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weather report

Kolkata Weather

31 °C | °F

Precipitation 85%

Humidity 91%

Wind 11 km/h

Mostly cloudy with a t-storm

Indian Indices

NIFTY 50		
25212.05	16.25	0.06
SENSEX		
82634.48	63.57	0.08
NIFTY BANK		
57168.95	162.30	0.28
NIFTY IT		
37660.75	236.15	0.63
BSE SMALLCAP		
55475.40	156.94	0.28

Gold Rates

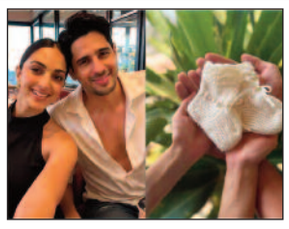
Today gold price in Kolkata
99,280 91,000
»
Today gold price in Bangalore
99,280 91,000
»
Today gold price in India
99,280 (₹-490) 91,000 (₹-450)

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"Speak More in Bangla, Then Send Me to Detention Camp if You Dare," CM Mamata Banerjee's Rallying Cry

Kolkata, 16 July: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee delivered a searing rebuttal to rising accusations against Bengali-speaking migrants, daring authorities to detain her if they persist. Her rallying words came at a protest in Kolkata amid reports of harassment and deportation of Bengalis, highlighting the growing linguistic and cultural tensions in BJP-ruled states. Amid intermittent rain, Banerjee led a procession from College Square to Dorina Crossing, joined by her party's powerful cadre, including Abhishek Banerjee and state ministers. Surrounded by supporters waving Trinamool flags, she addressed the crowd in unfiltered Bengali: "I've decided to speak even more in Bangla. If they want to send me to a detention camp, let them try." Her challenge was rooted in deep frustration with recent actions across Delhi, Maharashtra, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Assam, where Bengali speakers have reportedly been stopped, detained and even denied basic services like electricity and water, despite holding valid identity documents. Banerjee lambasted the central government's alleged interference, saying that a clandestine notification had prompted states to act against Bengali speakers. She vowed to legally confront "surreptitious" orders originating from the centre, warning that such targeting would carry a heavy political cost. The chief minister spotlighted harsh cases, including eight migrant workers from Nadia detained in Chhattisgarh and a family sent to Bangladesh from Delhi, whose release was later secured through legal intervention. She emphasised that nearly 22 lakh Bengali migrants across India possess Aadhaar and voter cards, questioning why their legitimate presence was being challenged by unfounded suspicion. Banerjee framed the issue as an existential affront to Bengali pride. She questioned: "Are we not Indian? What law allows you to treat citizens like foreigners because they speak our mother tongue?" She said this dilemma had escalated beyond simple prejudice into a politically motivated campaign to discredit her people. Politically, Banerjee invoked the popular 'Khela Hobe' slogan and made clear she would retaliate electorally: "If you send Bengalis to camps, Bengal will pitch BJP into political detention in the next polls. Inch by inch, we will fight." She warned that exclusionary tactics would not deter her movement; instead, her party would respond in kind. Her defiance comes amid growing concerns that internal migrants are being scapegoated under the guise of national security or demographic management. Bengal's migrant workers fear detention not due to immigration status, but for speaking their own dialect. Banerjee's demand: for central oversight to stop, for state governments to respect constitutional protections, and for public officials to halt the politics of identity-based discrimination. At the same time, a wider legal battle is underway. Bengal has already approached the Calcutta High Court, challenging detentions in Delhi and Maharashtra. This political-judicial strategy amplifies Banerjee's outreach beyond Kolkata: it asserts that any crackdown on Bengalis on linguistic grounds will face state pushback in both courtroom and ballot box. Analysts see this as a strategic escalation. With Assembly elections in 2026 nearing, language and identity have become core components of Trinamool's campaign. Banerjee's posture is less about nostalgia for a cultural icon and more about confronting what her party terms a divisive, centralised agenda. Observers suggest that this could widen the fault lines in Indian federalism, with language once again emerging as a political flashpoint. As political temperature rises, Banerjee's message to the centre is simple: attacks on Bengali identity will no longer be met with silence. For her supporters, there's now a clear warning—any attempt to silence Bengal through detention or policy will echo back in political consequences.



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with party leader and LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Assam Congress President Gaurav Gogoi and others during a party workers' meeting, at Chaygaon, near Guwahati, Wednesday.



West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee along with party National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee and other leaders participates in a protest march against the alleged harassment of Bengali-speaking people in BJP-ruled states, in Kolkata, West Bengal, Wednesday.

Calcutta High Court Upholds Exclusion of 'Tainted' Candidates in SSC Recruitment, Offers Major Relief to West Bengal Government

Kolkata, 16 July: The Calcutta High Court has delivered a critical verdict in the long-running School Service Commission recruitment controversy, supporting the state government's position and barring candidates labeled 'tainted' from participating in the fresh round of SSC exams to fill more than 35,000 teaching vacancies. The decision was rendered by a division bench chaired by Justices Soumen Sen and Smita Das De, which upheld a previous single-judge ruling grounded in directives from the Supreme Court.

The legal dispute arose after nearly 26,000 teachers and non-teaching staff were dismissed by the Supreme Court in April, following findings of systemic fraud and manipulation in the 2016 SSC recruitment process. While earlier judgments scrapped the entire panel, the Supreme Court had stopped short of mainstreaming a ban on those dismissed from contesting again in future recruitments. Interpreting this silence, the division bench reinforced the ban, citing that allowing those implicated in the scam to re-enter public service would dishonor the rule of law and the sanctity of merit-based hiring.

In court, advocates representing the SSC and the state argued that excluding tainted individuals constituted double punishment, since they had already lost service and been asked to repay salaries. They contended that constitutional equality under Article 16 should allow even disqualified candidates a fresh chance. The court, however, rejected this, emphasising that the Supreme Court's description of the 2016 appointments as fraudulent implied that those responsible should be permanently disqualified from participating in the rectified recruitment process.

The justices underscored the importance of moral integrity in public services, stressing that the government must not protect those who sought entry through dishonest means. Reflecting on legendary educators like Beni Madhab Das and Surya Sen, the judges argued that recruiting compromised candidates would erode the educational fabric of the state, harming students and damaging governance at its core. With the court majority opinion, the timeline for the fresh SSC examinations—which are to be conducted and concluded by December 31 in compliance with Supreme Court orders—remains intact.

Mamata Banerjee Declares All Languages Equal, Condemns Lingual Prejudice in BJP-ruled States

Kolkata, 16 July: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today emphatically stated that while every language in India merits respect, she would not tolerate any insult directed at the Bengali language. Speaking at a rally from College Square to Dorina Crossing in Kolkata, she launched a forceful condemnation of multiple BJP-governed states for allegedly harassing Bengali-speaking migrant workers—some accused of being Bangladeshi nationals merely for speaking their mother tongue. Banerjee's address came amid reports that, across Delhi, Maharashtra, and other BJP-administered regions, Bengali-speaking laborers have faced wrongful detention, denial of basic utilities, and even pushback across the border. "We respect every language and every citizen. But degrading Bangla and insulting Bengalis will not be tolerated," she declared, her voice resonant with resolve. Accompanied by party colleagues including Abhishek Banerjee and members of the state cabinet, Banerjee traversed the protest route flanked by supporters, chanting slogans that underscored pride in regional identity. The event drew significant public engagement, highlighting the emotion surrounding linguistic dignity in the current political climate. The chief minister questioned the logic underlying the targeting of her community. "If speaking my language makes me suspect, what country am I living in?" she asked. "These are citizens with valid documents, here to earn an honest living. To label them illegal based on language is unacceptable." She further described these actions as an ideological strategy: "This is not development politics, it's politics of hatred. They are weaponizing language." Earlier in the month, Banerjee had raised similar alarms in the state



assembly, accusing central and BJP-ruled states of systematically exploiting language as a proxy to render Bengalis stateless and block central funding to her government. She had claimed that rights of internal migrants were under threat and that Bengali was being stripped of its legitimacy across India. The political backdrop is intensifying as the BJP presses ahead with a narrative of national integration while critics warn of cultural homogenisation. The imposition of the National Register of Citizens in Assam and other BJP-led measures have prompted concerns about internal profiling escalating along linguistic lines, prompting waves of regional resistance. In her Kolkata speech, Banerjee cautioned, "If the insult does not stop, we will have more to say on this land and its honour." Reflecting on past assurances, she added that she would continue raising Bengal's cause, both inside and outside the state. Her remarks signalled readiness to escalate both legal and political action, dovetailing with planned protests in Delhi and throughout the state. Political analysts note that this confrontation represents more than regional assertion—it underscores mounting tension over federal autonomy. The use of language as a marker of belonging is emerging as a flashpoint in a deepening battle over national unity versus local identity.

Amid Row Over Contentious Project, Andhra, Telangana Discuss Water Sharing

New Delhi, 16 July: Amid a backdrop of heightened political sensitivities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the Chief Ministers Chandrababu Naidu and Revanth Reddy held a surprisingly cordial and productive meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Chaired by Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil, the discussions, while notably sidestepping the highly contentious Banakacherla project, yielded significant progress on several long-standing water-sharing issues, underscoring a pragmatic approach by both leaders.

Given the domestic political pressures, observers had anticipated a potentially fraught encounter, especially with Naidu pushing forth on Banakacherla, even bringing it up in the meeting with Union home minister Amit Shah. The Telangana chief secretary wrote to the Centre on the eve of the meeting in Delhi that the state is unwilling to discuss the diversion of waters for the Banakacherla project.

The tone of the meeting, however, was remarkably cooperative, suggesting a mutual understanding of the need for stability and resolution on shared resources. A key outcome saw Andhra Pradesh agreeing to Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's proposal for the installation of telemetry systems to monitor water release from various projects. This technical solution is a tangible step towards greater transparency and could depoliticise future water allocations. It was also decided that the Godavari River Management Board will be headquartered in Telangana.

Rahul Gandhi Urges Restoration of Statehood for Jammu & Kashmir, Advocates Special Status for Ladakh Ahead of Monsoon Session



New Delhi, 16 July: Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, along with Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, has penned a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi pressing for the swift restoration of Jammu & Kashmir's full statehood and simultaneous inclusion of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The leaders described the demand for statehood as "legitimate and grounded in their constitutional and democratic rights," pointing out the unprecedented nature of downgrading a full-fledged state to a Union Territory in independent India .. They emphasised that public assurances, both in Parliament and before the Supreme Court, had promised statehood restoration "at the earliest and as soon as possible". Their letter also urged the government to table a bill during the session that formally extends Sixth Schedule protections to Ladakh. Fronted as a gesture to safeguard tribal rights, land, identity, and regional aspirations, this appeal mirrors demands raised by local activists, including Sonam Wangchuk . They underscored historical assurances by Prime Minister Modi: during a Bhubaneswar interview on May 19, 2024, and again at a rally in Srinagar on September 19, 2024, he reportedly reaffirmed the pledge to restore Jammu & Kashmir's statehood . The push carries broader political resonance. The restoration of statehood has been a rallying point for regional parties, including the National Conference, which tabled a resolution demanding full statehood after winning the first assembly elections in the Union Territory.Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has even offered to dissolve the assembly to expedite the cause, describing the downgrading to Union Territory as an act of disenfranchisement by "unelected nominees of New Delhi" . The Supreme Court's December 2023 verdict upheld the abrogation of Article 370 but directed the Centre to restore statehood "as soon as possible"—a timeline that opposition figures now argue is being ignored . Political experts say that with Parliament reconvening next week, focus will be keenly placed on whether the ruling government will honour its constitutional and judicial commitments, despite signals from administration sources that no such bill is planned for this session . Analysing the long-term implications, observers note that restoring statehood for Jammu & Kashmir could set a precedent for future reorganisation of Indian federalism, but also raise questions about regional stability amid ongoing security and governance challenges. Similarly, granting Sixth Schedule protections to Ladakh would mark an acknowledgement of its unique ethnocultural composition—a demographic distinction that has been overshadowed since the 2019 bifurcation . This timely letter from the Congress leadership signals intent to dominate the legislative agenda and position their party as staunch defenders of federal and regional autonomy. The decision to include Ladakh's demand alongside that of Jammu & Kashmir demonstrates growing alignment between elected leaders and grassroots movements in northern India's troubled regions.

Ragi Millet Idli To Grilled Fish: Parliament Gets New Health Menu For MPs

New Delhi, 16 July: From ragi millet idli and jowar upma to moong dal chilla and grilled fish with vegetables, Parliament's new 'Health Menu' plans to serve up a plateful of nutrition for lawmakers, officials and visitors to the temple of democracy.

Designed at the instance of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to support wellness without sacrificing flavour, the revamped culinary offerings aim to nourish parliamentarians and officials as they navigate long hours of debate and decision-making during Parliament's sessions.

The Parliament canteen has rolled out this special menu that blends tradition with nutrition to promote healthier lifestyles in the corridors of power.

Along with delicious curries and elaborate 'thalis', also on offer are millet-based meals, fibre-rich salads and protein-packed soups, part of a broader effort to support a healthy diet.

Each dish has been carefully crafted to be low in carbohydrates, sodium, and calories while remaining high in essential nutrients. Besides, the Health Menu has the number of calories mentioned against the names of the dishes.

"Each dish is carefully curated to meet the highest nutritional standards - low in carbohydrates, low in sodium and low in calories, while being high in fibre and rich in protein," the menu stated.

Millets, thrust into the national spotlight during the UN-declared International Year of Millets in 2023, take the centrestage in the menu.

Shockingly Low Recruitment: Only 22 Lakh Appointed in 11 Years Despite 22 Crore Applications

New Delhi, 16 July: A startling revelation has come to light in Parliament: over an eleven-year period, more than 22 crore aspirants applied for permanent central government positions, yet scarcely 22 lakh appointments were made. This startling gap underscores systemic bottlenecks in hiring for one of the world's largest bureaucracies. Data released in Lok Sabha by the Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions traced central recruitment between 2011–12 and 2021–22. During this period—the report shows—applications flooded in year after year, but only a fraction received recommendations. In the fiscal span 2014–15 to 2021–22, the government recorded 22.05 crore applications, with just 7.22 lakh recruitments approved. The proportion of selections ranged from a dismal 0.07 percent to a peak of 0.8 percent in 2019–20 . Year-by-year, the numbers are revealing. The financial year 2014–15 saw 2.32 crore applications with 1.30 lakh hires. The following year recorded 2.95 crore hopefuls and 1.11 lakh appointees, then 2.28 crore and 1.01 lakh in 2016–17. Dramatic drops followed: 3.94 crore with just 76,147 in 2017–18, 5.09 crore with 38,100 hires in 2018–19, before a peak of 1.47 lakh appointments out of 1.78 crore applicants in the election-year 2019–20. Subsequent years showed modest recoveries—78,555 appointments for 1.80 crore in 2020–21, then a lapse to 38,850 placements from 1.86 crore applications in 2021–22. Overall, only about 0.33 percent of aspirants secured a



role across this period. That single election year (2019–20) produced over one-fifth of all recruitments, highlighting inconsistencies in hiring intensity . At the same time, vacancies persist in the government apparatus. A separate Finance Ministry report noted roughly 24 percent of civilian posts lay vacant by March 2023, including over 33 percent in Group C classifications. Railways, Defence and other strategic departments struggle under manpower shortfalls exceeding 20 percent.Sanctioned staff numbers exceed 40 lakh, with almost 10 lakh seats unfilled in the central government machinery . Behind these statistics lies frustration for millions of job seekers. Cases of delayed recruitment, exams taking years to process, or getting cancelled midstream—such as in agricultural or technical stream exams—have prompted aspirant fatigue. The government maintains that employment generation remains a policy imperative. It cites flagship schemes: Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) programmes aimed at catalysing manufacturing jobs, the Mudra Yojana for self-employment, street-vendor support initiatives, and the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana, which has reportedly yielded almost 60 lakh beneficiaries as of mid-2022 .However, these efforts often focus beyond central hiring, leaving the government service recruitment crisis unresolved. Recruitment lags while vacancies persist, leading many ministries to outsource tasks to contractual staff. These provisions, though filling administrative gaps, escape official statistics and leave public delivery diluted—raising questions over institutional efficacy .. Economic analysis points to long-standing structural trends.

'An Attack on Bengali Heritage': Abhishek Banerjee Slams Demolition of Satyajit Ray's Ancestral Home in Bangladesh

Kolkata, 16 July: Trinamool Congress leader and MP Abhishek Banerjee has strongly condemned the reported demolition of a portion of legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray's ancestral home in Bangladesh, calling it a direct assault on the cultural and emotional heritage of Bengal. In a sharp reaction, he urged the Indian government to raise the issue diplomatically with Dhaka, emphasizing the importance of preserving the legacy of a figure who transcends borders and represents the cultural soul of both nations.The ancestral property, located in Masua village in Bangladesh's Kishoreganj district, is believed to have been the home of Ray's forefathers before the family migrated to Kolkata. News that part of the house was recently torn down — reportedly due to local land disputes or redevelopment — has triggered outrage among cultural circles and political quarters in West Bengal.

Reacting to the news, Abhishek Banerjee stated, "This is not merely about a structure. It is about the rich legacy of one of Bengal's, and indeed the world's, greatest storytellers. The demolition of Satyajit Ray's ancestral home is an insult to our shared cultural heritage and a deep emotional blow to every Bengali who values history, art, and identity."He went on to urge the Ministry of External Affairs to immediately open dialogue with the



Bangladesh government and demand steps for preservation of what remains of the property. "There should be coordination between both nations to declare this site a heritage monument. Such a rich legacy must not be allowed to vanish due to apathy or negligence," he said.

Satyajit Ray, one of the most celebrated auteurs in world cinema, is revered not only in India but globally for his contributions to film, literature, and art. From Pather Panchali to Charulata, his work captured the essence of Bengali life and earned him an honorary Academy Award, among countless other accolades. The demolition of his ancestral roots in Bangladesh is thus being viewed as more than a local issue — it's a cultural loss that resonates across generations and geographies.The incident has also reignited a broader discussion about the importance of cross-border cultural heritage. With many historic Bengali figures — from Rabindranath Tagore to Kazi Nazrul Islam — having roots on both sides of the India-Bangladesh border, the preservation of ancestral homes and cultural sites is seen as a crucial step toward nurturing shared history and identity.

