Weather 26.0° MAX | 24.0° MIN
SUNRISE : 6:03 SUNSET : 5:32

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Four more Indian nationals rescued in Nepal, 120 cross safely from China: MEA

New Delhi, The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Saturday stated that four more Indian nationals were rescued from a hydropower project in Nepal's Rasuwa, bringing the total number of rescued Indian nationals to 88. The ministry confirmed that the rescued individuals are Ripu Kumar, Chaneshwar Narzary, Kripa Shankar and Mohammed Minhajuddin.

The MEA also stated that 120 Indian nationals crossed into Nepal from China on Saturday. It mentioned that 287 Indian nationals still remain missing and 128 persons of Indian origin also remain missing as of 5 pm on Saturday. A six-member forensic experts team from India is expected to reach Kathmandu on Saturday to assist in the analysis of DNA samples for identification of mortal remains. "A specialised technical team for tunnel rescue reconnaissance reached Kathmandu yesterday and started working from today to assist in tunnel rescue in the impacted area. Based on their recommendation, a specialised tunnel rescue team from India with equipment is expected to reach Nepal today," MEA stated.

Meanwhile, Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel on Saturday expressed gratitude to President Droupadi Murmu for her concern and the support extended by the government of India following the devastating flash floods in Nepal that left hundreds dead and caused widespread destruction. "On behalf of the Government and the people of Nepal, I extend our deepest gratitude to Your Excellency SmtDroupadi Murmu for your kind concern and also for the generous support and solidarity extended by your government following the recent calamity in Nepal," the Office of the President of Nepal posted on X. Paudel also conveyed condolences over the tragic loss of Indian lives in the aftermath of the catastrophic flood on Wednesday. "We also offer our heartfelt condolences and profound sympathy to the Government and the people of India for the tragic loss of Indian lives in the disaster of August 26, 2026," he stated.

Nepal tragedy: Reports emphasise need for close regional cooperation against future devastation

New Delhi, Nepal's devastating flash floods serve as a reminder of the urgent need for regional collaboration, where countries under the shadow of the mighty Himalayas need to adopt a diplomatic narrative that includes ecological security as an important part of relationships, exert reports.

Popular Nepali newspaper Kantipur Friday observed that it is time for Kathmandu to immediately start working on disaster diplomacy and on the agreement with Beijing on its "implementation modality" and "framework".

Incidentally, China and Nepal had agreed to share cross-border real-time information on floods and landslides and flag potential risks of glacial lake outburst floods. However, no formal agreement has been signed yet to implement such a mechanism despite Nepal Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal having raised the issue during his China visit in May. Such reports emphasised the need for sharing information and cooperation in disaster reduction, where long-term risks should be taken into account in the construction of strategic structures such as roads, bridges, and hydropower projects near international borders.

Parliamentarians from across the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region too had insisted on Wednesday, as news of the devastation emerged, that the tragedy underscored the urgent need for stronger regional cooperation to address climate risks that transcend national boundaries. They were meeting for the two-day 2nd Hindu Kush Himalaya Parliamentarians' Meet in Thimphu, where a moment of silence for the victims and their families was also observed, according to the International Centre for Integrated contd. on page 3

'Water up to 20 feet...ran up hills, climbed trees to stay alive': Indians rescued from flood-hit Nepal recount horrors

New Delhi, People from different parts of the country, who were rescued from flood-ravaged Nepal, on Saturday recounted the extent of devastation in the Himalayan Nation and considered themselves lucky to have escaped the catastrophe. Migrant labourers from Bihar's Bettiah referred to the flash floods as "unimaginable. One of the labourers said: "There were five to seven of us, three of our people went missing...There was a lot of water in the area, rising up to 20 feet. We took our children and ran up the hill. After an hour, when the water level receded, we went to look for them, but we could not find the three people."

"We were told to run away from there as people said there is no guarantee, the water (flood) might come again," he added. A youngster said: "At around 9:30 a.m., I heard a lot of noise. I went outside to see what was happening, but I could only see dust. Moments later, I saw that there was a lot of water due to the storm...immediately I alerted the people inside. We then ran towards higher terrain but three others were left behind." "After we came down, there was no trace of any humans nor our house," he said. Another migrant worker, sitting beside him, added: "We got up after hearing about the massive flow of water and despite being barefoot, we started running uphill...when we came down after an hour to search for our people, they were nowhere to be found."

