nearly nineteen years were taken from me, and no homecoming can return those lost years. I am not returning as a stranger or a guest.



Despite long gaps, Telugu stars bet on sequels

Tollywood's two-part film trend gaining momentum

SUHAS SISTU

Despite long gaps in between, the trend of two-part films is all set to gain even more ground in Telugu entertainment. It seems that filmmakers are now taking to two sequels in a row business very seriously, despite box office failures of some of the recent releases. From the Baahubali led boom, filmmakers have realized that big budget films call for a bigger narrative that needs more than one

movie to complete the story.

The trend started with Rajamouli's Baahubali, which broke the glass ceiling and set the ball rolling for the rest of the filmmakers who saw opportunity in capitalizing on the massive content, world building and the power of a larger than life narrative that can only be captured in two films.

Ever since its release, Baahubali has been inspiring many, as evident with the current slew of two-part films being made at the moment.

Jr NTR's Dragon, which is being made on an international scale by Prashanth Neel, is all set to be a two-part film, with the director saying he would need two films to do justice to the scale of his film. The same is being speculated for Allu Arjun's Raaka as well, which is being directed by Atlee. Though nothing has been confirmed yet, Ram Charan's RC17 along with Sukumar is also said to be going the two-part way.

In fact, the team is said to be

planning to release the two films like Dhurandhar, with barely a gap of four to five months in between. That way, there won't be an agonizing wait for the audiences, which would keep their interest alive for the second part while keeping the first part's magic alive.

With so many big budgeted films going the sequel route, it would be interesting to see if the trend continues in future, with either long awaited parts or entirely new projects.



Nitesh Tiwari's Ramayana trailer: Ranbir Kapoor, Yash & Sai Pallavi deliver big



The much-awaited trailer for the mythological drama Ramayana has finally arrived. It has lived up to the high expectations with grandeur and has set to give the audiences a sneak peek into the larger

than life project that promises to be one of the best in India.

This four-minutes long trailer gives a glimpse into the movie directed by Nitesh Tiwari, which introduces its lead characters through various action-filled sequences on a royal, larger than life scale.

Ranbir Kapoor as Lord Rama, Sai Pallavi as Sita and Yash as Ravana managed to steal the show with their respective performances. Yash dominates the first half of the trailer with a compelling and powerful presence, while Ranbir seems to be a true embodiment of Lord Rama and Sai Pallavi complements him well.

As the trailer progresses and eventually reveals more of the story, it manages to keep its focus on the epic love story between the two legendary characters before showcasing a fierce battle between the two sides. It has to be said that the technical excellence of the movie is truly worth appreciating as grand depictions of Ayodhya and Lanka, battle scenes, special effects, and creative concept art, among others, are some of the most engaging things about it.

Not to forget that the background

score by Hans Zimmer and AR Rahman makes the action-packed and emotional scenes even better. Produced by Namit Malhotra and co-produced by Yash under Monster Mind Creations, Ramayana is set to release globally on Diwali 2026 in various languages. Based on the spectacular trailer, it haws a great possibility of being the talk of the town and a truly epic production that could become one of the biggest hits in recent years.

Varun Tej saves loyal fan battling tumor

Varun Tej has once again proved that his fan following is not just limited to his acting skills as he comes to the aid of one of his loyal fans who was diagnosed with a severe medical condition. The actor's good gesture has left fans and well-wishers really touched.

It was recently reported that Suresh Patil, the Anantapur district president of Chiranjeevi Yuvaratna and Gutti town president of Jana Sena Party, was diagnosed with a brain tumor. The actor immediately sprung into action to help Suresh get the best treatment possible.

With the help of his mother, Padmaja, the actor has taken personal charge of making sure the medical costs are paid for and even



looked after the patient and his family at the hospital. From arranging for the doctors to get better treatment and looking after his needs till he recovers, the actor went out of his way to help the fan.

In addition to covering all the medical expenses, the ac-

tor has also been in constant touch with the doctors till the point Suresh was discharged from the hospital.

It has also been reported that this is not the first time the actor has gone out of his way to help a fan. Recently, he also helped the fans from the Anantapur region who

lost a close companion in an accident by giving generously to his family.