Several cultural organizations and intellectuals in Kolkata have expressed their anguish and called for joint Indo-Bangladesh efforts to protect such landmarks. "This is a moment of collective shame," said a senior member of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad. "Ray belongs to the world, but first and foremost, he is a son of Bengal. His ancestral home should have been protected, not pulled down."

Meanwhile, the Ray family and members of the film community have expressed concern and called for urgent measures to prevent any further damage. Some have suggested that the site, if not completely lost, could still be developed into a heritage museum or memorial, in collaboration with the West Bengal and Bangladesh governments. This is not the first time such incidents have raised alarm. In the past, heritage structures across Bangladesh and West Bengal have faced threats due to urban development, neglect, and lack of official recognition.

Expelled for Speaking Bengali? Calcutta High Court Seeks Clarification from Centre Over Alleged Language Discrimination

Kolkata, 16 July: The Calcutta High Court has sought a formal response from the Central government following serious allegations that individuals are being harassed — and in some cases removed — from their workplaces or institutions for speaking in Bengali. The court's intervention comes in the wake of a public interest litigation (PIL) filed recently, which claims that linguistic discrimination is being practiced in certain government-affiliated and private sectors, particularly in non-Bengali majority areas or Central undertakings operating in West Bengal.

The petitioner, a rights activist, submitted before the court that several employees and workers in railway, defence, and central government establishments have allegedly faced threats, warnings, or even expulsion for using their mother tongue — Bengali — during conversations or communication. The PIL argues that this constitutes not only a violation of fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution but also an affront to the linguistic and cultural identity of the people of West Bengal.

Taking the matter seriously, the Calcutta High Court bench directed the Centre to file a detailed affidavit responding to the allegations. The court has also asked for clarity on whether there exists any formal or informal policy discouraging or penalising the use of Bengali — or any regional language — in Central institutions within the state.

"Bengali is one of the 22 official languages recognized in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution," observed the bench during the hearing. "It is also the official language of this state. No Indian citizen should face discrimination or punitive action for speaking their mother tongue, especially within their own region."

The court's remarks reflect growing concerns over what many perceive as a trend of linguistic marginalization in federal institutions. Several civil society groups have come forward in support of the petition, stating that employees are often implicitly encouraged to speak only in Hindi or English, and that speaking Bengali — even during informal exchanges — is frowned upon or discouraged in some sectors.

While no specific agency



or department has been officially named in the court's directive, anecdotal reports submitted in the PIL include examples from defence cantonments, railway stations, and nationalised banks where individuals were reportedly rebuked or faced administrative pressure for speaking Bengali with colleagues or clients.

In response to the petition, the Union government's legal representatives requested time to gather information and file an appropriate response. The court granted a few weeks' time for the same but underlined that such matters must be handled with constitutional sensitivity and due urgency.

The case has stirred widespread discussion across West Bengal, with political leaders and language rights activists voicing sharp criticism. Leaders from multiple parties, including the Trinamool Congress, have denounced any attempt to suppress the Bengali language in its home state, calling it both unconstitutional and culturally offensive.

Abhishek Banerjee, senior TMC leader and Member of Parliament, tweeted shortly after the court's order: "It is shocking that in the land of Rabindranath and Netaji, one has to fight to speak Bengali. If true, this is an insult to our heritage and won't be tolerated."

Academicians and linguists have also weighed in on the issue. According to Dr. Mahuya Ghosh, a language policy expert at Jadavpur University, such cases reflect a growing tension between India's linguistic diversity and the administrative push for homogeneity in official communication. "The Constitution clearly provides for multilingualism. If someone is being penalised for speaking Bengali in Bengal, it sets a dangerous precedent," she said.

Vikram Solar Named 'Top Performer' Yet Again; Earns Global Recognition for the Eighth Time

Kolkata, 16 July: Vikram Solar, one of India's leading solar energy solutions providers, has once again earned international acclaim by being named a 'Top Performer' for the eighth time — reaffirming its position as a consistent global leader in solar photovoltaic (PV) manufacturing and innovation.

The recognition comes from the prestigious PVEL (PV Evolution Labs) annual Product Qualification Program (PQP), which is widely regarded as one of the most rigorous and trusted testing benchmarks in the global solar industry. Each year, the PVEL PQP evaluates solar module reliability and performance through a series of long-term stress tests, designed to simulate real-world operating conditions. Only the most robust and high-quality modules are awarded the coveted 'Top Performer' status.

For Vikram Solar, this repeated recognition marks a moment of pride, reinforcing the company's long-standing commitment to quality, technological advancement, and sustainability. This year's distinction means that Vikram Solar has now featured as a 'Top Performer' in PVEL's list eight times — a rare achievement that places it among the most dependable and consistent solar manufacturers worldwide.

"This recognition is not just a badge of honour but a reflection of our unwavering dedication to research, manufacturing excellence, and customer satisfaction," said a senior spokesperson from Vikram Solar. "We are proud to represent Indian innovation on the global stage and will continue to push the boundaries in renewable energy technology."

Industry observers note that Vikram Solar's continued success in such internationally competitive evaluations sends a strong message about India's growing capabilities in the green energy sector. The solar modules manufactured by the company undergo some of the toughest reliability tests — including thermal cycling, damp heat exposure, dynamic mechanical load, and potential-induced degradation — all of which mirror the environmental stresses faced during actual deployment of solar panels across diverse geographies.

Vikram Solar's latest modules, including their high-efficiency monocrystalline PERC (Passivated Emitter and Rear Cell) products, reportedly performed exceptionally well in PVEL's testing parameters, showcasing minimal degradation and robust durability. These results reassure clients and project developers worldwide that the products can sustain long-term energy yields even in harsh environments.

In recent years, Vikram Solar has expanded its global footprint, supplying solar solutions to more than 30 countries and executing large-scale solar projects across Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. The company's manufacturing base in India and its continued investment in cutting-edge research and development have contributed significantly to its ability to maintain high quality at scale.The timing of this recognition is also critical, as the global energy transition intensifies in the face of climate change and countries race to meet their net-zero targets. Reliable and high-performing solar technologies are vital to this transformation, and companies like Vikram Solar are playing a central role in making solar adoption more efficient and bankable.

Back at home, the recognition adds to India's growing pride in its clean energy capabilities. The country has made major strides in renewable energy deployment, with solar power at the forefront. Vikram Solar's repeated international accolades strengthen India's ambition to become a manufacturing hub for renewable technologies under its "Make in India" initiative.

While competition in the global solar industry remains fierce, this eighth 'Top Performer' award cements Vikram Solar's place as not just a successful Indian manufacturer, but a consistent global innovator. For customers, investors, and policymakers, it is a strong endorsement of trust, quality, and long-term value. Vikram Solar's achievement is a reminder that consistency, innovation, and performance excellence are the pillars upon which lasting impact is built — not just in energy, but in the future we all share.

Iran's Khamenei Calls Israel "Dog On A Leash" Of US, Warns Of "Bigger Blows"

Tehran, 16 July: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that it is ready to respond to any renewed military attack, and that it could deliver an even bigger blow to its adversaries, than what it gave during the 12-day war with Israel.

"The fact that our nation is ready to face the power of the United States and its dog on a leash, the Zionist regime (Israel), is very praiseworthy," Khamenei said.Last month, the United States had launched strikes on Iran's nuclear and military facilities, although Iran has said that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.In response, Iran had struck a US base in Qatar. "The base attacked by Iran was an extremely sensitive American regional base and an even bigger blow could be inflicted on the US and others", Khamenei said.

Currently, Iran is under pressure to agree to a nuclear deal with the US, as Washington and three European powers have set the deadline for the deal to be at the end of August. If there is no progress till then, France's foreign minister said that a "snapback" mechanism will automatically impose all international sanctions that were lifted under the 2015 Iran deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Despite that, Iran's parliament shared a statement on Wednesday saying that Tehran will not resume nuclear talks with the US unless preconditions are not met, in a statement published by the Iranian Students' News Agency."In both the diplomatic and military fields, whenever we enter the stage, we do so with our hands full and not from a position of weakness," Khamenei said, adding that diplomats should heed "guidelines" and continue their work.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Wednesday that Israel's attacks during last month's 12-day war were intended to weaken the Islamic Republic's system and spark unrest to topple it.

"The calculation and plan of the aggressors was to weaken the system by targeting certain figures and sensitive centres in Iran," said Khamenei in a statement published on his website. He said the move was meant to stir "unrest and bring people into the streets to overthrow the system".

Israel launched an unprecedented bombing campaign against Iran on June 13, killing top military commanders and nuclear scientists. Iranian authorities said more than 1,000 people were killed in Iran.

"Trade with Russia Will Have Consequences": NATO Issues Stern Warning to India Amid Growing Tensions

New Delhi, 16 July: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has issued a stern warning to India, cautioning that continued trade and strategic engagement with Russia may lead to "serious consequences." The message comes at a time when Western alliances remain locked in economic and geopolitical confrontation with Moscow over the ongoing war in Ukraine.

According to reports, senior NATO officials have expressed growing discomfort over India's deepening trade ties with Russia, particularly in the energy and defence sectors. The warning, described by analysts as "pointed and unusually sharp," underscores NATO's increasing impatience with nations that continue to maintain neutral or non-aligned stances while the West imposes strict sanctions on Moscow.

The core of NATO's concern lies in the significant surge in India-Russia bilateral trade over the past two years. Since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war, India has emerged as one of the largest importers of discounted Russian crude oil — purchases that have not only helped stabilize India's energy security but also, according to Western critics, aided Russia in maintaining financial flows amid crippling international sanctions.

India, however, has consistently defended its position, arguing that its trade decisions are guided by national interest, energy affordability, and strategic autonomy. Senior Indian officials, including External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, have repeatedly emphasized that India does not take orders from global power blocs and that its historical and defence relations with Russia predate the current conflict.

Nonetheless, NATO's latest tone indicates rising frustration. A senior NATO representative was quoted in European media saying, "Nations that claim neutrality but significantly fund Russia's war machine through trade must reconsider their positions. Continued cooperation with Russia, especially in critical sectors, cannot come without consequences."The statement has been interpreted by international observers as a warning shot — possibly foreshadowing economic or diplomatic measures should India deepen its reliance on Russian imports or ignore Western sanctions frameworks in the future.

In New Delhi, the remarks have not gone unnoticed. Indian foreign policy analysts have condemned NATO's tone as coercive and counterproductive. "India is not a vassal state. We have consistently called for peace and diplomatic resolution in Ukraine, while safeguarding our own interests," said a retired ambassador who has served in Moscow. "Attempting to bully India into compliance will only push it further towards strategic independence."

The timing of NATO's message is also notable. It comes just weeks after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Moscow for a high-level bilateral summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin. During the visit, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to defence cooperation, energy trade, and multipolar global governance — much to the irritation of Western policymakers who hoped India would distance itself from Moscow.

Western nations, particularly the United States, have tried a delicate balancing act with India — encouraging it to reduce its Russian dependence while simultaneously courting it as a counterweight to China. India's membership in the Quad (alongside the US, Japan, and Australia) reflects that growing strategic alignment. But India's refusal to toe the Western line on Ukraine remains a sticking point.Experts warn that direct pressure from NATO could strain this evolving partnership. "India sees itself as a civilizational power with sovereign choices," said a European strategic affairs analyst. "It will not respond well to threats — subtle or overt."

As of now, the Indian government has not issued an official response to NATO's warning, but sources suggest that quiet backchannel diplomacy is underway to diffuse tensions. Indian officials are expected to reiterate their position on neutrality and peaceful resolution at upcoming international forums, including the G20 and UN General Assembly sessions.



Today's Horoscope

ARIES: Ganesha anticipates some exciting times for you. You are likely to meet some people today who will prove to be assets in the future. You apply yourself to perfection in work.

TAURUS: It will be an optimistic day with its share of day dreaming, says Ganesha. You will be submissive at work, giving in or blindly following the advice of your peers.

GEMINI: You are likely to be concerned about your finances, jointly held assets and property, says Ganesha. Also, you will be a little edgy today.

CANCER: There is nothing extraordinary about today. You will be busy doing the routine work and will find contentment in the mundane. The absence of thrill.

LEO : The complete family man that you are, it is your near and dear ones who have always laid the foundation of your success. So why should today be any different.

VIRGO: Mundane, everyday routine will get on your nerves today, warns Ganesha. Don't make a mountain out of a mole hill. All said and done, you won't let anything affect your zest for work.

LIBRA: Put up that 'Do Not Disturb' sign on the door today. That's because Ganesha feels the tingle in your bones to want to stick to your preferred subject matter.

SCORPIO: Ganesha predicts you will possibly plan to launch a new product today. But put off the launch if you want to supersede certain unscrupulous elements.

SAGITTARIUS: Zoom in on complicated problems and solve them with style, says Ganesha. Don't fret over problems; instead concentrate on ways to solve them.

CAPRICORN: Today, you will get back to playing the power game, using both fair and unfair means to achieve your goals, says Ganesha. Intellectual growth will be phenomenal.

AQUARIUS: You have managed to carve a niche for yourself. Today, you may see the tangible benefits of all your past hard work. But business rivals may poke and pinch.

PIECES: An auspicious time for starting new projects, today will see you make substantial investments in your future. Your family is the foundation of your success.

"No Tolerance for Terrorism": Jaishankar Slams Pakistan in Presence of China at SCO Summit

New Delhi, 16 July: In a powerful and uncompromising message delivered at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) foreign ministers' meeting, India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar openly criticized Pakistan for its continued support of cross-border terrorism. Speaking firmly and without ambiguity — even in the presence of Chinese and Pakistani representatives — Jaishankar declared that terrorism in any form cannot be justified or tolerated, and nations that shelter or promote it must be held accountable.

The minister's statement, delivered at the multilateral platform where both China and Pakistan are key members, signaled India's hardened diplomatic posture when it comes to national security and sovereignty. Without naming Pakistan directly in every sentence, Jaishankar's message was clear and deliberate. "The menace of terrorism continues to threaten humanity. It is essential that the SCO does not hesitate to call out and combat terrorism, regardless of where it originates or who supports it," he said during his address.

The SCO summit, which took place in a neutral host country, brought together foreign ministers from member nations including Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and several Central Asian countries. As the group seeks to deepen regional cooperation on security, connectivity, and economic issues, India used the opportunity to drive home its key concerns — primarily the need for collective action against terrorism and the necessity of respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Jaishankar's remarks took on additional weight because they were delivered with Pakistan's foreign minister in attendance, and with China, a close strategic partner of Islamabad, seated at the same table. This bold diplomatic stand sent a strong message not just to the region, but to the global community watching closely.

"Countries that sponsor terrorism must be isolated," Jaishankar



said, underscoring India's long-standing concerns over Pakistan's support for terrorist groups that operate across the border into Indian territory, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir. "There can be no justification for terrorism, and double standards must end."

Observers noted that the statement also indirectly addressed China, which has often shielded Pakistan in international forums, including blocking or delaying the listing of known terrorists at the United Nations Security Council. While India and China continue to maintain strained ties following the Galwan Valley clash and the broader border standoff in Ladakh, both countries remain part of the SCO framework, which stresses regional cooperation and mutual respect.

Despite those tensions, Jaishankar maintained a firm yet diplomatic tone, stressing the need for all SCO members to uphold the basic principles of international conduct. He urged the organization to act decisively against terrorism and warned against using connectivity or development initiatives as cover for strategic expansion — a likely reference to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), parts of which run through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, which India strongly opposes.

In his speech, Jaishankar also reiterated India's support for enhancing regional connectivity, economic resilience, and cooperation in areas like health, education, and energy. However, he was quick to add that such efforts must not violate the sovereignty of member states — reinforcing India's objections to Chinese projects in contested regions.

The minister's speech received attention both for its content and the context. In a forum designed to promote regional unity, India did not hesitate to assert its concerns, choosing not to dilute its message in the name of diplomatic decorum.

Kiara Becomes a Mother to a Baby Girl: Siddharth Shares Health Update for Both Mother and Child

Mumbai, 16 July: Bollywood's beloved couple, Kiara Advani and Sidharth Malhotra, have stepped into a new chapter of their lives as they welcomed their first child — a baby girl. The news has brought immense joy not only to the families of the couple but also to their countless fans across the country. Ever since the news broke, social media platforms have been buzzing with congratulatory messages for the duo, who tied the knot in a dreamy ceremony in February 2023. The couple, who have kept much of their personal life away from the limelight, surprised their fans with the announcement of their baby's arrival. According to sources close to the family, Kiara delivered a healthy baby girl in a private hospital in Mumbai. Both mother and daughter are reportedly doing well. Actor Sidharth Malhotra, beaming with happiness, shared a brief update regarding Kiara and their newborn. Speaking to the media outside the hospital, Sidharth said, "We are overwhelmed with joy and gratitude. Kiara is doing well, and our baby girl is healthy. We thank everyone for their love and blessings." His face reflected the excitement and emotion of becoming a father for the first time. Though the couple has chosen to maintain privacy during this special time, it is understood that both families are currently with them, providing support and care. Close friends and relatives are said to have already visited the hospital to bless the newborn and spend time with



the new parents. The journey to parenthood has been a closely guarded one for Kiara and Sidharth. Despite occasional media speculations and fan curiosity, the two managed to keep news of the pregnancy under wraps for the most part. It was only in the last couple of months that a visible change in Kiara's public appearances sparked rumors, but the couple neither confirmed nor denied the news. Now, with the baby's arrival, fans are eager to know what name the couple will choose and whether they'll share pictures of their little one. As of now, no official photos have been released, but well-wishers are hopeful that the couple will introduce their daughter to the world in their own time. Kiara, known for her calm elegance and grace, has always maintained a poised presence in the public eye. Over the years, she has built a reputation not only as a talented actress but also as a grounded individual. Sidharth, too, has earned praise for his composed nature and quiet charm. Together, the two have formed one of Bollywood's most adored power couples, their relationship symbolizing modern love, mutual respect, and companionship. Professionally, both Kiara and Sidharth had been busy in the past year with film commitments, brand endorsements, and appearances. But as the due date approached, Kiara reportedly stepped back from her work commitments to focus on her health and family, while Sidharth, too, kept his schedule flexible to be by her side during this crucial time. Their fans, who have followed their journey from co-stars in the hit film Shershaah to life partners and now parents, are celebrating this new milestone with heartfelt messages and love. Social media is flooded with hashtags like #WelcomeBabyMalhotra and #KiaraSidharthBaby, trending across platforms since the news came out. Celebrities from the film industry have also joined in the celebration. From veteran actors to younger stars, many have extended their congratulations to the couple. Messages have poured in from friends and colleagues such as Karan Johar, Alia Bhatt, Varun Dhawan, and others, all expressing their joy at the arrival of the little angel. While the couple is expected to take a short break from work to focus on parenthood, sources suggest that they are already planning a small and intimate celebration at home once Kiara and the baby are discharged from the hospital.