In Chennai, a woman who was on a pilgrimage to the Kailash Mansarovar, returned safely from Nepal. Speaking to IANS, her son-in-law said: "My mother-in-law had reached Kathmandu on August 24 and was to visit (Mansarovar) on the 26th. Along with her there were 21 people in the bus when the disaster struck, while they were nearing the immigration office at China-Nepal border.""They were unable to breathe contd. on page 3

PSU lenders to appeal NCLT approval of Subhash Chandra's Rs 6.5-cr repayment plan

New Delhi, Public sector lenders LIC Housing Finance, Canara Bank and Union Bank of India on Saturday said they will challenge the National Company Law Tribunal's (NCLT) approval of Essel Group Chairman Subhash Chandra's repayment plan in his personal insolvency case before the appellate tribunal. The three lenders which collectively held an 8.45 per cent voting share in Chandra's insolvency proceedings had opposed and voted against the repayment plan.

According to LIC Housing Finance, the plan was ultimately approved on account of votes cast in its favour by other financial creditors which collectively accounted for 80.81 per cent of the voting share. "The plan was ultimately approved on account of the votes cast in favour of the Repayment Plan by the other Financial Creditors, aggregating to 80.81 per cent," the housing financier said. It also said it would immediately file an appeal before the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), along with other public financial institutions.

Meanwhile, Canara Bank said it had opposed Chandra's repayment plan of Rs 6.25 crore and would challenge the NCLT order before the NCLAT. The bank said it held a 1.60 per cent voting share, while Union Bank of India and LIC Housing Finance held 0.76 per cent and 6.09 per cent, respectively. Canara Bank also said it had sought a forensic audit, but its request could not be approved due to its minority voting share.

Union Bank of India said it had rejected the repayment plan along with other public sector entities and opposed its approval before the NCLT. However, the plan was approved due to the majority vote of certain private creditors, it said. The lenders' statements came after the NCLT approved the repayment plan submitted by Chandra in his personal insolvency contd. on page 3

India's forex reserves hit record $729.3 billion on strong dollar inflows

New Delhi, India's foreign exchange reserves surged to a record high of $729.3 billion in the week ended August 21, providing the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) with greater firepower to manage pressure on the rupee amid elevated oil prices and global economic uncertainties. According to data released by the RBI on Friday, the country's forex reserves increased by $12.4 billion during the week, surpassing the previous record of $728.5 billion registered in February.

The sharp rise in reserves has been supported by strong foreign currency inflows following measures introduced by the central bank in June to attract overseas capital. These included a special deposit programme aimed at overseas Indians and other non-resident customers. The measures have attracted around $72.8 billion in inflows through August 21, helping strengthen India's external position and reducing the risk of a third consecutive year of a deficit in the country's broadest measure of capital flows.

The increase in reserves also gives the RBI greater room to intervene in the foreign exchange market and support the rupee if necessary. The Indian currency has recovered around 1.7 per cent from its record low reached in May, but remains under pressure, particularly because of higher crude oil prices and the country's heavy dependence on imported fuel. However, the strategy of attracting overseas deposits comes at a significant cost for the central bank. Under the special diaspora deposit programme, the RBI is bearing the hedging costs incurred by banks, contd. on page 3

GST Council to meet on Sept 12, likely to discuss registration reforms

New Delhi, The 57th meeting of the GST Council -- chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman -- is scheduled to be held here on September 12 with simplification of GST registration for large businesses likely to figure on the agenda, according to an office memorandum circulated by the GST Council secretariat. It further highlighted that the meeting will be preceded by a meeting of officers on September 11.

The Council -- comprising the Union Finance Minister and state finance ministers -- will meet after a gap of over a year. Its 56th meeting was held on September 3-4, 2025, when the Centre and states approved a major restructuring of GST rates and slabs. The new GST structure -- which came into effect from September 22, 2025 -- comprises two standard rates of 5 per cent and 18 per cent along with a 40 per cent rate for select sin and ultra-luxury goods. It replaced the earlier four-tier structure of 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent that had been in place since the launch of GST in July 2017.

At the September 12 meeting, the Council is likely to discuss simplification of GST registration procedures for businesses that pass on tax credit of more than Rs 2.5 lakh a month. Automation and other changes in the process of GST registration cancellation are also expected to be considered Currently, there is no uniformity in the procedures followed by central GST formations and various state formations while granting GST registration to large businesses passing on input tax credit of over Rs 2.5 lakh per month. This can create uncertainty for taxpayers.