It appears that Varun Tej continues to follow in his family's footsteps by helping people around him. This recent gesture has only helped improve his already existing fan following.

VFA gets honoured at Kodi Ramakrishna Awards 2026



Reputed Vinod Film Academy (VFA) has received the "Best Acting School in Hyderabad" award at the recently held Kodi Ramakrishna Awards 2026 for nurturing young talents and promoting good acting skills in the Telugu film industry. Andhra Pradesh Deputy Speaker Raghu Rama Krishna Raju, senior actor Suman, producer Ambika Krishna and veteran producer Thummalaipalli Rama Satyanarayana presented the awards to the Vinod Film Academy.

The felicitation ceremony was held in the presence of a galaxy of film personalities who graced the event.

Vinod Film Academy founder and actor Vinod Nuvvula expressed his delight over receiving the esteemed Kodi Ramakrishna Award and said that it was an actor's dream come true. "This is one of the best days of my life, actually, and I felt very happy. This award is named after a great legendary filmmaker Kodi Ramakrishna, so this is one big blessing from our well-wishers, students who dedicate their lives to the film industry and the organisers, and I extend my heartfelt gratitude to them," he said.

Meanwhile, actor and Vinod Film Academy founder Vinod Nuvvula thanked the students for putting their trust and faith in the institution. "The confidence they have placed in this institution by giving us their opportunity is overwhelming. We will make them successful and famous so that they can promote the Telugu film industry," he added.

Is Chiranjeevi planning a birthday surprise for his fans?

Though Vishwambhara, the latest Telugu film of the Megastar Chiranjeevi was one of the most anticipated movies, there hasn't been an update about this flick in quite some time. However, it is now being reported that the makers have planned a birthday surprise as his birthday falls on the release window for the film.



Interestingly, Vishwambhara was set to release prior to Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu, which not only released first but also turned out to be a phenomenal hit at the box office.

However, it seems that the wait for Vishwambhara might just end on August 22 which happens to be Chiranjeevi's birthday.

As per the latest rumors doing rounds, makers of the flick have reportedly locked the first week of October 2026 for the film's release as a birthday surprise for the fans.

Furthermore, the team has been working on the film's VFX so that movie lovers can experience best visual treat. Although the film's release date hasn't been officially confirmed by the producers yet, the film has been postponed multiple times.

The fantasy entertainer that stars Trisha and is directed by Mallidi Vasishta. Aashika Ranganath, Ramya Pasupuleti, Esha Chawla, and Ashrita Vemuganti Nanduri are also a part of the star cast. The music of the film has been composed by MM Keeravani.

For now, the fans would have to wait till August 22, 2026 to know if Chiranjeevi's birthday will truly turn out to be a surprise for the viewers who have been waiting for Vishwambhara to hit the screens for a long time now.

Shraddha Kapoor stuns in minimalist look

Bollywood actress Shraddha Kapoor once again made her fans go crazy after sharing the latest clicks on her social media site. As per her usual attitude, the actress shared some of the best pictures of hers by keeping the looks simple but elegant. Shraddha Kapoor was seen wearing a beige knit sleeveless dress with minimal yet elegant gold adornments in the picture. She kept her hair in wavy style and her bold eye makeup caught everyone's attention.

A minimalistic yet elegant look along with minimal makeup and a dazzling smile in monochrome stole the hearts of her fans. Kapoor was looking gorgeous in her minimalistic outfit as she continues to flaunt her regular style statement.

Her fans were crazy about the latest click as they showered her with love and appreciation in the comment section.

They called her the most beautiful Bollywood actress and liked her minimalistic makeup and beautiful smile along with the minimalistic yet elegant look she was seen in the picture. They found Shraddha Kapoor looking gorgeous in the golden accessories and liked her minimalistic makeup that complemented her cuteness.

Shraddha Kapoor keeps her fans updated with all the latest happenings in her life through her frequent social media posts, where the actress keeps her near and dear ones posted about her lifestyle, work, and other relevant updates in her life. She was seen recently updating her fans with the pictures of her minimalistic looks and style statement.