Bollywood actor and brand ambassador of Indian Supercross Racing League (ISRL) season 2 Salman Khan unveils the official jersey during an event, in Mumbai, Wednesday.

"You Are The One for Me" Vicky Kaushal Shares Romantic Birthday Wish for Katrina Kaif with a Kiss



Mumbai, 16 July: Bollywood's beloved couple Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif continue to melt hearts with their love story, and this time, the occasion was Katrina's birthday. As the actress celebrated her special day, Vicky took to social media to share a heartfelt message that left fans swooning. Along with a romantic photograph of the two, Vicky wrote a simple yet deeply affectionate message: "Tumhi to ho meri zindagi mein sab kuch... Happy Birthday my love!" — roughly translating to "You are everything in my life." In the photo that accompanied the post, Vicky is seen planting a soft kiss on Katrina's cheek, while she smiles with her eyes closed, soaking in the moment. The picture radiates warmth, intimacy, and the kind of quiet joy that defines their relationship. The post went viral within minutes, with fans, celebrities, and well-wishers flooding the comment section with birthday wishes and admiration for the couple's genuine bond.

This public display of love from Vicky Kaushal, who is otherwise known for being quite private about his personal life, was a treat for fans who adore the couple's chemistry. The message and gesture were subtle yet powerful — not flashy or overdone, but tender, honest, and full of emotion. It reminded everyone yet again why Vicky and Katrina are one of the most cherished couples in the industry today. Katrina Kaif, who turned a year older on July 16, is currently enjoying a quiet birthday getaway with Vicky. Though the exact location has not been disclosed, sources suggest the couple has chosen a serene, tropical destination to celebrate. Katrina, always graceful and elegant, hasn't shared much about the trip herself, but Vicky's post gave fans a peek into the peaceful, love-filled atmosphere surrounding her birthday this year. The couple, who tied the knot in a private but lavish ceremony in December 2021, have often spoken about their relationship with mutual respect and admiration. While both maintain a relatively low profile when it comes to their personal life, moments like these — filled with unfiltered affection — offer glimpses into the depth of their bond. Vicky's message to Katrina, calling her "the one" and expressing that she means everything to him, resonated with fans deeply. In a world of fleeting celebrity romances, the sincerity in their relationship stands out.

Both Vicky and Katrina have, over time, created a beautiful balance between stardom and personal happiness, supporting each other's careers while nurturing their home life away from the limelight. Several celebrities also reacted to the post, with heart emojis and birthday wishes pouring in from friends across the industry. It was not just a celebration of Katrina's birthday, but also a reminder of the kind of love that many aspire to — one built on quiet support, mutual admiration, and shared joy. Professionally, both stars are busy with their upcoming projects. Katrina is set to appear in a few high-profile releases in the coming months, while Vicky continues to win hearts with his performances in both mainstream and content-driven cinema. But despite their hectic schedules, the two never fail to make time for each other — something their fans deeply appreciate.

This birthday, much like their wedding, seems to reflect the couple's personality: intimate, meaningful, and focused on the love they share. There was no grand party or red-carpet appearance, no extravagant declarations — just a moment between two people, captured with affection and shared with the world. Vicky's gesture also highlighted a modern masculinity that celebrates emotion and tenderness — something increasingly embraced in today's society. His willingness to express love openly, while still maintaining dignity and privacy, sets a strong example in an industry often dominated by bravado and image-building. As the photo of the birthday kiss continues to make rounds online, it has become more than just a celebrity moment — it's a symbol of lasting love in the glittering world of showbiz. Fans are already calling it one of the most romantic birthday wishes of the year. In the end, it wasn't about elaborate gifts or fancy celebrations. It was about four words — "Tumhi to ho…" — and one kiss that said it all. Vicky Kaushal's heartfelt birthday wish reminded everyone that sometimes, the simplest expressions of love are the most powerful. And in that quiet, affectionate frame, we saw not just a movie star couple, but two people truly in love.

Archana Puran Singh Becomes Victim of Financial Fraud During Dubai Vacation: Actress Shares Her Experience

Mumbai, 16 July: Popular actress Archana Puran Singh recently found herself in a distressing situation during what was supposed to be a relaxing vacation in Dubai. While enjoying her trip abroad, the actress became the unsuspecting victim of a financial scam — an experience she later shared with her fans and followers, warning them to remain cautious while travelling.

Known for her vibrant personality and comedic timing on television shows like The Kapil Sharma Show, Archana had taken a break from her hectic schedule to unwind in Dubai, a destination she often visits and holds dear. However, things took an unexpected turn when she noticed irregularities in her financial transactions.

According to Archana, the incident began subtly, without any immediate sign of wrongdoing. She had used her card for a few regular purchases, and everything seemed normal until she checked her account later that evening. To her shock, she noticed that a significant sum of money had been deducted in unauthorized transactions. The actress was quick to react and immediately contacted her bank, who then froze the card to prevent further misuse.

Speaking about the incident, Archana revealed that the fraud seemed to have occurred through a sophisticated form of digital skimming, possibly at a payment terminal where her card details were cloned without her knowledge. She emphasized how seamless and professional the scam was — there were no red flags during the actual payment process, making the fraud even more concerning.

The actress expressed her frustration and disbelief, stating, "I've travelled to Dubai so many times and never faced any issues. This time, it just caught me off guard. I used my card at a reputable place, and yet my details were compromised. I want to tell everyone — please be extremely careful while using your cards, even in places that seem completely secure."

Archana also shared how the experience shook her trust in digital transactions abroad. She pointed out that while cashless payment systems are convenient, they also come with risks that users may not always be prepared for, especially while travelling. Despite being a seasoned traveller, she admitted that she had never expected such a thing to happen to her.



After reporting the incident to both her bank in India and local authorities in Dubai, Archana was assured that the matter was under investigation. Fortunately, due to her quick response and the bank's prompt action, she was able to prevent additional losses and recover part of the stolen amount. However, the emotional toll and stress caused by the event remained.

Following the incident, Archana took to social media to raise awareness about such scams. Her message was clear — "No one is immune to financial fraud. Always keep an eye on your transaction alerts, never ignore small deductions, and wherever possible, use cards that offer better fraud protection and instant control."

Her honesty and openness in sharing this personal experience struck a chord with many of her fans and followers. The comment sections under her post were flooded with messages of support and similar stories, showing just how common such scams have become, even in supposedly secure international destinations.

Travel experts have also weighed in following Archana's revelations, advising tourists to use virtual cards, avoid handing over physical cards to attendants, and regularly check their mobile banking apps for any unusual activity. They also recommend using digital wallets or prepaid forex cards for international travel, which limit the exposure of one's primary bank accounts.

Archana, who remained composed throughout the ordeal, said that while the experience was deeply unsettling, it would not deter her from continuing to explore the world. However, she now plans to take additional precautions and has even begun using advanced security features like card locks and temporary deactivation when not in use.

As news of the fraud made its way to media outlets, Archana was praised for her transparency and for turning a negative experience into a learning opportunity for others. Her willingness to speak up has potentially saved others from falling into similar traps, especially as digital scams continue to evolve in scale and sophistication.

The incident is a stark reminder that even well-known personalities, who are often assumed to have extra layers of protection, can fall victim to cybercrime. As the world becomes more connected and reliant on technology, stories like Archana's underscore the importance of staying vigilant, informed, and proactive about financial security.

For now, Archana is back home in India and has resumed her work commitments. She maintains a positive attitude, calling the incident "a wake-up call" rather than a disaster. With her characteristic sense of humour intact, she joked in an interview, "Next time I go shopping abroad, I might just carry a stack of cash like in the old days — or better yet, take my husband along and let him pay!"

Ranbir Kapoor's 'Ramayana' Becomes India's Most Expensive Film: Budget Soars to 4000 Crore

Mumbai, 16 July: The much-anticipated epic 'Ramayana', starring Ranbir Kapoor as Lord Ram, is set to become the most expensive film ever made in the country. While initial reports had pegged the budget at around ₹1600 crore, new updates suggest that the actual production cost has now skyrocketed to a staggering ₹4000 crore — a figure that places the project in the league of the most lavish cinematic productions globally.This ambitious reimagining of the Indian epic is being helmed by director Nitesh Tiwari, known for his critically acclaimed work in films like Dangal and Chhichhore. The project has been generating enormous buzz ever since its announcement, with fans and industry insiders alike eagerly following every update. But with the revelation of the colossal budget, the excitement around Ramayana has reached a whole new level.

The film is envisioned as a three-part saga, spanning generations and mythological arcs, with immense attention given to visual grandeur, storytelling depth, and historical authenticity. The producers are reportedly sparing no expense to ensure that Ramayana becomes a cinematic spectacle unlike anything India has ever seen before. High-end VFX, state-of-the-art production design, international technicians, and top-tier cast members are all contributing to the ballooning cost.Ranbir Kapoor, who takes on the monumental role of Lord Ram, has reportedly undergone extensive physical and emotional preparation for the part. Known for his dedication to roles and his versatility, Ranbir's casting has already built huge expectations. Fans are curious to see how the actor, who recently gained acclaim for his performance in Animal, transforms into the virtuous and heroic figure of Ram.

Alongside him, South Indian star Yash — known for his iconic role in the KGF series — is set to portray Ravan, the formidable antagonist of the epic. The contrast between the calm and composed Ram and the intense, powerful Ravan is expected to be a major highlight of the film. Yash's intense screen presence and fan base, especially in the South, is likely to add further momentum to the project.Sai Pallavi, the critically acclaimed actress known for her expressive performances and natural screen charm, is slated to play Sita. Her casting has been welcomed warmly by audiences, as she brings both grace and strength to a role as emotionally and culturally significant as Sita's.

The massive ₹4000 crore budget includes not only production and cast costs, but also a highly detailed plan for global release, dubbing in multiple languages, and an extensive promotional campaign that spans continents. The film's makers are said to be targeting an international audience, hoping to bring Indian mythology to the global mainstream in a way that rivals Hollywood's treatment of Greek or Norse legends.According to sources close to the production, a significant portion of the budget



is being invested in visual effects and world-building. The goal is to create immersive mythological landscapes — from Ayodhya to Lanka — with unprecedented realism and aesthetic richness. Some of the most advanced VFX studios from around the world have been roped in, making this a truly international collaboration.

Despite the sky-high budget, the producers appear confident that the film will deliver not only artistic excellence but also commercial success. With a story that is deeply rooted in Indian culture and spirituality, Ramayana already has an emotional and religious resonance with audiences, giving it a strong foundation for massive appeal.The film is also expected to inspire spin-offs, merchandise, and possibly even a cinematic universe exploring other Indian mythological stories. There are whispers of potential web series, animated adaptations, and games that could extend the reach and legacy of this epic project.

Shooting for the first part of the trilogy has already commenced under tight security, with the team ensuring that no leaks or on-set photos disrupt the aura of mystery and anticipation surrounding the film. The scale of the sets, the use of green screens, and the rigorous schedules of the actors all hint at a production of epic proportions.With Bollywood's recent struggle to deliver big-budget blockbusters that connect across demographics, Ramayana could mark a turning point. It is not just a film, but a cultural moment — a testament to India's storytelling potential and a bold step toward reclaiming mythological narratives through modern cinematic technology.Ramayana could redefine how Indian epics are brought to screen and elevate the country's presence on the global cinematic map. With a ₹4000 crore budget, an A-list cast, and a visionary director at the helm, all eyes are now on Ramayana as it prepares to take audiences on a journey into the heart of one of the most enduring tales of dharma, sacrifice, and divinity.

Movie Tickets Now at Just ₹200 Across All Theatres? A Big Move to Bring Back the Audience

Mumbai, 16 July: In what could be a major turning point for the Indian film industry, reports suggest that a nationwide initiative is in the works to cap movie ticket prices at just ₹200 in theatres across the country. This comes as a response to growing concerns about the ever-increasing cost of watching films on the big screen — a factor that many believe has been driving audiences away from cinemas and toward OTT platforms.

Over the past few years, ticket prices in multiplexes, especially in urban areas, have seen a sharp rise, with some weekend or premium show tickets costing as much as ₹800 to ₹1200. For a family of four, a single movie outing could easily cross ₹3000 after adding food and convenience charges, making it more of a luxury than a regular entertainment option. This rising cost has drawn significant criticism from moviegoers, particularly the middle class, who find it increasingly difficult to afford such expensive leisure.

Now, with theatrical footfalls dwindling and box office performances suffering in spite of high-profile releases, stakeholders in the industry are reportedly coming together to implement a bold move — one that could breathe new life into Indian cinema halls. The idea is simple: make ticket prices affordable and uniform, with a ceiling price of ₹200 for all shows, across all theatres, including multiplex chains and single screens.

If this plan materializes, it could radically change how audiences interact with cinema. A ticket price of ₹200 makes movies more accessible to a larger section of the population, including students, families, and those living in smaller towns. It could also encourage repeat viewing and boost the overall culture of watching films in theatres, something that has taken a hit post-pandemic.

Sources suggest that this initiative may not be permanent across the board but could be implemented for specific time periods, films, or even as part of a broader campaign like "Cinema Lovers' Day" — a concept that has seen huge success in the past. On such days, audiences flock to theatres in massive numbers, lured by flat, low ticket pricing. The positive response from such experiments may have prompted the industry to explore longer-term solutions.

Theatres and production houses have realized that bringing audiences back to cinema halls is not just about star power or big-budget visuals — it's also about accessibility and affordability. With so much high-quality content now available online, viewers are less likely to spend thousands on a single movie unless they feel it truly offers something unique. Affordable pricing, therefore, becomes an important part of the strategy to win back the public.

Industry analysts believe that this ₹200 ticket strategy could actually lead to higher total revenue, even if the individual ticket cost is lower. The logic is simple: more people in the seats means more sales, not just from tickets but also from food, beverages, and merchandise. It also creates a better viewing environment where packed theatres bring back the communal excitement that used to define the moviegoing experience.

Several big production houses and theatre chains are reportedly on board with this move, understanding that the long-term sustainability of cinema depends on re-establishing that direct connection with the audience. Some even argue that the ₹200 cap should become a standard benchmark for all films, barring special exceptions like 3D or IMAX screenings, where technical costs are higher.

The response from the audience has already been overwhelmingly positive. On social media, fans are celebrating the idea, saying it finally brings the joy of cinema back within reach. Many hope this also encourages filmmakers to focus on storytelling and quality, rather than relying solely on star power and marketing hype to draw crowds.

It is yet to be seen whether this ticket pricing plan will be adopted officially and how it will be implemented across regions, given that entertainment taxes and operational costs differ from state to state. However, the buzz around this development is strong, and several insiders believe that it's not a matter of "if" but "when."

Editorial

The Problem with Criminalising All Adolescent Relationships: A Call for Nuanced Understanding

The legal system has found itself increasingly entangled in cases involving adolescent relationships, particularly those where both individuals are teenagers, often close in age and acting with mutual consent. While laws designed to protect minors from sexual exploitation are vital, there is growing concern that the blanket criminalisation of all adolescent relationships — even those grounded in mutual affection and consent — may be doing more harm than good. At the heart of the issue is the delicate balance between safeguarding young people and respecting their evolving capacity to form emotional and romantic connections. In many countries, including India, laws such as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act were introduced with the noblest of intentions — to shield minors from abuse, predation, and coercion. However, the unintended consequence has been the growing number of consensual teenage relationships being treated as criminal offenses. When two adolescents engage in a relationship — often marked by emotional exploration, physical curiosity, and a search for identity — and the law steps in with punitive force, it risks not only criminalising young love but also undermining their dignity and development. The idea that every sexual or romantic interaction between teenagers is inherently exploitative ignores the complex realities of adolescent growth. Teenagers, while still maturing, are not devoid of agency or emotion. To treat them solely as victims or perpetrators strips them of the right to navigate their own emotional lives. Courts themselves have increasingly recognised this conflict. Several judgments have highlighted how consensual relationships between adolescents — especially when the age gap is minimal and both parties are above 16 — should not automatically be treated as predatory. In many such cases, the so-called "offender" is a boy only slightly older than the girl, often her classmate or friend. Yet, families, especially in conservative communities, invoke criminal charges as a means to control or punish relationships they disapprove of, using the legal system to reinforce cultural taboos around love, caste, religion, or honour. This trend becomes particularly troubling when adolescent boys are charged with sexual assault or rape under laws meant to combat actual abuse. Once an FIR is filed, the boy faces arrest, social stigma, academic disruption, and in many cases, prolonged legal battles — even if the girl later admits the relationship was consensual. The law, meant to protect, ends up punishing both young people — one with the weight of criminality, and the other with the erasure of her voice and choice. Moreover, this overreach can damage the credibility of the very laws designed to fight genuine abuse. If legal protections are perceived as tools of social control rather than justice, there is a risk that truly vulnerable victims may be less likely to come forward, fearing disbelief or misapplication of the law. It also places an additional burden on the already overstretched judicial system, diverting attention from actual cases of abuse. What's needed is a more nuanced, rights-based approach — one that distinguishes between exploitative relationships and those that are consensual and age-appropriate. This does not mean turning a blind eye to harmful dynamics or abandoning legal protection for minors. Rather, it means recognising that all adolescent relationships are not the same, and that the law must account for shades of grey rather than enforcing blunt binaries of guilt and innocence. Several legal experts and child rights advocates have proposed introducing a "close-in-age" exemption — often referred to as a "Romeo and Juliet clause" in some jurisdictions — that would decriminalise consensual relationships between teenagers close in age, typically within a 2- to 3-year range. Such provisions already exist in parts of the United States, Canada, and Europe.