The GST Council had approved a simplified registration scheme for small and low-risk businesses at its September 2025 meeting. The scheme was rolled out from November 1, 2025. Under the simplified scheme, applicants identified as small and low-risk by the GST system through data analysis, or those who self-assess that their monthly output contd. on page 3

NEET-PG 2026 to be held for over 2.73 lakh medical graduates tomorrow

New Delhi, The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Post Graduate (NEET-PG 2026) will be held across 1,300 centres in 340 cities across the country on Sunday with more than 2.73 lakh medical graduates expected to appear in the exam, an official said. The National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) had released NEET-PG 2026 admit card on August 26, the official said.

A total of 2,73,183 candidates had registered for NEET-PG 2026, representing an increase of more than 12.5 per cent compared to the previous year, the official said, adding that the exam will be conducted in a single shift. Clearing NEET-PG allows doctors to secure seats in various advanced medical courses across government and private colleges and pursue courses including MD (Doctor of Medicine) and MS (Master of Surgery). Earlier, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare J.P. Nadda reviewed the preparedness for NEET-PG 2026.

The Union Minister directed all stakeholders to ensure a smooth, secure, transparent and technology-enabled examination process. For maintaining the integrity of the exam, the authorities are relying on an extensive security framework which includes CCTV surveillance, biometric verification, frisking, signal jammers, dynamic computer allocation, live monitoring through central and regional command centres, and deployment of more than 60,000 examination personnel. Nadda urged candidates not to be misled by rumours or fraudulent claims relating to the examination.

He highlighted that the final question paper is selected through a highly secure, encrypted and time-bound process shortly before the commencement of the examination, with multiple layers of technological and operational safeguards ensuring its confidentiality until the scheduled start time. Any claim of prior access to the question paper by anyone is therefore entirely false and intended to mislead candidates, Union Minister Nadda said. He advised aspirants to rely only on official communications issued by NBEMS and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and to promptly report any suspicious activities or attempts at unfair practices. Union Minister Nadda during the high-level review meeting assessed the preparedness of the NBEMS, technology partners and other agencies involved in conducting the examination.

According to a press statement, officials briefed him on examination logistics, candidate facilitation measures, security arrangements and the technology-driven interventions introduced for this year's test. Union Minister Nadda asked officials to ensure that every effort is made to uphold the highest standards of fairness, integrity and security. He also told them contd. on page 3

NTA releases final answer keys for Joint CSIR-UGC NET June 2026 exam

New Delhi, The National Testing Agency has released the final answer keys for all five subjects of the Joint CSIR-UGC NET June 2026 examination on its official website, an official said on Saturday. In a message on X, the NTA said, "Joint CSIR-UGC NET June 2026 Final Answer Keys are now available. Candidates can visit the official portal to check the answer key relevant to their examination."

The NTA's Director (Exams) said in a public notice, "Candidates who appeared in the examination may log in using their credentials to access and view the Final Answer Keys pertaining to their subject."

"Candidates are advised to visit the official Joint CSIR-UGC NET June 2026 examination website regularly for the latest updates regarding the examination," said the notice.

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The NTA conducted the Joint CSIR-UGC NET June 2026 examination for determining the eligibility of Indian nationals for 'award of Junior Research Fellowship and appointment as Assistant Professor', 'appointment as Assistant Professor and admission to PhD' and 'admission to PhD only' in Indian universities and colleges.

The NTA conducted a series of national examinations between June and July this year. The examinations for which answer keys were processed together spanned three major examinations, UGC-NET, CSIR-NET and ICAR (AIEEA-PG and AICE-PhD), conducted across 184 subjects and papers in all, comprising 24,700 distinct questions. Over 10 lakh candidates registered for the examination, and of these, nearly 8 lakh appeared.

Sources stated that each of these questions has to be set, moderated, translated, typeset, administered and evaluated to a common standard. They further stated that given the sheer breadth of subjects and the volume of unique questions, one can grasp the sense of the scale and complexity of the process.

Earlier this month, the NTA announced that it will re-conduct the University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) for English, Sociology and Commerce after several errors were found in the question papers.

After CM Adhikari's instruction, Kolkata Police register suo motu FIR against Mamata Banerjee

Kolkata, Following the instruction from West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari earlier in the day, the Kolkata Police on Saturday registered a suo motu FIR against former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over violation of a Calcutta High Court order at the foundation day rally of Trinamool Congress' student wing, Trinamool Chhatra Parishad (TMCP), on Friday.