They acknowledge that criminal law is not the right tool to handle consensual teenage romance and that these situations should be approached with education, counselling, and dialogue, not handcuffs and prison sentences. Education also plays a crucial role. Comprehensive sexuality education, which remains controversial and under-implemented in many regions, can equip adolescents with the tools to understand consent, boundaries, and healthy relationships. Ignoring this need or replacing it with silence and shame leaves teenagers vulnerable to both manipulation and over-punishment.

One Life, Many Loves

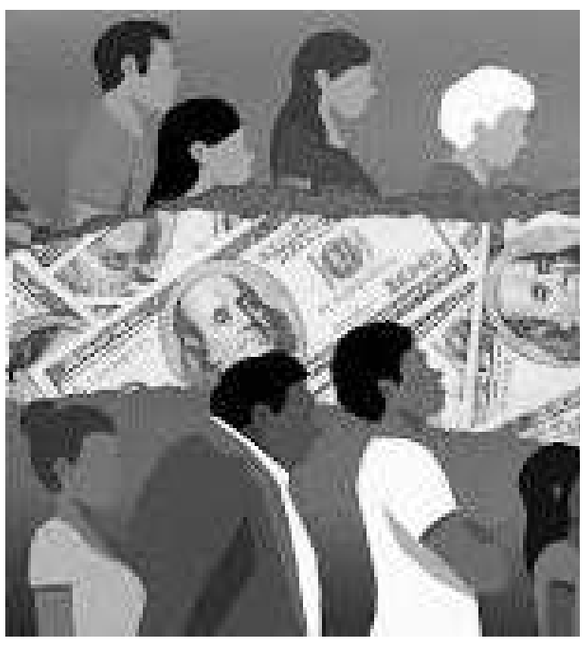
Exploring the Case for Polyamory in Modern India



The idea of polyamory — having consensual romantic or emotional relationships with more than one partner — is still seen as controversial, if not outright taboo. But as India grapples with changing social dynamics, evolving relationship patterns, and a generation increasingly focused on emotional honesty and personal freedom, the conversation around polyamory is beginning to find space, albeit cautiously, in urban discourse. For centuries, Indian society has revolved around the institution of marriage, often viewed as the cornerstone of moral and familial order. While India has witnessed practices like polygamy in ancient times — both in mythology and historical records — the modern Indian relationship ideal is largely monogamous, heterosexual, and marriage-bound. Anything that challenges this structure tends to draw resistance, often wrapped in concerns over tradition, religion, or social stability.Yet, as more young Indians redefine what love, commitment, and companionship mean to them, polyamory is slowly emerging as a reality — not as a rebellion, but as an alternative. In metro cities and digital communities, individuals and couples are beginning to explore and openly discuss non-monogamous relationships built on consent, communication, and emotional transparency. Polyamory is often misunderstood. It is not the same as infidelity or swinging. It is not about casual encounters or secret affairs. At its core, polyamory is about the belief that it is possible to love more than one person at a time — deeply, honestly, and ethically. It challenges the idea that a single partner must fulfill every emotional, romantic, and physical need of another for life. For those who identify as polyamorous, this model offers a chance to form multiple meaningful bonds, with each connection enriching rather than threatening the others. However, the path to acceptance for polyamorous individuals in India is anything but smooth. The legal and social framework is still rigidly monogamous. Marriage laws, inheritance rights, and even housing societies are structured around traditional family units. Public acceptance is rare, and many polyamorous individuals live with the constant pressure to conform or conceal. Even within progressive circles, polyamory is often dismissed as a phase, an excuse for promiscuity, or emotional immaturity.The stigma surrounding non-monogamous relationships is rooted in deeply held beliefs about love and exclusivity. Indian films, literature, and media have long reinforced the idea that true love must be singular, possessive, and lifelong. Any deviation is seen as morally suspect or emotionally unstable. But this notion of love as exclusive and territorial is being re-evaluated by a growing number of people who feel that love need not be scarce or possessive to be real.Critics argue that polyamory undermines the stability of relationships and the sanctity of commitment. But proponents respond that polyamory, when practiced ethically, requires even greater honesty, communication, and emotional maturity than monogamy. Unlike relationships based on deception or repression, polyamorous arrangements demand clear boundaries, regular check-ins, and mutual respect — all of which are essential, but often overlooked, even in traditional marriages. Mental health professionals are also beginning to take note. Therapists and counselors report a growing number of clients seeking help in navigating open or poly relationships. Some view this as a sign of cultural confusion, but others see it as an evolution — a sign that Indians are starting to ask deeper questions about happiness, compatibility, and the meaning of fidelity. Of course, polyamory is not without its complications. Jealousy, insecurity, and miscommunication are very real challenges. But these problems are not unique to polyamorous relationships. They exist just as much in monogamous ones, often hidden beneath the surface due to fear or societal expectations. Polyamory simply brings these issues into the open and forces those involved to confront them head-on.In many ways, the growing visibility of polyamory in India is part of a broader shift in how relationships are being reimagined. Live-in relationships, same-sex partnerships, single parenting, and divorce — all once stigmatized — are now more openly discussed and, to varying degrees, socially acknowledged. Polyamory is the latest addition to this evolving landscape, and like every other social change, it will require time, dialogue, and empathy to find its place.The digital world has played a crucial role in this shift. Online platforms, forums, and support groups have given polyamorous individuals a space to connect, share experiences, and seek advice without fear of immediate judgment. While still niche, these communities are growing — and more importantly, they are becoming bolder in asserting their right to love freely and ethically.The case for polyamory in India is not about dismantling marriage or rejecting monogamy. It is about expanding the possibilities of love and acknowledging that no one model fits all.

It is about allowing adults to define their own emotional boundaries and to choose relationships that resonate with their values, needs, and truths — even if those truths do not align with centuries-old norms. In the end, polyamory is not a threat to love; it is a different expression of it. As Indian society continues to evolve and embrace diversity in all its forms, perhaps it is time to look beyond the binary of "right" and "wrong" and begin to ask a different question: What makes a relationship honest, healthy, and fulfilling — regardless of how many people are in it?
In a world where love is often boxed into rigid definitions, polyamory dares to ask: Can love be more — more expansive, more inclusive, and more free? India may not be ready for all the answers just yet, but the questions are certainly worth asking.

Race and Economies: The Persistent Wealth Gap Between Black and White Communities



The wealth gap between Black and White communities remains one of the most persistent and pressing economic issues in modern society. Despite decades of civil rights advancements, educational gains, and policy reforms, the economic disparity along racial lines continues to reflect a deeply entrenched legacy of systemic inequality. It is not merely a matter of income or employment; it is a complex, multi-generational phenomenon that ties into history, access, policy, and power. At the heart of this gap is generational wealth — the financial assets, property, investments, and savings that are passed down from one generation to the next. For many White families in Western economies, especially in the United States, the ability to accumulate and transfer wealth began long before Black families were even legally considered equal citizens. From slavery to segregation, from redlining to discriminatory lending, Black communities were systematically denied access to the tools and opportunities necessary for wealth accumulation. Data continues to tell a stark story. In the U.S., for example, the median wealth of White households is many times greater than that of Black households. A typical White family holds over eight times the wealth of a typical Black family, according to the Federal Reserve. Even among those with similar education levels and incomes, disparities persist — highlighting that this is not simply a matter of individual achievement, but one of structural barriers and unequal starting points.Homeownership is one of the most visible arenas where this divide plays out. Owning a home is often the single most important asset a family can hold, and it serves as a foundation for financial security, stability, and intergenerational wealth. Yet Black homeownership rates have consistently lagged behind those of White households, not just due to economic constraints, but also because of historically racist housing policies. Redlining — the practice of denying mortgages or insurance to people in certain neighborhoods based on race — may no longer be legal, but its long-term impact is still deeply felt in segregated neighborhoods, undervalued properties, and restricted access to credit.
Education, while often held up as the great equalizer, also reveals racial economic inequities. Black students are more likely to take on greater debt to pursue higher education, and they often face wage disparities in the job market upon graduation. Furthermore, Black communities frequently live in underfunded school districts, where the quality of education lags far behind wealthier, predominantly White neighborhoods. Employment disparities further exacerbate the problem. Black workers are more likely to face job insecurity, lower wages, and fewer opportunities for advancement. Even when qualifications are equal, studies have shown that racial bias can influence hiring decisions. This contributes not only to lower incomes but to diminished retirement savings, fewer benefits, and weaker safety nets during times of economic hardship.
The COVID-19 pandemic made this wealth divide even more visible. Black and other minority communities were disproportionately affected — not only in terms of health outcomes but economically. Job losses hit Black workers harder, while government aid programs often failed to reach those most in need due to systemic barriers, limited access to financial systems, or exclusion from formal employment structures. Yet, amidst these challenges, Black communities have continued to show resilience, innovation, and determination. Across the country and beyond, Black entrepreneurs are building businesses, cultural institutions are preserving and promoting history, and new generations are demanding justice — not just social, but economic. However, individual effort, while commendable and vital, cannot undo centuries of structural disadvantage on its own.Bridging the racial wealth gap requires a serious and sustained policy commitment. This means targeted investments in Black-owned businesses, stronger support for first-time Black homebuyers, reform in lending and financial practices, and equitable education funding. Reparations, a subject of long-standing debate, have also returned to the mainstream political conversation as a possible measure to address historic injustices that created today's disparities. Moreover, financial institutions, corporations, and governments must take an active role in dismantling economic barriers. Equity cannot be achieved through symbolic gestures alone; it demands redistribution of opportunity, resources, and access. Transparency in hiring, equal pay initiatives, diversity in leadership, and community investment are not just moral imperatives — they are necessary economic strategies for inclusive growth. Public awareness is also key. For too long, the racial wealth gap has been viewed as a private issue, a result of individual choices. But it is, in reality, a public problem born of public policy. When society understands this, the conversation shifts from blame to responsibility — from questioning why the gap exists, to asking what can be done to close it.The wealth gap between Black and White communities is not merely a statistic. It is a reflection of whose lives are valued, whose dreams are supported, and whose futures are protected. If we are to live in truly just and equitable societies, then closing this gap must be seen not as an optional goal, but as a moral and economic necessity.

Contesting the Future of Forest Governance: Who Truly Owns the Green?

Forests have long been more than just reservoirs of biodiversity or carbon sinks for climate stability — they are homes, livelihoods, and sacred landscapes for millions of people across the globe. In countries like India, where forested regions intersect with some of the most marginalized and indigenous communities, forest governance is not just about conservation, but also about justice, identity, and autonomy. Today, the future of forest governance stands at a crossroads, as competing visions — from centralized conservation models to community-led stewardship — clash over who gets to decide the fate of these crucial ecosystems. For decades, forest management in many post-colonial nations was largely shaped by colonial-era laws that viewed forests as state property. In India, the Indian Forest Act of 1927 symbolized this approach, asserting government control over vast tracts of land while systematically excluding the forest dwellers who had lived in and protected those areas for generations. These laws prioritized revenue generation and resource extraction over the rights and roles of forest communities. Even as conservation gained ground in independent India, forest governance remained largely top-down — dominated by bureaucrats, technocrats, and occasionally, corporate interests masquerading as environmental partners.This began to shift with the landmark Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006 — a revolutionary piece of legislation that aimed to correct historical injustices by recognizing the rights of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers to own, manage, and use forest lands and resources. The FRA was not just a policy change but a profound reimagining of forest governance — one that placed the Gram Sabha (village assembly) at the center of decision-making and acknowledged the ecological wisdom of communities that had long coexisted with forests. However, the promise of the FRA remains unevenly fulfilled. Despite constitutional backing and strong legal provisions, its implementation has been marred by bureaucratic resistance, legal pushback, and, more recently, renewed efforts to dilute its authority. In many states, the Forest Department continues to exercise overriding control, often reluctant to cede power to communities. Moreover, forest dwellers still face evictions, and their claims to land and access are routinely rejected or delayed on questionable grounds. At the same time, the emergence of climate finance and global carbon markets has added a new layer to the forest governance debate. Schemes like REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) and afforestation programs funded by corporations or international donors often promote forests as instruments for carbon offsetting, rather than as lived landscapes. While these efforts are framed as eco-friendly and sustainable, they frequently bypass local communities, reduce forests to carbon stock, and encourage monoculture plantations that harm biodiversity and local livelihoods. The contest over forest governance, therefore, is not just about management strategies — it is a deeper political and ethical struggle over ownership, rights, and worldviews.

Jio BlackRock Earns SEBI Approval to Launch Quartet of Passive Index Funds

Jio BlackRock Asset Management has secured approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India to launch four new index tracking mutual funds. This development marks a significant move for the joint venture between Jio Financial Services and global asset manager BlackRock, reflecting their ambitions to democratise affordable, rules-based investment products in the country .

The newly approved schemes span both equity and fixed income, catering to diverse investor appetites. Among them are the Nifty Midcap 150, Nifty Next 50, Nifty Smallcap 250 equity index funds, and an 8–13-year G-Sec index fund replicating medium-term government bond performance. Each fund will be offered exclusively as a direct plan with growth options and no exit loads. Investors can begin with a minimum investment of ₹500, either as a lump sum or via systematic investment plans, with top-ups allowed in multiples of Re 1 . The equity funds aim to track mid-sized and emerging large-cap stocks. Specifically, the Midcap 150 fund targets the mid-cap segment, the Next 50 fund focuses on companies ranked 51–100 by market capitalisation, and the Smallcap 250 fund captures smaller firms with higher growth potential.the gilt fund tracks government securities maturing in the 8–13-year band, appealing to fixed-income investors seeking relative stability and longer duration yields . These proposed index funds mark the second major move by Jio BlackRock into the mutual fund business, following its successful launch of three debt-oriented schemes—including overnight, liquid, and money market funds—in early July, which attracted over ₹17,800 crore from more than 67,000 retail and 90 institutional investors.Since securing its initial mutual fund licence late last month, the entity has continued to expand its service offerings. Prior approvals include registration as an investment adviser and the operational launch of a brokerage business. Together, these moves create an integrated financial services platform underpinned by Jio's digital capabilities and BlackRock's investment infrastructure .

Industry analysts note that this entry into passive strategies aligns with India's rapidly evolving investor preferences. With passive assets accounting for nearly 15 percent of the nation's over $500 billion mutual fund industry—up from just 5 percent in 2020—both retail and institutional investors are seeking low-cost, transparent alternatives to expensive active funds . Backed by BlackRock's proprietary Aladdin risk-management and digital advisory technologies, coupled with Jio's vast telecom and fintech platforms, the joint venture is aiming to disrupt traditional distribution channels by reducing friction and cost. Digital distribution could allow the funds to be offered with expense ratios as low as 0.25 percent, significantly lower than the typical 1.5–2 percent seen in actively managed offerings . Scheduled to open for subscription during New Fund Offer periods of three to 15 days, the exact launch dates are yet to be confirmed. Nonetheless, observers point out that these low-entry, no-load index funds—backed by robust tracking-error management—could appeal to first-time investors and seasoned market participants alike . The broader context reinforces the growing momentum behind passive investing in India. In recent years, regulators have introduced a new asset class for high-risk strategies and relaxed compliance for passive schemes, paving the way for innovation and increased competition .

Tech Mahindra Q1 Net Profit Climbs 34% to Over ₹1,140 Crore on Cost Discipline



Tech Mahindra delivered a strong start to the fiscal year as its consolidated net profit surged by 34 percent on an annual basis to ₹1,140.6 crore in the quarter ended June 30, compared with ₹851.5 crore in the same period last year .The healthy growth was primarily driven by rising revenue coupled with a restrained cost structure.

The India-focused IT services provider showed steady momentum across its key metrics, as total revenue increased by 2.7 percent year-on-year to ₹13,351.2 crore, up from ₹13,005.5 crore in Q1 FY25 . On the earnings side, quarterly earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) rose by approximately 34 percent to ₹1,477 crore, delivering an EBIT margin of 11.1 percent—a gain of 50 basis points quarter-on-quarter . Cost efficiencies were notable as overall expenditure was kept almost flat. Total expenses stood at about ₹11,952 crore, slightly lower year-on-year, which significantly bolstered the bottom line . In dollar terms, Tech Mahindra recorded revenue of $1,564 million, marking a 1 percent sequential rise and 0.4 percent on-year improvement; in constant currency, however, revenue declined by 1.4 percent sequentially and 1 percent year-on-year .

A major contributor to the improved financials was a notable increase in deal activity: new order wins totaled $809 million, a leap of 51 percent compared to the year-ago quarter .The base of large clients also expanded, with 26 clients now paying $50 million or more annually—an increase of two from the previous year .

In terms of workforce dynamics, the company ended the quarter with a headcount of 79,987 employees, reflecting a reduction of 622 from the preceding quarter and 430 year-on-year .Attrition rates in IT services edged upward to 12.6 percent on a last-twelve-months basis, compared with 11.8 percent in the previous quarter . Cash flow also displayed strength. Free cash flow for the quarter was recorded at $86 million, representing 111 percent of net profit on a last-twelve-months basis . At quarter-end, the company held cash and cash equivalents of about ₹8,072 crore .Tech Mahindra's shares traded higher during the session, buoyed by investor optimism; they were up approximately 1.9 percent by mid-afternoon. Senior management emphasised the firm's focus on disciplined execution and cost control. Chief Executive Officer Mohit Joshi highlighted that the company's expanding deal pipeline—up 44 percent over the last year—spanned diverse sectors and geographies, reflecting sustained underlying momentum .He attributed the improvement to the effectiveness of the 'Project Fortius' initiative, aimed at operational efficiency, saying it "continues to generate meaningful results" . Chief Financial Officer Rohit Anand pointed out that the company had achieved its seventh straight quarter of margin expansion. He noted that even amidst uncertain demand conditions, the programme's cost optimisation strategies have driven tangible EBIT improvement . Brokerage analysts offered mixed assessments. Kotak Institutional Equities anticipated a dip in revenue in constant currency terms owing to sluggish performance in the high-tech vertical and BPO sector, but assured investors that margin gains would continue to accrue from cost reduction and currency benefit . Motilal Oswal also flagged the company's strong order wins pipeline—estimated at $750 million in total contract value—but cautioned that recovery remains uneven across verticals .

The management and analysts will monitor how Tech Mahindra navigates headwinds in its high-tech and telecom businesses, while leveraging its Project Fortius efficiencies and new customer wins to sustain profitability. The resilience in cash flows, disciplined expenditure, and strong order book position the company well against peers in an otherwise uncertain macroeconomic context.

Tech Mahindra's June-quarter results reinforce a narrative of sustained margin improvement and robust profit growth underpinned by disciplined cost management. Even as revenue growth shows signs of moderation, its ability to drive operational leverage and secure large contracts serves to strengthen investor confidence. The company must now focus on converting its deal pipeline into revenue, while resisting margin erosion from fluctuating demand segments.

ITC Hotels Soars on Robust Q1 Performance: Market Cap Crosses ₹50,000 Crore

ITC Hotels on Wednesday delivered a strong set of financial results for the first quarter ending June 30, 2025, prompting its shares to surge and send its market capitalisation past the ₹50,000 crore mark for the first time. The stock climbed as much as 6 percent to touch an intraday high of ₹242.15 on the BSE following the announcement . The hospitality chain reported a consolidated net profit of ₹133.71 crore, a year-on-year increase of 53.4 percent from ₹87.16 crore in Q1 of the previous financial year .Revenue from operations rose by 15.5 percent to ₹815.54 crore, up from ₹705.84 crore, while profit before interest, depreciation and taxes (PBIDT) surged 33 percent to ₹296.95 crore .Supporting these headline figures, ITC Hotels also posted a 19 percent increase in EBITDA, amounting to roughly ₹245–246 crore, and observed its EBITDA margin expand to around 30 percent. Expenses during the quarter increased moderately from ₹596 crore to ₹673–674 crore, reflecting controlled cost escalation . Investor enthusiasm triggered strong trading, with combined turnover of almost 14.7 million shares on the NSE and BSE. The rally pushed the company's market cap to approximately ₹50,011 crore by mid-afternoon, underscoring elevated investor confidence in the post-demerger hospitality business .

The larger hospitality sector in India began FY2026 with healthy momentum. RevPAR (Revenue per Available Room) growth remained in double digits in Q1, despite a minor dip in demand linked to geopolitical tensions in May . The industry's outlook for the next quarter is optimistic, aided by a cluster of long weekends during festive months such as Raksha Bandhan, Independence Day, Janmashtami and Ganesh Chaturthi, boosting leisure travel .

Analyst commentary reinforced the upbeat narrative. ICICI Securities highlighted the company's debt-free balance sheet, underpinned by robust cash reserves of ₹1,750 crore.

Schneider Electric in Exclusive Negotiations to Secure Complete Ownership of Its Indian Venture

Schneider Electric, France's industrial and energy management giant, is in advanced discussions to acquire Temasek Holdings' 35 percent stake in the Schneider Electric India joint venture. The deal, reportedly valued at approximately USD 1 billion, would bring Schneider Electric's total investment in the venture to roughly USD 5 billion including debt . The Indian joint venture, formed in 2020, unified Schneider's India-based low-voltage and industrial automation units with Larsen & Toubro Ltd.'s electrical and automation arm. Following this merger, Schneider Electric owned 65 percent of the business, while Temasek, Singapore's sovereign wealth fund, held the remaining 35 percent . Negotiations are reportedly ongoing and non-binding, with both parties declining to comment officially. If the deal proceeds, it would allow Schneider Electric to gain full operational control of its Indian subsidiary and reflect confidence in the country's long-term growth trajectory . Temasek, meanwhile, is said to be exploring various exit paths. Public disclosures indicate that the sovereign wealth fund, which holds investments totaling US D 324 billion globally, is diversifying its India strategy. It plans to inject up to USD 10 billion in areas such as digital technology, green energy, and healthcare over the next three years .

Industry analysts note that this acquisition aligns with broader trends: Schneider Electric has been stepping up its engagement in India's infrastructure and automation sectors. The country remains a pivotal market for the company's software and hardware solutions targeting buildings, data centers, utilities, and industrial green transformation .

India's M&A landscape supports such investments. Deal volumes in the country reached USD 31 billion in the past year—a 16 percent rise—fueled by increased interest from multinational corporations seeking expansion in one of the world's fastest-growing economies . Within Schneider Electric India, the company offers a broad portfolio—merging mechanical components, software, and digital services aimed at boosting efficiency and decarbonization across sectors. Its clients include developers of smart buildings, industrial plants, and data centers. The enterprise has been continuously expanding its footprint through manufacturing, R&D, and accelerated rollouts across India's regions .Should Schneider Electric proceed with the full buyout, Temasek may choose to recycle capital into investments beyond the existing JV. A strategic exit, possibly via an initial public offering, had been considered—but a direct sale to Schneider appears the most likely path given current discussions . Full ownership would provide Schneider Electric with several advantages. It would gain flexibility to pivot quickly in response to India's evolving business environment, and enhance synergies by aligning with global strategy under a unified management structure. The French firm would also free itself from constraints linked to minority partnership agreements, enabling more coherent decision-making and agility in capital expenditure .

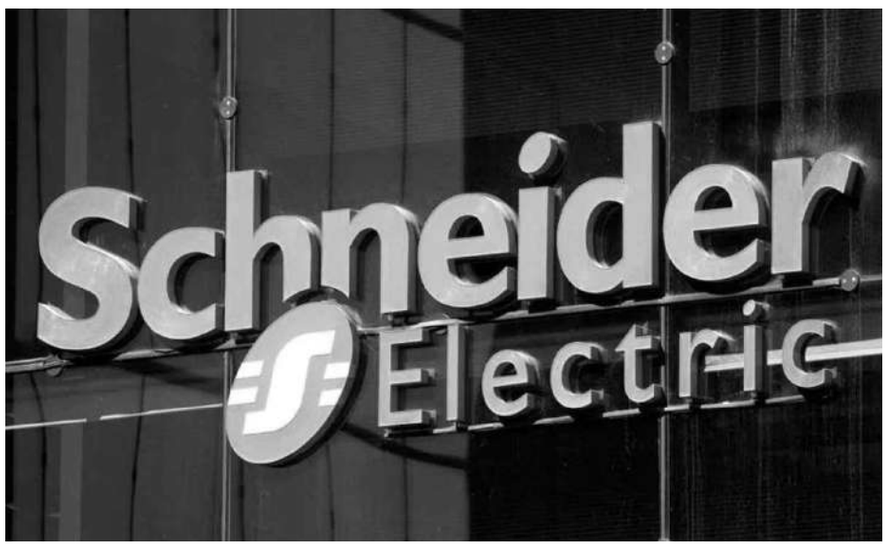
Analysts point out that the total valuation at USD 5 billion is striking but reflective of high strategic premiums. The enterprise value incorporates not just current assets, but also growth potential tied to India's industrial modernization, Renewable energy initiatives, and digitization trends .On the financial front, prior internal assessments showed Schneider Electric had forecast strong capital deployment in India. The JV sustained healthy revenue growth over recent years, driven by large infrastructure projects. Market performance has generally reflected this momentum, with stable revenue expansion and profitability margins in line with global peers . However, the outcome of negotiations remains uncertain. Both parties have refrained from issuing official statements, leaving the timeline and structure of any deal unclear. Market observers will closely watch if the acquisition proceeds and under what terms—particularly whether Schneider Electric will finance part of the deal through external borrowing or free cash flow. From Temasek's angle, channeling capital out of a maturing investment could yield strong returns. The firm's focus on reallocating funds into other sectors—digital health, green tech and beyond—aligns with its global strategic shift . In a broader context, the transaction could mark one of the largest private deals involving a foreign investor in Indian infrastructure and automation to date.

For Indian stakeholders, full ownership by Schneider Electric may open further investments—such as new manufacturing lines and enhanced service capabilities across the country's growing industrial and energy infrastructure. Both the JV's existing leadership and Schneider Electric's global management will need to collaborate closely during any integration phase.

Schneider Electric's potential acquisition of Temasek's 35 percent stake in its Indian joint venture signals a bold moment in India's corporate consolidation narrative. With a possible USD 1 billion payout for full control, the move underscores Schneider Electric's conviction in its India growth blueprint.

At the same time, Temasek is preparing to rechannel investments into dynamic new sectors aligned with its next-phase ambitions.

Observers will be watching closely as deal negotiations progress—especially whether Schneider Electric opts to proceed with the acquisition, how the purchase is financed, and what strategic advantages full control brings in navigating India's rapidly evolving industrial landscape.



Name Change
I, SK SAURAV (Old Name) S/O SK RASID Residing at 23/4, Kashinath Apartment, P.S.-Barasat, District - North 24 Parganas, Pin - 700125 West Bengal, India have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as SAURAV SEKH (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public Govt of India vide affidavit dated 16-07-2025. SK SAURAV (Old Name) and SAURAV SEKH (New Name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change
I No. 6914474N Ex Hony Nb Sub Keshab Chandra Das of Chandpur, Vidyanagar, Purba Bardhaman, My daughter's original name is Shiuly Das and DOB is 03 March 1982.That in the AOC service record my daughter's name & DOB has been recorded as Shiuly Kumari Sudha and 03 March 1982 respectively. My daughter Shiuly Das & Shiuly Kumari Sudha is the same and one identical person in the eye of law in the court of 1st class Judicial Magistrate at Kalna, Purba Bardhaman vide affidavite on 15.07.25

Name Change
I, Abdur Rahaman Bhuia (old name) S/O Abdul Khalek Bhuia , residing at Balihatta (Paschim),Pandua (CT),Po.Pandua, Hooghly west bengal - 712149, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Abdur Rahaman Bhuniya (new name), as declared before the notary public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 16/07/2025. Abdur Rahaman Bhuniya (new name) and Abdur Rahaman Bhuia (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, CHANDRANI RANA (Old Name) W/O SUBRATA GHOSH Residing at Station Road, Rahara, Khardah, PO & P.S - Rahara, District - North 24 Parganas, Pin - 700118 West Bengal, India have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as CHANDRANI GHOSH (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public Govt of India vide affidavit dated 16-07-2025. CHANDRANI RANA (Old Name) and CHANDRANI GHOSH (New Name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change
I, Abdul Mannan Gazi (old name) S/O Khayrulla Gaji , residing at Vill-Nityaberia,Po.Nityaberia North 24 Parganas west bengal - 743442, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Abdul Mannan Gaji (new name), as declared before the notary public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 15/07/2025. Abdul Mannan Gaji (new name) and Abdul Mannan Gazi (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, RIZWANAFATHIMA M O (Old Name) W/O AHAMED MATHAR HUSSAIN Residing at 72, Tiljala Road, Block-VI, Flat-1D, P.S.-Beniapukur, District - Kolkata, Pin - 700046 West Bengal, India have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as RIZWANA FATHIMA (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public Govt of India vide affidavit dated 16-07-2025. RIZWANAFATHIMA M O (Old Name) and RIZWANA FATHIMA (New Name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change
I, Khayrulla Gazi (old name) S/O Rahim Baska Gaji , residing at Vill-Nityaberia,Po.Nityaberia North 24 Parganas west bengal - 743442, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Khayrulla Gaji (new name), as declared before the notary public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 15/07/2025. Khayrulla Gaji (new name) and Khayrulla Gazi (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I Rasidul Mandal, S/O Fakir Mahammad Mandal, resident of Vill Chapra Academy para, P.O - Bangaljhi, P.S - Chapra, Dist. Nadia in West Beng 741123 do hereby declare that I have changed my name from Rasidul Mandal to Rashidul Mandal and henceforth I shall be known me Rashidul Mandal in all purpose, vide affidavit No. 73 sworn in Notary Pubile si Krishnagar, Nadia 11.07.2025. Rashidul Mandal and Rasidul Mandal both are same and Identical person.

Name Change
I, MOU MONDAL (old name) wife of, Subhasish Kundu & daughter of Malay Krishna Mondal ,residing at Flat No- 3A,Bluesky Residency,14C,Middle Road,P.O- Santoshpur,Kolkata-700075,West Bengal & having permanent address – 348,ward no -16,Silver Jubilee Road Near Rash Mela Math,Cooch Behar -1,P.O & District – Cooch Behar,PIN- 736101,West Bengal.have changed my surname and shall henceforth be known as MOU MONDAL KUNDU(new name) as declared before the Court of Ld. 1st Class Judicial Magistrate at Alipore South 24 Parganas dated 07/07/2025. MOU MONDAL (old name) and MOU MONDAL KUNDU (new name) both are same and one identical person.

১১ নোটিশ ১১
এতদ্বারা ঘোষনা করা যায় যে, আমার মক্কেল **শ্রী গৌতম ঘোষ**, পিতা - নকুল চন্দ্র ঘোষ, ঠিকানা ৩৬৮/২০৩, এস.এস. বোস সরনী, বৈদ্যবাটী, হুগলী, গত ইং ১০/১১/২০২৩ তারিখে এ.ডি.এস.আর. শ্রীরামপুর হইতে I - ৬৩৪৩/২০২৩ দলিল মূলে জেলা - হুগলী, থানা- শ্রীরামপুর, মৌজা - চক, জে.এল নং ১, এল.আর. খতিয়ান ৩২, ১৩৯, ২৩০, এল.আর. দাগ ৮৫২ হইতে ০২ কাঠা ০৫ ছটাক ১৬ বর্গফুট জমি খরিদ করিয়াছে। উক্ত জমি পূর্ববর্তী বিক্রেতা **নিশ্মল কুমার চৌধুরী**, পিতা- গুরুদাস চৌধুরী এ.ডি.এস.আর শ্রীরামপুর হইতে দলিল নং I-৩৮৪৭/১৯৯০, তাং ১৪/০৮/১৯৯০ মূলে আমমোক্তার নং -IV, ৭৬/৮৬, তাং ১৪/০৯/১৯৮৬ আমমোক্তার গ্রহীতা **স্বপন ধোলে**, পিতা পঞ্চানন ধোলে আমমোক্তার দাতা **১) অলোকা ধোলে, ২) দিলীপ ধোলে, ৩) রঞ্জন ধোলে, ৪) চন্দন ধোলে, ৫) ঝর্না ধোলে, ৬) কমলা ধোলে, ৭) অনিমা পাড়ুই, ৮) উত্তরা ঘোষ, ৯) বন্দনা ঘোষ**, সাং চক, বৈদ্যবাটী দীগের কাছ হইতে খরিদ করেন। উক্ত আমমোক্তার বিষয়ে কাহারও কোনও আপত্তি থাকিলে অদ্য তাং হইতে আগামী ০১ মাসের মধ্যে শ্রীরামপুর বি.এল. এ্যান্ড এল.আর.ও. অফিসে যোগাযোগ করিবেন।
মহঃ আফজাল হোসেন (এ্যাডভোকেট)
শ্রীরামপুর কোর্ট,
Enl. No.- F-1643/1636/1999

JANGIPUR MUNICIPALITY
P.O.Raghunathganj, Dist Murshidabad
e-TENDER NOTICE
NIeT No: MAD/ULB/JM/BMS/NIeT2/24-25(2nd Call), e-Tender are invited by the Executive Officer, Jangipur Municipality, from the eligible contractors for 01 Nos Construction of Drain in ward no-08 within Jangipur Municipality, Tender ID: 2025_MAD_878938_1, Publish Date: 17/07/2025 at 10:00 IST, Bid Submission Start date (Online): 17/07/2025 at 12:00 IST and Bid Submission Closing date(Online): 02/08/2025 at 18:00 IST. The detail e-Tender notice may be seen www.wbtenders.gov.in
Sd/-Chairman
Jangipur Municipality

BARGACHIA-II GRAM PANCHAYAT
UNDER JAGATBALLAVPUR DEVELOPMENT BLOCK, HOWRAH
VILL & PO.- BARGACHIA, P.S.-JAGATBALLAVPUR,DIST.-HOWRAH, PIN-711404
E-TENDER INVITING NOTICE
Electronic tenders are hereby invited by the Pradhan, Bargachia-II Gram Panchayat, Jagatballavpur, Howrah for the following works:09 (NINE) nos of schemes from SBM scheme tender for the bonafied experienced contractors having 50% credential. NIT NO-BAR-II/377/SBM/2025, 17/07/2025 TO BAR-II/385/SBM/2025, 17/07/2025. Last date of submission of tender: 25/07/2025 (10:00 AM). For further details see wbtenders.gov.in & the notice board of Bargachia-II Gram Panchayat.
Sd/-Pradhan
Bargachia-II Gram Panchayat

বিজ্ঞপ্তী
এতদ্বারা জানানো যায়, যে আমরা ১। আবিদা খাতুন এবং ২। মহঃ আসলাম ঠিকানা -১৯, নুরী লেন চাঁপদানী, বৈদ্যবাটী, হুগলী গত ইং 17.12.2019 তার দলিল নং 5140/2019 এ. ডি. এস. আর. শ্রীরামপুর দ্বারা জেলা- হুগলী, থানা-শ্রীরামপুর, মৌজা - দীর্ঘাঙ্গ , জে. এল. নং-4: L.R খতিয়ান-3483 L.R. দাগ - 4596, হইতে ০১ কাঠা ০৮ ছটাক শালি জমি খরিদ করিয়াছি। উক্ত জমি আমার বিক্রেতা আমমোক্তার দাতা লক্ষ্মী চৌবেস্বামীঃ শিউ শংকর চৌবে গত ইং - 16.11.2018 তারিখে আমমোক্তার নং- IV-187/18 এ. ডি. এস. আর শ্রীরামপুর আমমোক্তার গ্রহীতা মিঠু রানী মণ্ডল, স্বামীঃ অরুন মণ্ডল দ্বারা খরিদ করিয়াছি। উক্ত আমমোক্তার বিষয়ে কাহারও কোনও আপত্তি থাকিলে অদ্য তাং হইতে আগামী ১ মাসের মধ্যে শ্রীরামপুর বি. এল. আর অফিসে যোগাযোগ কারবেন।
বিনীত
মহঃ আসলাম