In the FIR registered at the Hastings Police Station in South Kolkata, the former Chief Minister has been accused of violating the Calcutta High Court order, which imposed some restrictions on organising the TMCP rally at Cathedral Road in central Kolkata on Friday.

In the FIR, she has also been accused of continuing the programme at Cathedral Road beyond the time limit prescribed by the Calcutta High Court. In the FIR, charges have been brought against Mamata Banerjee's followers for engaging in scuffles with the police personnel present there and also obstructing them from performing their duties.

Of the restrictions set by the Calcutta High Court for the rally, the most important was that the rally should be restricted to a single lane and the second lane should be kept free for traffic movement. The Calcutta High Court had fixed the rally time between 12 noon and 3 p.m.

But in reality, it was witnessed that both the lanes were blocked for a substantial period of time since the programme started, thus creating tremendous traffic congestion in the area. At the same time, the programme continued well beyond the court-fixed limit of 3 p.m., according to the police.

Mamata Banerjee has also been accused of inciting her followers to violate the court-imposed restrictions. According to the police, because of her instigation, her followers were encouraged to violate the court-imposed restrictions and also enter into scuffles with the police personnel present there. Earlier in the day, CM Adhikari informed that contd. on page 3

US clears plan to scrap H-1B job-loss window

Washington, The Trump administration has completed its review of a proposal to eliminate the discretionary 60-day grace period available to H-1B and other foreign professionals after their employment ends, potentially affecting thousands of Indian workers and their families. The Department of Homeland Security proposal, titled "Eliminating the Discretionary 60-day Grace Period", was submitted to the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs on August 6.

The review concluded on August 27 with the action listed as "Consistent with Change", according to the official regulatory record. The designation means the proposal cleared the White House review process with changes. The proposal has not been published, and its full provisions remain unavailable. The existing 60-day protection therefore remains in force.

The next step would ordinarily be publication of the proposed rule in the Federal Register, followed by a public comment period. DHS would then have to consider the comments and issue a final rule before any change could take effect. The proposal carries Regulatory Information Number 1615-AD22 and is being developed by US Citizenship and Immigration Services. The regulatory record describes it as a proposed rule that is not economically significant and has no legal deadline. Under the current regulation, eligible workers may receive up to 60 consecutive days after their employment ends, or until the expiration of their authorised stay, whichever period is shorter.

The window allows affected workers to find another employer willing to sponsor them, seek a change of immigration status or prepare to leave the United States. It covers people holding H-1B, L-1, O-1 and several other temporary employment visas. Indian nationals, who constitute the largest group of H-1B beneficiaries, could face particular uncertainty if the administration proceeds with the proposal. Ajay Jain Bhutoria, a former member of the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, condemned the proposed change and called for the existing grace period to be extended rather than eliminated.

"I strongly condemn and slam this proposed DHS policy. Eliminating the 60-day grace period is both inhumane and unworkable. When a high-skilled worker faces a sudden termination, 60 days was already dangerously short. Stripping away this protection entirely leaves thousands of law-abiding individuals with zero contd. on page 3

India's DPI becomes global model for inclusive growth: Report

New Delhi, India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) has emerged as a global blueprint for inclusive growth, with countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America exploring elements of the country's digital architecture to accelerate service delivery and financial inclusion, a new report has said.

"At the heart of this transformation lies a simple but powerful idea: digital infrastructure should function as a public good, accessible, affordable and interoperable for everyone," the report from Times of Oman said.

Further, India's DPI provides an important foundation for the country's next phase of digital development when artificial intelligence reshapes global economic activity.

The publication said the DPI rests on the JAM trinity - Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar digital identity and broad mobile connectivity - which has been extended through platforms such as the India Stack, Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and DigiLocker.

Collectively these reforms reduced transaction costs, while Direct Benefit Transfer improved transparency and broadened access to government programmes.

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana expanded access to formal banking, bringing crores of previously unbanked citizens into the financial system. Stack serves as an open set of digital platforms and application programming interfaces (APIs) enabling governments, financial institutions and private enterprises to innovate while maintaining interoperability.

The report also highlighted innovations built on the foundation of India's DPI such as the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, an integrated digital health ecosystem; e-Shram, a national database for unorganised workers; and the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) an open network that democratises digital commerce.