Name Change
I, Abdul Ajid Mondal son of Late Abdul Jalil Mondal, residing at Vill: Chhotochupria, P.O – Chupria, P.S – Hanskhali, Nadia – 741502, West Bengal, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Abdul Aziz Mondal as declared before the Ld. 1st Class Judicial Magistrate at Ranaghat vide affidavit No. 70055 dated 30/06/2025. Abdul Ajid Mondal and Abdul Aziz Mondal both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Emdadul Seikh my father's (Old Name) (Late) Abdul Khalek Vill & Po-Mahadipur , Ps-Englishbazar , Dist-Malda, West Bengal, Pin-732216 do hereby decrale that I have changed my father's name from (Late) Abdul Khaleque Sk to (Late) Abdul Khalek and henceforth my father's shall be known as (Late) Abdul Khalek (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 16/07/2025 . My father's name (Late) Abdul Khalek & (Late) Abdul Khaleque Sk both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Barun Kumar Biswas (Old Name) S/O–Ranjit Biswas residing at Raghabpur Girjapara, Ranaghat, Dist-Nadia, West Bengal, Pin-741201 do hereby decrale that I have changed my name from Barun Kumar Biswas to Barun Biswas and henceforth I shall be known as Barun Biswas (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 16/07/2025 . My name Barun Biswas & Barun Kumar Biswas both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Raihana Multana (Old Name) W/O–Zakaria Mandal residing at Vill & Po- Barua, Ps-Beldanga , Dist-Murshidabad, West Bengal, Pin-742189 do hereby decrale that I have changed my name from Raihana Multana to Raihana Sultana and henceforth I shall be known as Raihana Sultana (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 16/07/2025 . My name Raihana Sultana & Raihana Multana both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Sorif Sk (Old Name) S/O–Nur Hoque Sk residing at Gajdharpara , Ps-Berhampore , Dist-Murshidabad, West Bengal, Pin-742102 do hereby decrale that I have changed my name from Sorif Sk to Sharif Sekh and henceforth I shall be known as Sharif Sekh (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 16/07/2025 . My name Sharif Sekh & Sorif Sk both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Upen Debnath (Old Name) S/O–Rajkumar Debnath residing at Bhaduri ,Nowakhali Para , Taherpur, Dist-Nadia, West Bengal, Pin-741121 do hereby decrale that I have changed my name from Upen Debnath to Upendra Debnath and henceforth I shall be known as Upendra Debnath (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 16/07/2025 . My name Upendra Debnath & Upen Debnath both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Biren Kumar Ghosh (Old Name) S/O–Biswanath Ghosh residing at Sehalai, Ps-Bharatpur, Dist-Murshidabad, West Bengal, Pin-742301 do hereby decrale that I have changed my name from Biren Kumar Ghosh to Biren Ghosh and henceforth I shall be known as Biren Ghosh (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 15/07/2025 . My name Biren Ghosh & Biren Kumar Ghosh both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Tapati Sengupta Bhattacharyya (Old Name) W/O–Rajesh Bhattacharyya residing at Vill-D/4 Golden Height 26 Sriram Shiromani Road , Po-Berhampore , Ps- Berhampore , Dist-Murshidabad, West Bengal, Pin-742101 do hereby decrale that I have changed my name from Tapati Sengupta Bhattacharyya to Tapati Sengupta and henceforth I shall be known as Tapati Sengupta (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 15/07/2025 . My name Tapati Sengupta & Tapati Sengupta Bhattacharyya both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Faruk Shaikh S/O–Yousuf Ali Shaikh residing at Vill-Khamarpa , Po-Daulatabad , Ps-Murshidabad , Dist-Murshidabad, West Bengal, Pin-742302.I have change my name Faruk Shaikh & my father's name Yousuf Ali Shaikh by notary public Berhampore court on 15/07/2025. My name Faruk Shaikh & Faruk Shaikh & Faruk Sk & my father name Yousuf Ali Shaikh & Md Usuf Ali & Md Yusuf Ali & Yusuf Ali both are same and an identical person.

Flood Situation Worsens in Four South Bengal Districts Due to DVC Water Release and Heavy Rain; Mamata Assigns District-Wise Duties to Officials

Kolkata, 16 July: Several districts in South Bengal are reeling under a worsening flood situation as continuous rainfall and the release of water from the Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) have combined to wreak havoc across low-lying areas. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has taken urgent action, assigning senior officials district-specific responsibilities to ensure effective management and quick response to the crisis.

The affected districts — including East Burdwan, West Burdwan, Hooghly, and Howrah — have reported widespread waterlogging, damaged crops, collapsed embankments, and the displacement of hundreds of families. Heavy monsoon rains over the past few days have caused rivers such as the Damodar, Ajay, and Rupnarayan to swell beyond danger levels. The situation turned critical after the DVC began releasing large volumes of water from its reservoirs to manage rising dam levels.

According to official sources, over 150,000 cusecs of water were released in phases, leading to a sudden surge in downstream water flow. This influx, combined with already high rainfall, overwhelmed riverbanks and drainage systems in many areas. Several rural roads are under water, houses have been submerged, and farmlands destroyed — causing both infrastructural damage and significant economic loss for farmers.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, monitoring the situation closely from the state secretariat, held a high-level emergency meeting with disaster management officials, irrigation experts, and district magistrates. In the meeting, she emphasized the need for immediate relief operations, timely evacuation of at-risk populations, and round-the-clock monitoring of vulnerable zones.

To streamline the response, Mamata assigned top bureaucrats and ministers to each of the severely affected districts, instructing them to coordinate with local administrations, supervise rescue work, and ensure that relief materials like dry food, drinking water, tarpaulins, and medical aid reach affected families without delay. The Chief Minister has also directed district authorities to keep schools and community halls ready as temporary shelters for displaced people.

Mamata Banerjee expressed concern over the timing and volume of DVC's water release, reiterating her long-standing demand for better coordination between the Centre-controlled agency and the state government. "Unplanned water release without warning leads to flooding almost every year. There must be a protocol in place to inform and prepare the districts in advance," she said.

She also criticized what she called the lack of accountability in inter-state water management, pointing out that the water released affects Bengal even when rainfall in Jharkhand or other upper catchment areas is not excessive. This has once again sparked debate over the need for a more collaborative and transparent mechanism between DVC, Jharkhand, and West Bengal to prevent such recurrent disasters.

Meanwhile, disaster response teams including NDRF, SDRF, civil defense, and local volunteers have been deployed in the flood-hit zones. Boats have been pressed into service to rescue marooned villagers, while health camps are being set up to prevent waterborne disease outbreaks. In areas where electricity lines have gone down due to flooding, emergency backup systems are being activated to ensure power supply to critical services.

The Agriculture Department has also begun an assessment of crop damage, as large swathes of paddy fields, especially in Burdwan and Hooghly, are now submerged. Farmers who had recently transplanted kharif crops are now facing the prospect of total loss. The state government is expected to announce compensation packages soon, depending on the extent of the damage.

Local residents have expressed frustration at the repeated cycle of floods that plague the region each monsoon. "We face the same situation almost every year. Our houses go underwater, crops are destroyed, and we are left with nothing," said a villager in Hooghly, standing knee-deep in water. "Why can't a permanent solution be found?"

While the Meteorological Department has forecast some relief in terms of reduced rainfall over the next 48 hours, officials warn that river levels may remain dangerously high for some time due to the cumulative effect of upstream water discharge. Embankments at several places are being reinforced with sandbags and concrete to prevent breaches.

Rain Deficit in North Bengal Triggers Agricultural Crisis; Tea Leaves Wither, Paddy Cultivation Hit, Hill Residents in Distress

Siliguri, 16 July: A severe rainfall deficit in North Bengal has led to growing concerns among farmers and tea garden workers, with visible signs of crop stress and declining yield already emerging across the region. The lack of adequate monsoon showers this year has not only disrupted the regular agricultural calendar but has also left hill residents grappling with economic uncertainty and environmental anxiety.

In districts like Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, and parts of Cooch Behar and Kalimpong, the monsoon has so far been patchy and significantly below normal. For an area that relies heavily on consistent seasonal rain for both cash crops and food grains, the impact has been severe. The tea industry — one of the region's primary economic lifelines — is already suffering, as the tea leaves are drying up and losing quality due to lack of moisture.

Planters report that the "second flush," considered one of the most valuable harvests of the year, is under serious threat. Tea bushes are wilting in several gardens, with production volumes down and the flavour profile of the leaves deteriorating. "If the rains don't come soon, the entire cycle may collapse. We are already seeing a 30–40% drop in output in some estates," said a senior manager from a Darjeeling tea garden. With exports tied closely to the quality of the second flush, this could translate to major financial losses.

The paddy cultivators in the Terai and Dooars regions are facing an equally dire situation. Paddy transplantation, which usually begins in earnest by early July, has been delayed due to the parched fields. Farmers are anxiously waiting for rainfall, with many unable to prepare their land or transplant seedlings. Those



who have managed to begin sowing worry about the poor germination rate and weak plant growth due to inadequate water levels in irrigation canals and ponds.

"Without proper rain in the next 7 to 10 days, our paddy crop will fail. This land needs water — not just for sowing, but to sustain the crop over the next few weeks," said a farmer in Jalpaiguri, watching his cracked, dry field with concern.

The ripple effects of this rain shortfall extend beyond just crops. Daily-wage labourers in tea gardens are facing reduced working hours, and many are going home empty-handed as plucking activities slow down. In several hill and foothill villages, water scarcity is becoming a daily struggle, with natural springs drying up faster than usual and water tankers being brought in as a temporary fix.

Environmental experts suggest that the rainfall pattern in North Bengal is becoming increasingly erratic, in line with broader climate change trends. While the region is typically known for heavy monsoon downpours, this year's delayed onset and scattered distribution point to a worrying shift in seasonal behaviour. "The microclimate of the hills and the Terai-Dooars belt is changing. The unpredictability of rainfall is no longer an exception, but a growing pattern," said a senior climatologist from Siliguri. Local residents in the hills are also voicing growing frustration.

Madrasah Group D Recruitment Gets Green Signal After 15 Years; Calcutta High Court Clears Path to Fill Vacant Posts

Kolkata, 16 July: The Calcutta High Court has finally granted permission to proceed with the recruitment of Group D staff — ending a 15-year-long stalemate that had left numerous posts vacant and daily operations hampered across institutions.The court's verdict comes after years of legal hurdles, administrative delays, and procedural ambiguities that had stalled the recruitment process despite a growing need for support staff in these educational institutions. With this judicial nod, the Madrasah Service Commission has now been empowered to initiate the recruitment process, paving the way for hundreds of vacant non-teaching positions to be filled after a decade and a half.

Group D employees, including roles such as peons, lab attendants, and clerical support, are essential to the day-to-day functioning of schools and madrasahs. Over the years, the absence of such personnel had put immense pressure on teaching staff and students alike, forcing teachers to often handle tasks well beyond their academic responsibilities. In many institutions, especially in rural districts, a single employee had to manage cleaning, documentation, student logistics, and even food distribution under the midday meal scheme.

Madrasah authorities and educational administrators have welcomed the court's decision, calling it a much-needed step toward restoring efficiency and normalcy. "For 15 years we have been waiting to fill essential posts. Our schools have functioned with severe manpower shortages, affecting both staff morale and student experience. This clearance from the High Court brings new hope," said a senior official from the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education.

The roots of the delay can be traced back to legal disputes regarding the legitimacy and structure of the Madrasah Service Commission and its authority to conduct recruitment for non-teaching staff. Several petitions had been filed over the years, questioning procedural fairness, reservation policies, and administrative jurisdiction. The prolonged litigation left the Commission paralysed and recruitment plans indefinitely postponed.



Members of CPI(ML) Liberation take part in a protest march against the alleged harassment of Bengali-speaking people in BJP-ruled states, in Kolkata, West Bengal, Wednesday.

Trinamool in power in Laxminarayanpur North, Pradhan Deepali, opposition zero Mathurapur No. 1 Block.

Mathurapur, 16 July: Putting an end to all speculations, the ruling party i.e. Trinamool Congress formally formed the board of Laxminarayanpur North Gram Panchayat of Mathurapur No. 1 Block of South 24 Parganas district on Wednesday afternoon, following the administrative instructions. Following the party instructions, the chief election was unanimously held today, with member Deepali Paik, who won from the Patki booth on the Trinamool symbol. All the members present, including the Pradhan, were garlanded and welcomed. Out of the total 10 gram panchayats in Mathurapur No. 1 Block, 9 gram panchayats were in the possession of Trinamool Congress. This only gram panchayat was in the possession of the opposition. That too came into the possession of Trinamool Congress today. As a result, Mathurapur No. 1 Block is empty of opposition. Mathurapur Lok Sabha constituency MP Bapi Halder, Sundarbans Organizational District President and Mandirbazar MLA Joydev Halder, Mathurapur No. 1 Panchayat Samiti President Manabendra Halder, Zilla Parishad Member Keya Mandal and others were present.

It is learned that the total number of seats in Laxminarayanpur Uttar Gram Panchayat of Mathurapur No. 1 Block is 19. In the last Panchayat elections, Trinamool Congress won 8 seats in this Gram Panchayat. BJP won 5 seats. CPM won 3 seats. Independents got 2 seats. Congress won 1 seat. The opposition alliance formed a board. Uttara Gayen, the candidate who won on the Congress symbol, became the president. Prahlad Halder, the candidate who won from an independent party, became the vice president. Since coming to power, they have been failing to do development work in the area. As a result, the people of the area were being deprived of development work in the area. Besides, Gram Panchayat President Uttara Gayen resigned on July 4 due to physical illness. His resignation letter was accepted. Since then, the development work of the panchayat has completely collapsed. To overcome that deadlock and provide developmental services to the people of the area for the development of the area, they decided to join the Trinamool Congress. In the first week of this month, CPM winning members Md. Rezaul Laskar, Seema Roy, Manabendra Naiya and Independent winning member Dinabandhu Halder joined the Trinamool Congress, with the help of Mathurapur Lok Sabha constituency MP Bapi Halder. Naturally, the Trinamool Congress got an absolute majority to form a board in this Gram Panchayat. MP Bapi Halder said on this day, out of a total of 10 Gram Panchayats in Mathurapur No. 1 Block, this is the only Gram Panchayat that was under the control of the opposition. As a result, they were not able to carry out development work in this region for a long time. The common people have not received their civic services. To expand the developmental work of the state Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and our MP Abhishek Banerjee, from today the common people of this gram panchayat area will start receiving their civic services. Our members are determined to provide services. Whatever needs to be done for the people, they will continue to do that work for the needs of the people, the way the party will run. Everyone will help them.

Leopard Family Discovered in Kotshila's Simoni Forest; Trap Cameras Capture Rare Glimpse of Adult Pair

Purulia , 16 July: In a rare and thrilling discovery that has sparked excitement among wildlife enthusiasts and forest officials alike, a pair of adult leopards has been spotted living in the dense forests of Simoni, located in Kotshila, Purulia district. What makes the sighting even more significant is that these big cats, once spotted only occasionally in the region, appear to have made the area their home — from cubs to adulthood.

The presence of the leopards was confirmed through a series of trap camera images recently analyzed by the state forest department. These motion-sensitive cameras, strategically placed by officials to monitor wildlife movement, revealed a healthy pair of adult leopards roaming the region — a possible male and female, leading to speculation that they may be a breeding pair. The images offer compelling evidence that the leopards were born in the area and have now matured, choosing to remain in their native forest habitat.

According to senior forest officials, this is the first time in recent memory that leopards have been tracked so consistently in this part of Purulia. While sporadic sightings had been reported over the past few years, especially of paw prints and rare visual encounters, this new evidence confirms a stable leopard presence, raising hopes for a natural revival of biodiversity in this ecologically rich but often overlooked region of West Bengal.

Forest rangers believe that the initial trap camera footage captured a leopard cub in the same area nearly a year and a half ago. Based on phys-



ical characteristics, experts now suspect that one or both of the adult leopards currently being monitored could be the same animal(s) seen in those earlier images — now grown and thriving in their native terrain. This has given rise to the hypothesis that a breeding cycle is being established in Kotshila's forest belt, signaling a potentially self-sustaining leopard population.

The landscape of Purulia — with its mix of hills, sal forests, and rocky terrain — offers a natural habitat ideal for leopards. However, due to increasing human encroachment, forest degradation, and poaching threats in the past, big cat sightings had become rare. The forest department's focused conservation and habitat protection efforts over recent years may now be bearing fruit, as wildlife begins to reclaim its space.

Local villagers have also played a role in the conservation efforts, with many cooperating with forest authorities by reporting signs of animal movement and refraining from disturbing natural zones. However, the presence of leopards so close to human settlements has also raised concerns. While no recent attacks on livestock or humans have been reported, forest officials are working to raise awareness among local communities to avoid conflict and ensure coexistence.

Special patrol teams have been deployed in the area to monitor the leopards' activity and ensure their safety. Forest personnel are also increasing the number of trap cameras and planning to install GPS tracking collars, should tranquilization and tagging be possible in the future. This would allow researchers to map the movements, behavior, and territorial range of the leopards — critical data for formulating long-term conservation strategies.

Police Lathicharge Sparks Tension During SFI-DYFI Protest in Cooch Behar Over Closed College

Cooch Behar, 16 July: Tension erupted in the Nishiganj area of Mathabhanga in Cooch Behar district on Tuesday after police resorted to a lathicharge on members of the Students' Federation of India (SFI) and the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) who were protesting against the indefinite closure of Nishiganj Madhusudan Hor College. The protesters, demanding the immediate reopening of the college and that it be brought under full government control, had blocked the Mathabhanga-Cooch Behar State Highway for several hours, leading to traffic disruption and chaos in the region.

The situation turned volatile when the demonstrators, despite repeated warnings from police, refused to clear the road. As the blockade continued, law enforcement personnel from Nishiganj Police Station intervened and launched a lathicharge to disperse the agitators. Several protesters were injured in the process, and a number of them were taken into custody. The incident triggered strong reactions from both the Left-affiliated organizations and opposition parties, who condemned the police action as excessive and undemocratic.

Yusuf Ali, the Cooch Behar district secretary of DYFI, sharply criticized the police response, accusing the state government of deploying force against students who were only seeking their right to education. "This movement is for the students, and the entire state has witnessed the brutal lathicharge by police. Twelve of our comrades were injured. They were treated and later released from Nishiganj Primary Health Center. However, this attempt to crush our protest with force will not succeed. Our movement will intensify until the college is reopened and brought under government management," Ali stated.

The protest is rooted in a long-standing issue concerning the management and operational crisis at Nishiganj Madhusudan Hor College. Just days ago, about 30 teaching and non-teaching staff of the college locked the main gate, citing non-payment of salaries for three consecutive years. As a result, the college has remained closed, leaving students without



access to academic resources or classes. The staff, reportedly demoralized and struggling financially, have been forced to stop attending work due to the prolonged lack of remuneration. According to college officials, the crisis stems from a complete absence of student enrollment this academic year, rendering the institution financially incapable of disbursing salaries.

The matter has sparked widespread outrage among students and parents in the region. Many have voiced concern over the future of hundreds of youths whose education has come to a standstill. While Left-affiliated student and youth groups have taken to the streets, the political blame game has intensified.

Cooch Behar District Trinamool Congress president Girindranath Barman, when asked about the situation, appeared critical of the protest methods adopted by the Left organizations. He alleged that the culture of road blockades and disruption was a legacy of Left politics and insisted that such forms of agitation only inconvenience the public. "There are many democratic ways to protest. Blocking roads for hours and disturbing normal life is not acceptable. We are treating the issue seriously, and discussions are ongoing at the ministerial level to resolve the matter," he said. However, Barman also questioned the silence of the local BJP MLA. "Why is the BJP MLA of the area not raising the issue in the assembly? They have done nothing except point fingers," he added.

Responding to this, Mathabhanga's BJP MLA Sushil Barman denied the charge and stated that he had already raised the issue in the West Bengal Assembly. "I asked the Higher Education Minister about this college. He replied that since it is not a government-run institution, the state cannot intervene. This clearly shows the government's apathy. They make big promises but do nothing to support institutions or the youth," he said. Barman also denounced the police action during the protest. "Every political party has the democratic right to protest. Using lathis to suppress voices is highly condemnable," he said.

The incident has not only intensified political confrontations but also brought to light the deep-rooted issues in the state's higher education system, particularly concerning unaided colleges. With no resolution in sight, the future of Nishiganj Madhusudan Hor College hangs in uncertainty, while the student community continues to bear the brunt. As calls for justice and state intervention grow louder, the demand for a lasting solution to the crisis is becoming more urgent.

Conditional Bail Granted to Rahul Gandhi in Defamation Case Over Alleged Remarks Against Army



New Delhi, 16 July: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has been granted conditional bail in a defamation case filed against him over comments that were allegedly perceived as derogatory toward the Indian Army. The case, which has sparked political controversy and renewed debate around freedom of speech and political accountability, stems from a public statement made by Gandhi that his critics claim insulted the dignity of the armed forces.

The complaint, filed by a political activist, alleged that Gandhi's remarks — made during a political rally — crossed the line of acceptable political discourse and amounted to defamation of the Indian Army, an institution held in high regard across the country. The activist contended that such statements not only undermined national sentiment but could also have repercussions on the morale of soldiers and their families.

Rahul Gandhi's legal team argued that his comments were taken out of context and that he never intended to insult the army or question its integrity. According to the defense, Gandhi was criticizing the central government's handling of military issues and policies, not the armed forces themselves. They maintained that the statement fell within the purview of political speech and was aimed at sparking debate, not disparagement.

The court, after reviewing preliminary evidence and hearing both sides, granted Gandhi bail under specific conditions. These include a personal bond, cooperation with the investigation, and an assurance that he will refrain from making similar statements until the legal proceedings are concluded. The next hearing date has been scheduled, during which the court may decide whether the case holds enough ground to proceed to trial.

Reactions to the court's decision have been swift and divided along political lines. Leaders from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have accused Gandhi of consistently making irresponsible statements and crossing red lines in his critique of the government. They argue that while political leaders are entitled to question policy, invoking the army in a disparaging tone cannot be tolerated.

Congress, on the other hand, has come out strongly in support of their leader, claiming the case is part of a broader campaign to silence dissent and intimidate opposition voices. Several senior Congress leaders asserted that Rahul Gandhi has always expressed deep respect for India's armed forces and that the case is politically motivated.

The matter has reignited an ongoing national conversation about where the line lies between free speech and defamation — especially in the realm of political discourse. While public figures are held to high standards and their words carry weight, critics of the current political environment argue that criminal defamation is being increasingly used as a tool to suppress criticism, especially when directed at powerful institutions or government policy.

Legal experts are also weighing in, with some warning that an expansive interpretation of defamation — particularly in the context of political commentary — could pose a threat to democratic dialogue. Others argue that the court's decision to grant conditional bail strikes a balance between individual rights and institutional respect.

As the case moves forward, it is likely to remain in the public eye, not just because of the stature of the person involved, but also because of the larger implications for political speech and legal redress in a democratic society. For now, Rahul Gandhi remains free on bail, but the debate his remarks have sparked — about patriotism, dissent, and the limits of political criticism — shows no sign of fading.



Congress members stage a demonstration against the BJP-led government over the death of a college student in Odisha's Balasore, in Jagdalpur of Bastar district, Chhattisgarh, Wednesday.

Uncertainty Continues Over Resumption of 100 Days' Work Scheme in West Bengal

Mumbai, 16 July: The future of the much-needed 100 days' work scheme under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) remains uncertain in West Bengal, as the central government has yet to provide a clear timeline for its resumption. Despite repeated appeals from the state government and growing concern among rural workers dependent on this scheme for survival, the Centre has maintained silence, leaving thousands of families in limbo.

For nearly a year now, West Bengal has witnessed a complete halt in MGNREGA-related payments and new work allocations. The Union government had stopped releasing funds to the state, citing alleged irregularities in the implementation of the scheme. The state government, while contesting these claims, has submitted reports and audit responses, but the deadlock continues.

As a result, millions of rural workers across Bengal, especially in economically vulnerable districts, have been left jobless and without the meager yet vital daily wages that MGNREGA guarantees. For many, this scheme was not just a government benefit — it was their only source of livelihood. From marginal farmers to landless laborers and women-headed households, the suspension of the scheme has brought deep financial distress.

State officials have expressed frustration over the prolonged delay. Despite fulfilling the requirements laid out by the Union Ministry of Rural Development, they say that no communication has been made regarding when the funds will be released or when work can resume. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has raised the issue on several platforms, accusing the central government of politically motivated action aimed at punishing Bengal for its opposition to the ruling party at the Centre.

Its suspension has triggered anger not only among workers but also among local panchayat leaders, many of whom are now facing the burden of explaining the Centre's inaction to their constituents.Opposition leaders at the national level have also criticized the central government for what they describe as arbitrary withholding of a constitutional entitlement. MGNREGA, enacted as a rights-based law in 2005, mandates that every rural household is entitled to 100 days of wage employment in a year, and failure to provide such work without cause is legally actionable. Yet, in Bengal's case, the system appears to have come to a standstill without any formal redressal or accountability.

Student's Death by Self-Immolation Sparks Protests Outside Odisha Assembly; Water Cannons and Tear Gas Used

Mumbai, 16 July: Tension gripped Odisha's capital as massive protests broke out in front of the State Assembly following the tragic death of a college student who had set herself on fire. The incident, which has stirred public outrage and political condemnation, led to a chaotic scene on the streets of Bhubaneswar, where police used water cannons and tear gas to disperse angry demonstrators demanding justice and accountability.

The student, a young woman from a government college, had allegedly attempted self-immolation earlier this week in front of the college premises. She was immediately rushed to a hospital with severe burn injuries, but despite efforts by medical staff, she succumbed to her injuries. Her death has triggered widespread public outrage, as questions swirl around what compelled her to take such a drastic step and whether authorities failed to intervene in time.

Reports suggest that the student had been distressed for days, allegedly over issues related to internal college affairs. While the exact reasons remain under investigation, early accounts point to harassment, mental pressure, and negligence on the part of the college administration. Family members of



the deceased have accused college officials of ignoring repeated complaints and creating an environment that pushed her to the edge.

As news of her death spread, opposition parties and student groups took to the streets, organizing a protest march toward the Odisha Legislative Assembly. Carrying placards and shouting slogans against the state government, they demanded a thorough investigation into the incident, immediate suspension of college authorities involved, and compensation for the victim's family.

The peaceful protest soon turned volatile when demonstrators tried to breach police barricades near the Assembly. In response, security forces deployed water cannons and fired tear gas shells to break up the crowd. Several protesters were injured in the scuffle, and some were detained. Visuals from the scene showed young students drenched, coughing, and retreating from tear gas fumes, while leaders of opposition parties accused the government of suppressing dissent with force.

Political leaders across party lines expressed their condolences to the student's family but differed sharply in their interpretation of events. The ruling party appealed for calm and promised a fair probe, while opposition leaders called for the resignation of senior officials and even the education minister, citing administrative failure and insensitivity.

The incident has not only highlighted the emotional and psychological struggles that students often face within academic institutions, but also raised concerns about accountability mechanisms within colleges. Many activists have pointed to the lack of mental health support, ineffective grievance redressal systems, and the culture of intimidation that can exist in certain educational settings.

After Odisha, Shock in Bengaluru: College Student Raped Under Pretext of Providing Notes; Two Teachers Among Three Arrested

Bengaluru, 16 July: A college student was allegedly raped by two of her teachers and another accomplice under the pretext of providing academic notes. The case comes close on the heels of a similar tragedy in Odisha, raising nationwide concern over the safety of young women within educational institutions — spaces meant to empower and protect.

The incident reportedly took place over the past few weeks but came to light after the survivor, a young college student, gathered the courage to approach the police and register a formal complaint. According to her statement, two faculty members from her own college and one other individual lured her into a meeting, citing academic help and offering to share important study materials.

Once she was in a private setting with them, the situation quickly turned sinister. The men allegedly sexually assaulted her and warned her against revealing the crime, using threats and emotional manipulation to silence her. Despite the trauma and pressure, the survivor eventually approached authorities, assisted by a friend and a local women's rights group.

Bengaluru police acted swiftly on her complaint. Within hours of the FIR being filed, all three accused were arrested. Two of them are confirmed to be faculty members of the college where the survivor was enrolled, while the third is believed to be associated with one of the accused. A case has been registered under multiple sections of the Indian Penal Code, including rape, criminal intimidation, and breach of trust. The investigation is ongoing.

This heinous act has reignited debate over student safety and the urgent need for stringent oversight of educational institutions. Parents, students, and activists are demanding stricter background checks, regular psychological evaluations of staff, and stronger internal mechanisms to report misconduct within colleges and universities.

The college administration, meanwhile, has issued a brief statement claiming ignorance of the incident until the police intervention. However, critics argue that such crimes often go unreported due to a culture of silence, stigma, and the power imbalance between students and teachers. Many students feel unsafe coming forward, especially when perpetrators are in positions of authority.



Several student organisations held protests outside the college, demanding justice for the survivor and immediate action against those who failed to protect her. "If our classrooms become places of fear and exploitation, where will our daughters feel safe?" asked one protester, echoing a growing sense of anger and helplessness among the community.

Women's rights groups have also stepped in, calling for a broader overhaul of how colleges handle sexual misconduct. They argue that simply arresting perpetrators after the fact is not enough. Prevention must begin with awareness programs, consent education, and safe spaces for students to voice their concerns without fear of retaliation.

Mental health professionals warn that survivors of sexual assault often suffer from long-term trauma, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. In this case, early intervention and counselling support have been arranged, but the survivor's journey toward healing will be long and painful. Her courage, however, in speaking up despite overwhelming odds, has been widely praised.

This incident, following so soon after the tragic self-immolation case of a student in Odisha, paints a grim picture of the current state of safety for young women in academic spaces. From small towns to metro cities, from government colleges to private institutions — no space appears immune to the threats of abuse and exploitation.

The Karnataka State Women's Commission has taken cognizance of the case and is expected to meet with the college authorities soon. There are also reports that the Education Department may launch a broader review of college-level staff hiring and grievance redressal systems across the state. For now, the three accused remain in custody, and the survivor's statement has been recorded before a magistrate. Legal proceedings are underway, and police have assured that a thorough and time-bound investigation will be conducted.

"If You Want To Come Over...": Devendra Fadnavis' 'Invite' To Uddhav Thackeray

Mumbai, 16 July: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis sparked much merriment in the state assembly today with his public invitation to Uddhav Thackeray to cross over - suggestion Mr Thackeray and his party stonily ignored.

Speaking during the during the farewell ceremony of Ambadas Danve, Leader of Opposition and a member of Mr Thackeray's faction of the Shiv Sena, Mr Fadnavis - addressing Mr Thackeray who was also in the House - said: "Look Uddhav-ji, there is no scope of (our) going there (in the opposition) till 2029... But if you want to come over here, then consider it... it depends on you... it can be considered".

As NDA colleagues in the house broke into guffaws, Mr Fadnavis said, "Ambadas Danve may be anywhere (party or opposition) but his real thoughts are right wing".His comments sparked massive speculation. While there has been plenty of interest whether the old allies would get back together and there have been multiple reports of the BJP sending feelers to the Thackeray faction, this was the first instance of the Chief Minister making such a comment in public.

The Thackeray faction has always treated any talk to getting back with the BJP with disdain. Mr Thackeray -- who had met Mr Fadnavis in the assembly premises earlier -- later said these things are said as a joke and should be taken as such.Party insiders indicated that Mr Fadnavis's comment can also be a ruse to keep a check on his deputy, Eknath Shinde ahead of the civic election.

Mr Shinde is seen to have been unable to keep a check on his leaders like Sanjay Gaikwad and Sanjay Shirsat, who had left the Mahayuthi government open to embarrassment. On Monday, Mr Shinde had issued a stern waring to his leaders, saying they should consider themselves "workers" first and foremost, keep a firm control on their tempers and "not let success go to their heads"."In the past few days, certain incidents have taken place... People don't point fingers at you - they point at me for what you do. They ask me: 'What are your MLAs up to?'" sources had quoted him as saying.

While Mr Fadnavis had not commented on the matter publicly, there have been police action against the Sena MLAs.

There is speculation that the Shinde Sena and the BJP can contest the election for the Brihanmumbai Corporation - the richest civic body in the country - separately.

Questions Emerge Over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Two Crore Jobs Per Year Promise

New Delhi, 16 July: As the nation grapples with growing concerns over employment and economic recovery, scrutiny has once again returned to a major electoral promise made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi — the creation of two crore jobs every year. First announced during the 2014 election campaign, this commitment was a cornerstone of the BJP's development agenda. A decade later, however, critics and economists are raising serious questions about whether that promise has been kept.

The job creation pledge was one of the most widely discussed elements of Modi's campaign, resonating strongly with young voters eager for economic opportunity. At the time, the country was witnessing a demographic surge, with a rising number of young people entering the workforce each year. The idea that two crore jobs would be generated annually gave hope to millions looking for a better future.

However, as data and reports continue to surface, there is a growing perception that the target has not only been missed, but that employment opportunities have fallen well short of expectations. Independent surveys, economic think tanks, and even some government-backed data suggest that the job market has struggled to keep pace with the growing labor force.

The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), which tracks labor market trends, has repeatedly flagged concerns over rising unemployment and underemployment, especially among youth. According to CMIE data, India's unemployment rate has often remained in the high single digits, with rural joblessness increasing significantly during times of economic stress, such as the pandemic and post-lockdown recovery period.

Adding to the skepticism is the lack of official, transparent, and consistent employment data. The government's periodic labor force surveys provide snapshots, but critics argue they are not frequent or detailed enough to paint an accurate picture of nationwide job creation. In the absence of comprehensive, publicly accessible data, evaluating the fulfillment of the two crore jobs per year promise becomes even more challenging. Opposition parties have seized upon this issue, accusing the Modi government of failing to deliver on its most fundamental promise. Several political leaders have raised the matter in Parliament and public rallies, pointing out that instead of creating jobs, the economy has seen contraction in certain sectors and a spike in informal or gig-based employment that lacks stability or benefits.

Moreover, the problem isn't just about the number of jobs, but also about the quality. Economists argue that many of the jobs created in recent years are either low-pay-



ing, short-term, or part of the informal sector, offering little in terms of social security or upward mobility. The surge in delivery jobs, freelance gig work, and small-scale contract labor — while providing some income — cannot substitute for the salaried, secure employment that was envisioned by many under the two crore jobs promise.

The government, for its part, has defended its employment record by pointing to various flagship schemes such as Make in India, Skill India, Start-Up India, and the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana. Officials argue that these initiatives have supported entrepreneurship and job creation indirectly by fostering a culture of self-employment and small business. But critics contend that such programs, while valuable, do not address the need for large-scale formal employment, especially for graduates and skilled professionals.

Some ministers have also argued that job creation is not solely the government's responsibility, but a function of private sector growth and economic conditions. However, with the state being one of the largest employers and a key driver of economic policy, such explanations offer little comfort to those who remain unemployed or underemployed.

The issue of job creation has also taken center stage in election narratives, with youth unemployment becoming one of the most pressing concerns in both urban and rural India. Social media campaigns, protest movements, and civil society forums have repeatedly highlighted the widening gap between promises made and the reality on the ground. In some states, job aspirants have taken to the streets, demanding better recruitment processes and more transparency in government hiring.

Analysts argue that addressing India's employment crisis will require more than just ambitious slogans or campaign rhetoric. It needs sustained investment in infrastructure, manufacturing, green technology, education reform, and digital access. It also requires a fundamental rethink of labor laws, social security, and the skilling ecosystem — to ensure that the workforce of tomorrow is equipped for the industries of the future.

In the end, the promise of two crore jobs a year stands as a reminder of the high expectations that were set and the urgent need for accountability. While it is clear that India's economy has faced global and domestic challenges — from demonetization to the pandemic — the gap between policy announcements and outcomes cannot be ignored. As India looks to the next chapter of its development story, employment generation will remain a key metric by which any government is judged. The question being asked now is not just whether two crore jobs were created each year, but whether enough was done to meet the aspirations of a nation hungry for opportunity.