"Rather than creating isolated digital services, India has built an integrated ecosystem that allows citizens, businesses and governments to interact seamlessly," the report said.

The publication found the model becoming increasingly relevant as nations seek technology-driven solutions that promote economic participation while reducing barriers to access.

"The World Bank had acknowledged the country's rapid progress in building an inclusive digital ecosystem capable of reaching populations at extraordinary scale," the report noted.(agencies)

Trump hails Indian-origin astronaut Anil Menon

Washington, President Donald Trump has praised Indian-origin NASA astronaut Anil Menon and two crewmates as "great Americans, great patriots, brave people" during a call to the International Space Station, inviting them to the Oval Office after their return to Earth. is a great honour, to be with you is a great honor and I just want to thank Jessica, Anil, Jack, great Americans, great patriots, brave people," Trump said during Friday's call from NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston.

"I wouldn't do it. I will tell you right now, I hate to admit it, I would not want to do it, but some people love it more than anything," he said.

Trump praised the courage of Menon, Jessica Meir and Jack Hathaway, saying that even their selection for the mission was an achievement.

Menon, a colonel in the US Space Force, told Trump that he was proud to serve in space and spoke about a spacewalk he completed last week.

"Thank you, sir. And I would like to say, as a colonel in the Space Force, that I am very proud to serve in the largest domain imaginable," Menon said.

"And last week, I got the great honor of doing a spacewalk and got to look at the space station from the robotic arm and saw the incredible ingenuity that we are capable of," he said.

Menon said he was "so proud and excited" that the United States was preparing for missions beyond low-Earth orbit.

"We are going to pave the way to our next journey to the Moon, Moon Base and Mars," he said. "And thank you for propelling us in that direction."

The call followed Trump's announcement of plans for a US Space Academy. He told the astronauts that the proposed institution would be placed at the same level as West Point, the Naval Academy, the Coast Guard Academy and the Air Force Academy.

"If we're going to do it, it has to be at that very high level. Those are among the hardest schools to get into in the whole country," Trump said.

Menon's wife, Anna Menon, joined Trump at the space centre and briefly addressed the astronauts.

"Hi, it's Anna. Great to see you guys up there. We love you guys. You're doing a great job," she said.

Trump said he was proud of establishing the Space Force during his first term. He argued that space-based intelligence had become important to US military operations and would grow further in importance with advances in technology.

"You're really pioneers. In a true sense, they're really pioneers," Trump told the crew.

Hathaway, a Naval Academy graduate, said the institution would be ready to support the proposed Space Academy. Meir said the crew was completing several spacewalks and preparing for another one next week.

Trump concluded the call by asking the astronauts to return safely and offering to receive them at the White House.

"Great job. Very proud. We're going to see you when you get back. In fact, if you want, Oval Office time, right?" Trump said. "So you'll - we'll see you in the Oval Office, OK? Thank you very much. Be safe."

Menon was born and raised in Minneapolis to Indian and Ukrainian immigrant parents. NASA selected him for its 2021 astronaut candidate class after he had worked as SpaceX's first flight surgeon and as a NASA crew flight surgeon supporting International Space Station missions.

He launched aboard Russia's Soyuz MS-29 spacecraft on July 14 with cosmonauts Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina. NaSA said three-member crew would spend about eight months aboard the orbital laboratory, conducting research and technology demonstrations before returning to Earth in April 2027.(agencies)

Pre-festive crackdown: Maha launches statewide drive against illegal sugar hoarding

Mumbai, In a direct strike against speculative trade and market manipulation, the Maharashtra Department of Food, Civil Supplies, and Consumer Protection on Thursday issued a high-level Government Resolution (GR) mandating an aggressive enforcement drive against illegal sugar stocking across the state.

The state government's crackdown comes as wholesale and retail sugar prices hit historic highs in August.

Unjustified ex-mill price hikes -- driven by speculative trading, "paper trading" (transactions without physical stock movement), and inventory hoarding -- have threatened to trigger severe food inflation ahead of India's major festive season.

Acting on strict directives from the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Maharashtra has deployed specialised multi-agency task forces to break artificial supply bottlenecks and stabilise market rates through November 30, 2026.

The GR mandates joint inspections and strict monitoring of sugar stocks, sales, and transportation across the state.

Following guidelines set by the Union government, the state has outlined specific limits for traders, distributors, and bulk consumers to maintain market stability.

According to the GR, traders and distributors cannot hold sugar stocks exceeding 4,000 quintals (400 metric tonnes) at any single time or location, nor keep stock for longer than 30 days from the date of receipt.

Bulk consumers, especially industrial users or commercial entities, consuming more than 10 metric tonnes of sugar monthly as raw material or for production are prohibited from holding inventory exceeding a 15-day supply.

All sugar sellers and distributors must immediately register on the central Food Stock Monitoring Portal (https://foodstock.dfpd.gov.in/)(https://foodstock.dfpd.gov.in/) and update their inventory status every Friday.

The state government warned that non-registration, incomplete reporting, or misrepresentation will be treated as a severe irregularity, inviting strict penal action under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

To enforce compliance, special inspection teams have been deployed across districts from Thursday.

District teams will be led by the District Supply Officer (Chairperson), alongside the District Deputy Registrar of Cooperative Societies, a representative from the Sugar Commissioner's office, a Legal Metrology Inspector, and a Police Officer of Superintendent/Inspector rank.

The Maharashtra government has constituted specific inspection squads under the Controller of Rationing and Director of Civil Supplies for the Mumbai and Thane regions.

Inspection teams are authorised to conduct physical stock counts at registered premises and warehouses, cross-examine purchase invoices, gate passes, and GST returns (using Harmonised System of Nomenclature codes), and photograph discrepancies.

Any stock mismatch or violation of stock limits will be referred immediately to competent authorities for strict legal enforcement under the Essential Commodities Act.

FSSAI proposes to roll out front-of-pack red warning on food, drinks high on sugar, salt, or fat

New Delhi, The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has proposed to roll out a front-of-pack red warning label for processed food items and beverages that are high in sugar, salt, or fat content so that consumers can make an informed choice. "The warning label shall indicate the applicable declaration, such as 'HIGH FAT', 'HIGH SUGAR', 'HIGH SALT' and/or 'HIGHLY SWEETENED BEVERAGE' ... to enable consumers to readily identify products high in the specified nutrients," according to a Reuters that cited an FSSAI filing in the Surpreme Court.

The submission was made in the Supreme Court as it is hearing petitions from health activists calling for the introduction of warning labels on the lines of Western countries. The Supreme Court had told the FSSAI at a hearing earlier this month to expedite the introduction of these labels.Big Food companies such as Nestle, PepsiCo, and Coca-Cola have been opposing the move as it is expected to hit sales.The Supreme Court had pulled up the FSSAI during the last hearing over prolonged delays in implementing mandatory packaged food warning labels. Hearing a public interest litigation, the bench emphasised that transparent nutritional disclosures are crucial to protect citizens, especially young children, from the risk of diseases such as obesity.

A Supreme Court bench comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K. Vinod Chandran expressed profound dissatisfaction with the statutory regulator's slow pace. The judges questioned whether regulatory authorities genuinely prioritised the health of the Indian population. Consequently, the court warned that judicial orders would follow if the executive branch failed to act independently.The Supreme Court rejected arguments suggesting that front-of-package warning labels might unfairly penalise traditional Indian packaged snacks. The bench observed that commercial interests cannot supersede public health imperatives. It granted a strict two-week window for the regulatory body to establish a definitive framework. The judges emphasised that young consumers face aggressive marketing of ultra-processed items. Without unambiguous visual warnings on product containers, consumers cannot readily assess nutritional risks.(agencies)

Gen Z in APAC region refrain from antivirus use on mobile phones

New Delhi, Gen Zs globally and in the Asia Pacific are less likely than older generations to use antivirus software on smartphones or change passwords regularly despite spending more time online, a report said on Friday. Gen Zs globally reported high confidence in navigating the digital world, the report from Kaspersky said after surveying about 7,200 respondents worldwide.The report found 57 per cent of Gen Zs globally spend more time online than offline, with 56 per cent of APAC Gen Zs mirroring that trend.Smartphones play a particularly central role in their digital lives, with 75 per cent of APAC Gen Zs naming them as their main device for regular internet use, the report added.About two thirds of Gen Z respondents in APAC say they feel confident but only 26 per cent across the region rate their understanding of digital threats and online safety practices as advanced.Understanding of digital threats and protective measures was reported highest in India (35 per cent), followed by Indonesia and Malaysia (28 per cent each), while confidence in digital security knowledge is notably lower in Vietnam (24 per cent), Thailand (23 per cent), and especially China (10 per cent).