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INDIAN INFO EXCHANGE

Shubman Gill's On-Field Outburst at Lord's Draws Sharp Reactions and Raises Questions Over Leadership Style

London, 16 July: At the close of the thrilling third Test at Lord's, newly appointed India captain Shubman Gill's fiery outburst turned heads and stirred debate about his emerging style of leadership. The captain's aggressive tone, shouting an expletive at England opener Zak Crawley for perceived time-wasting with just minutes left in the day, was captured on stump mic and ignited a storm of reaction from former players, pundits and fans alike.

As the day drew to a tense close and India, led by Jasprit Bumrah's spirited bowling, sought to sneak in two overs, Crawley's repeated stepping out of his crease and then a delayed physio appeal disrupted proceedings. Frustrated voices erupted from the slip cordon, and Gill's impassioned "Grow some f***ing balls" burst out, setting off sarcastic applause from teammates and earning boos from the crowd.

The back-and-forth saw Gill walk toward Crawley, pointedly clapping and gesturing—a charged confrontation that one former England player labelled "acting," noting parallels with Virat Kohli's on-field theatrics.This dramatic face-off drew distinctions between its positives, such as generating intensity and momentum, and negatives, including questions about sportsmanship.

In the post-match press conference, India vice-captain KL Rahul defended the incident as part of Test cricket's combative spirit at its best, highlighting India's eagerness to bowl those additional overs.



He noted that Crawley's tactics were clearly a stalling game and understandable frustration followed . England's consultant bowling coach Tim Southee responded diplomatically, pointing out that both sides had shown similar delays—citing instances of India's frequent ball changes—yet affirming that the tension underscored cricket's competitive energy.

Gill, speaking the next day, acknowledged the charged atmosphere at Lord's and suggested that such moments elevate the contest rather than diminish it. He said that extended matches reflect tightly contested cricket, and added that staying calm under such pressure reveals character .

Regardless, the incident has ignited intense debate in India. Supporters argue Gill's assertive reaction projects strength and authority, vital qualities in a Test captain. Critics, however, caution against mirroring predecessors like Kohli, fearing it may backfire and appear contrived—especially when dubbed "unnatural" or merely for "attention and mileage." On social platforms, some questioned whether Gill was adopting a persona that did not truly reflect his natural temperament .

Former England spinner Jonathan Trott was blunt in his criticism, branding the sledge as "acting" and suggesting the captain seemed more motivated by theatricality than genuine aggression .

This episode comes against the backdrop of Gill's historic ascension to Test captaincy, inheriting a mantle left by Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma following their retirements. Early successes, such as twin centuries at Headingley and Edgbaston, had painted him as one who could seamlessly blend batting dominance with calm leadership.What remains under scrutiny is whether he can temper passion with composure as England again stands on top of the series with a 2-1 lead.

Critics worry this flamboyant style may unsettle the measured approach Gill had previously demonstrated. Others contend that the edge he showed might galvanize his teammates and set a fiercely competitive tone for the remainder of the tour. The central question now is whether his intensity is a genuine expression of leadership or a failed bid to replicate past captains' fire.



Cricketer Vaibhav Suryavanshi signs autograph for fans, in London.

Virat Kohli Becomes 1st In The World To Set Mega ICC Record, Even After Retiring From Tests And T20Is

New Delhi, 16 July: Indian batting legend Virat Kohli continues smashing records despite retirement from T20Is and recently Tests, as the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday updated his maximum T20I rating points to 909 points, making him the only batter in sports history to cross the 900-point mark in ICC Men's Cricket Rankings across all formats of the game. On Wednesday, Virat, who had retired from T20Is following a title-sealing 76 during the final of the ICC T20 World Cup last year, got an upgrade in his T20I rating. His all-time T20I rating was updated by the ICC from 897 to 909, as per Wisden. This is the third-highest rating points attained by a batter in the ICC Men's T20I Rankings, behind Suryakumar Yadav (912) and England's Dawid Malan (919), who have had their reigns at the top of the ranking charts.

Virat's highest rating points in the ICC Men's Test Rankings are 937, the highest for an Indian batter and overall 11th-highest of all time. He achieved this way back in 2018 during the tour to England, where he slammed 593 runs in 10 innings with two centuries and three fifties and was the lone-warrior for India in an otherwise poor series for the batters.

In ODIs, Virat's rating points peaked at 909 as well during the tour to England back in 2018, during which he scored 191 runs in three ODIs, including two half-centuries.At the peak of his success, Virat was once rated as the number one batter in ICC Men's Test, ODI and T20I Rankings simultaneously.

With this latest feat, Virat has made another strong statement supporting an argument that he could be the best all-format batter of all time.

Virat retired from T20Is with 4,188 runs to his name in 125 matches and innings at an average of 48.69, with a century and 25 fifties. His best score is 122*. He is the third-highest run-getter in the format's history.

In May this year, Virat announced his retirement from Test cricket ahead of the new ICC World Test Championship (WTC) cycle starting with the ongoing tour to England following a disastrous tour to Australia, where he could manage just 190 runs in nine innings across five matches at an average of 23.75, with a century at Perth being his notable contribution.

He retired as India's fourth-highest Test run-getter and is overall the 19th-highest in the all-time list, with 9,230 runs at an average of 46.85, with 30 centuries and 31 fifties. His best score is 254*.

Virat is still active in ODIs though, scoring 14,181 runs in 302 matches and 290 innings at an average of 57.88, with 51 centuries and 74 fifties. His best score is 183. He is the third-highest run-getter of all time in ODIs and second-highest for India. His last ODI assignment was the ICC Champions Trophy-winning campaign back in March, during which he scored 218 runs in five matches, with a century against Pakistan and a half-century against Australia in the semifinals being the highlights.

Across all formats, Virat has scored 27,599 runs at an average of 52.27, with 82 centuries and 143 fifties in 617 innings and a best score of 254*. He is India's second-highest international run-getter ever and overall third-highest.

England Docked Two WTC Points After Thrilling Lord's Triumph Over India

London, 16 July: England, despite securing a nail-biting 22-run victory over India at Lord's and taking a 2-1 lead in the five-Test series, have suffered a late setback. The International Cricket Council has penalised them for maintaining a slow over-rate, docking two World Test Championship points and imposing a 10 percent match fee fine.

Match referee Richie Richardson, of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel, confirmed that England finished the match two overs short of the required rate, even after accounting for standard time allowances. Under Article 16.11.2 of the WTC Playing Conditions, such a lapse incurs a deduction of one point per shortfall over, while Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct mandates a 5 percent fee fine per over not completed. England accepted the penalties, with captain Ben Stokes promptly pleading guilty and bypassing the need for a formal hearing.

The deduction has had immediate repercussions on the standings. England's points total has dropped from 24 to 22 out of 36, causing their World Test Championship percentage to tumble from 66.67 percent to 61.11 percent. Consequently, they have slipped from second to third place, overtaken by Sri Lanka, while Australia remains top of the table with a perfect record so far.

Despite the setback, the intensity of the Lord's Test cannot be understated. With the match boiling down to the final session, bowler Shoaib Bashir produced a courageous last-wicket breakthrough, sealing a dramatic win. The ebb and flow of the match kept spectators enthralled until the very last ball. Ben Stokes, himself rewarded with a Player-of-the-Match performance, led from the front, contributing vital runs and a five-wicket haul as England held nerve to emerge victorious.

However, this triumph was overshadowed by a technical infraction. The ICC pointed out that even with provisions for player injuries, DRS reviews, and other delays, England hadn't completed their overs in the prescribed time frame. Their failure was confirmed by the officiating umpires—Paul Reiffel, Sharfuddoula Ibne Shahid, Ahsan Raza, and Graham Lloyd—underscoring the WTC context, where even a single point can tip the balance in deciding finalists. With each series now carrying heightened importance and every over counting, the current penalties signal a shift in accountability for pace of play.

Ben Stokes responded to the sanctions with defiance and resolve. Acknowledging the penalty, he maintained that his team's slow over-rate stemmed from legitimate in-game decisions, such as managing bowlers' workload and responding to review signals. He



that the penalties were procedural rather than performance-based.

This is not the first time England has faced criticism over-rate management. The team has a history of lagging behind—having suffered similar sanctions in previous series under the same regulations. In fact, Edgbaston's over-rate policies have been a recurring sore point, drawing continuous protest from Stokes, who has advocated for reforms like the introduction of a stop-clock system in Test cricket—similar to those in limited-overs formats.

Analysts highlight that while England's aggressive tactics—especially frequent bowling changes and field tweaks—often disrupt their over-rate, the repercussions are growingly significant in reiterated England's calls for greater understanding and flexibility from the ICC to accommodate diverse playing styles.

With the series now heading into the fourth Test at Old Trafford on July 23, England will need to climb both on-field and off-field. On the field, the focus will be on sustaining bowling discipline and tactical execution; off the field, they must manage time more efficiently and avoid further procedural fines that could jeopardise their World Test Championship ambitions.

Looking ahead, the upcoming Test match will not only test batting depth and bowling strategies but will also require greater on-field management. England must balance aggression and control—bowling at an effective pace without falling afoul of time regulations.

Atlético Madrid Clinches Deal for Argentina's Thiago Almada in Summer Transfer Boost

London, 16 July: Atlético Madrid have confirmed an agreement to secure Argentina international Thiago Almada from Brazilian side Botafogo, pending medicals and final contractual signatures. The 24-year-old, fresh from a loan stint at Olympique Lyonnais, is poised to enhance the Rojiblancos' forward options under Diego Simeone's guidance .

Madrid's sporting director outlined that the transfer fee is believed to be in the region of €20 million for the player's registration rights, with potential add-ons and future sell-on clauses raising the total consideration to as high as €40 million . Botafogo may also earn additional sums—up to €15 million—should Almada be moved on in the coming three years.

The agreement includes a five-year contract extending to 2030, marking a long-term commitment to the Argentine on a multi-million-euro deal .Finalisation of the move follows a productive six-month loan in Ligue 1, where Almada contributed goals and assists during his time at Lyon .

Almada arrives at the Spanish capital in the wake of forward Ángel Correa's departure to Mexico's Tigres. Atlético view him as a fitting replacement, blending flair, vision and attacking impetus into their established frontline alongside Julián Álvarez, Antoine Griezmann and Alexander Sorloth .His arrival forms part of an extensive recruitment drive that already includes defender Clement Lenglet, goalkeeper Juan Musso, midfielder Álex Baena, and full-back Matteo Ruggeri .

Sporting chiefs at the Wanda Metropolitano have kept a keen watch on Almada since 2019, closely monitoring his progression through spells with Vélez Sarsfield, Atlanta United and later Botafogo . He first drew attention at Atlanta, where his per-



formances in the MLS earned him a record-breaking transfer to Botafogo in 2024 .

His success in Brazil was swift, helping Botafogo secure the Série A title and Copa Libertadores in 2024 .In January 2025, it was that performance which led to his loan move to Lyon . Almada's credentials extend to the international stage: he has ten senior caps for Argentina, scoring four goals, and was part of the squad that lifted the World Cup in 2022 . During his early years, he rose through Vélez's ranks before earning a move to Atlanta in 2022 .

Known for his creativity, dribbling, and versatility—able to play centrally or on the wing—Almada brings a fresh attacking dimension to Simeone's system. Club officials believe he will offer both immediate impact and growth potential, reinforcing Atlético's ambition to remain in title contention in La Liga and Europe .

Supporters have welcomed the move enthusiastically, given Almada's public admiration for the club and affinity with Argentine stars who have thrived in Madrid .Interviews from last year revealed both his desire to join Atlético and close relationships with departing players like Correa and De Paul .

Negotiators believe the fee reflects Atlético's shrewd dealings in a crowded midfield market—holding firm even as Benfica and Zenit showed interest . With Edwin's approval, his medicals are expected in the coming days ahead of a formal unveiling.

"Everybody Is Worried, Hurt, Scared": Chhetri Warns Indian Football as ISL Faces Indefinite Suspension

Riyadh, 16 July: Indian football icon Sunil Chhetri has broken his silence on the sudden hold-up that has paralysed preparations for the upcoming Indian Super League season, describing a mood of widespread anxiety and urging calm among players and support staff across the country. In an emotional message shared on his social media, the Bengaluru FC striker acknowledged the fear and uncertainty gripping the ecosystem following the delay.

Initially informed that pre-season activities would be pushed back by two weeks, Chhetri admitted that the news first brought relief during a personal break. He wrote that the surprise extension of his off-season brought a moment of relaxation. Yet, his tone quickly shifted when the short delay turned into an indefinite suspension. "That 'fortnight' has now changed to 'indefinitely' and that smile's been wiped out," he confessed .

The 40-year-old veteran then revealed a flood of messages and calls from teammates, trainers, physios, masseurs and operational staff—not just from Bengaluru FC but from across all ISL clubs—expressing deep concern about what lies ahead . "Everybody in the Indian football ecosystem is worried, hurt, scared about the uncertainty we are faced with," Chhetri wrote, capturing the mood within the league .



The crisis stems from a stalled renewal of the Master Rights Agreement between the AIFF and FSDL, which governs the commercial and operational structure of the ISL. The upcoming season, originally slated to begin in September, has disappeared from the AIFF's calendar—mired in regulatory disputes and constrained by court oversight that prevents signing new agreements .

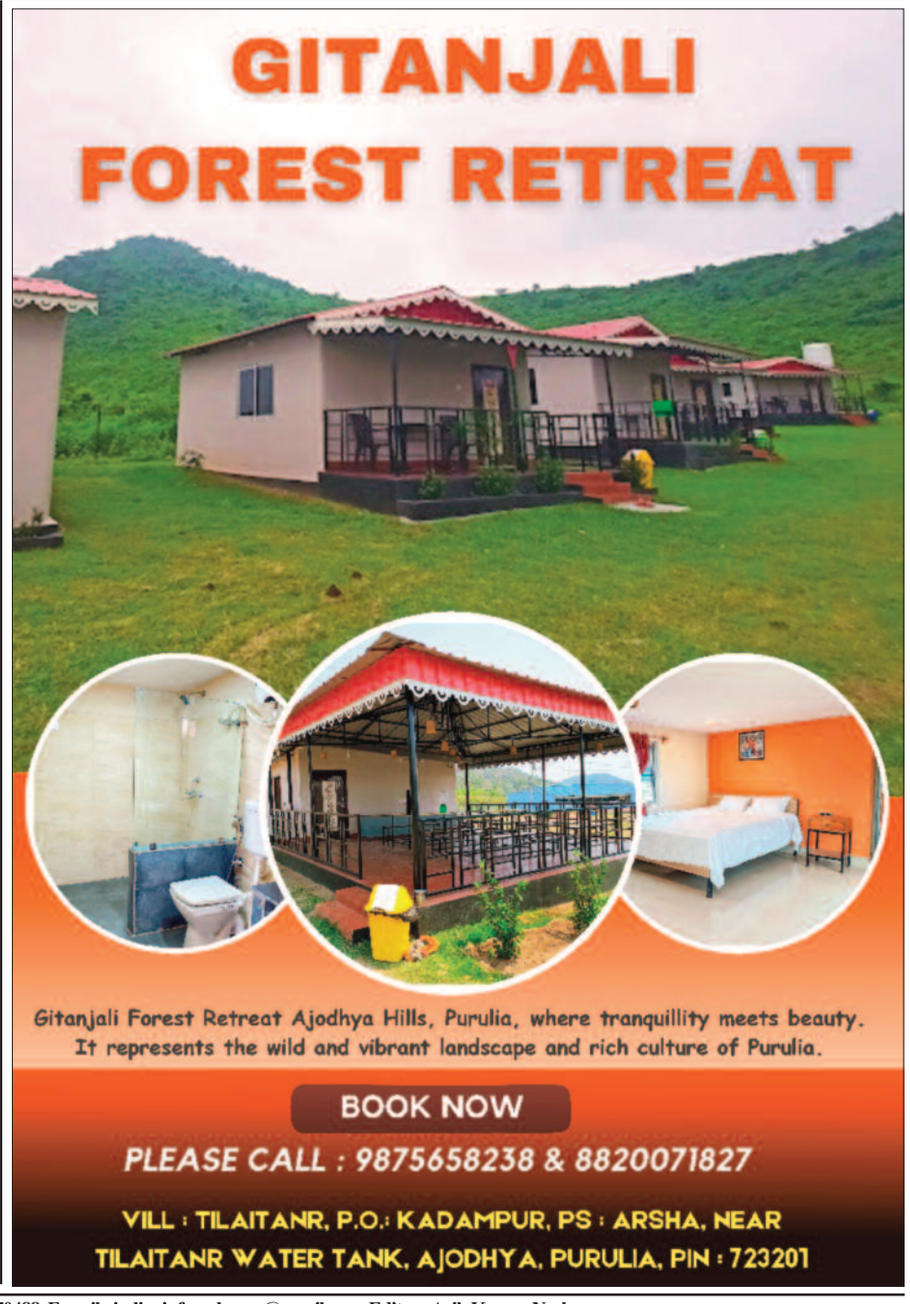
Chhetri's intervention is significant. As India's most capped footballer and a leading goalscorer, he serves as both senior statesman and moral anchor for the sport in the country. Despite his international retirement in 2024, he reversed the decision in early 2025 to lend his experience and presence during a crucial qualifying campaign, reinforcing the weight of his voice in turbulent times .

He acknowledged not having a solution, but urged those affected to stay composed and united: "Please stay calm. We'll ride this storm together… Keep training and getting better. Football has to resume soon. It will," he said .

Chhetri's tone was not one of alarmism, but of measured resolve. He recognised ongoing efforts by administrators and expressed hope that a resolution will come swiftly. Though unaware of the precise timeline, he conveyed confidence that those driving Indian football are working toward a firm fix.

The wider impact of the suspension extends far beyond players. Thousands rely on the league's operation—club coaches, sports medicine professionals, stadium staff, marketing teams and broadcast crews have all been thrown into uncertainty by an engineering breakdown at the administrative level.

At stake is not just the visibility of the ISL; delays risk disrupting developmental pathways, revenue streams and the financial viability of smaller clubs. The league's halt undermines efforts to grow grassroots football, earn sponsorship partnerships and maintain fan engagement. Beyond the economic fallout, there's a psychological cost. Chhetri's appeal highlights the emotional strain experienced by professionals whose livelihoods now hang in limbo.



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