Protective behaviours lagged as only 22 per cent of APAC Gen Zs use antivirus software on mobile devices and 35 per cent change passwords regularly, compared with higher shares among Millennials, Gen X and Boomers.However, 90 per cent of Gen Z respondents in APAC reported experiencing at least one cyber incident in the past year, including social media hacks, data leaks, scams and loss of access to gaming accounts, the report noted."Gen Z has grown up online, so digital services often feel intuitive and familiar to them. However, familiarity should not be confused with security expertise. Being able to navigate apps, platforms and devices confidently does not necessarily mean being able to identify scams, manage passwords securely or protect personal data," said Irina Ermilova, Vice President for Consumer Product Management at Kaspersky.

Everest, Laljee Godhoo barred from selling compounded hing powder: FSSAI

New Delhi, The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has prohibited the sale of compounded asafoetida (hing powder) by Everest Food Products Private Limited and Laljee Godhoo over alleged non-compliance with prescribed food safety standards, the regulator said on Saturday.

Taking to the social media platform X, the food safety regulator said it had issued prohibition orders against the two firms under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, following surveillance and legal sampling that found compounded hing products to be sub-standard and, in some cases, misbranded or adulterated.

In the case of Everest Food Products, samples of compounded asafoetida (hing powder) and its variants were found to be misbranded and sub-standard by the Food Analyst of the primary food laboratory.

FSSAI said the alcohol-soluble extract in one sample was found to be 0 per cent against the prescribed minimum standard of 5 per cent. Samples of Yellow Hing Powder and Black Hing Powder were also found to be sub-standard, with alcoholic extract levels of 3.29 per cent and 4.4 per cent, respectively.

The regulator said routine surveillance had also found non-compliance with the prescribed alcoholic extract parameter.

Previous regulatory compliance reviews of products including Chicken Masala, Garam Masala and Egg Curry Powder had also identified labelling-related non-compliances, it added.

FSSAI said consistent non-compliance had been observed in samples of asafoetida collected from various sources and locations, with products found to contain less than the prescribed 5 per cent alcoholic extract.

The sale of compounded asafoetida with all its variants by Everest Food Products has therefore been prohibited with immediate effect until further orders.

In the case of Laljee Godhoo, samples of compounded hing and compounded asafoetida, in powder and lump forms, were found to be sub-standard and not conforming to prescribed requirements.

Raw hing varieties used in manufacturing the compounded product were also found to be sub-standard due to excess starch. FSSAI regulations prescribe that starch content in hing should not exceed 1 per cent by weight.

The regulator said the violations were considered pervasive across batches based on market surveillance, legal sampling and test reports of raw materials.

Both firms have been directed to submit action plans for rectification and ensure that only standard products are manufactured and sold. FSSAI said further action would be initiated under the law if satisfactory compliance is not established.(agencies)

Maharashtra FDA cancels drug sale licence of Cipla's Pune unit

Mumbai, The Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has cancelled the drug sale licences of Cipla Pharma & Life Sciences Ltd's Carry and Forwarding (C&F) facility at Wadki in Pune, due to serious irregularities found during inspections related to the company's Reactin Plus tablets.

During the inspection in June, FDA officials found unauthorised promotional text on the packaging of Reactin Plus, a Schedule H prescription medicine. The words "analgesic and antipyretic" were found on the packaging.

The regulator seized Reactin Plus stock worth over Rs 11 lakh and ordered the firm to recall the drug from the market, citing packaging violations as per the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules, 1945. However, the company failed to fully comply with the directions.

The FDA said such promotion of a prescription medicine could encourage people to take the drug without medical advice, increasing the risk of self-medication.

The subsequent inspection of the company's C&F operations also found irregularities in the storage and distribution of medicines. These included discrepancies between physical and computerised stock records, gaps in purchase and sale records, and non-compliance with recall directions.

The inspection also found medicines stored directly on the floor and inadequate pallet and rack facilities. There were also shortcomings in the records and procedures for handling expired medicines.

The FDA had issued a show-cause notice to the company over the alleged violations. Its response was examined by the FDA before the licences were cancelled under the relevant provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and Drugs Rules, the statement added.

FDA Commissioner Tukaram Mundhe said the department would not show any leniency on issues concerning drug safety and public health, particularly in the advertising, sale, storage and distribution of Schedule H prescription medicines.

"Any violation of rules by any entity involved in the manufacture and distribution of medicines will invite strict action as per law," he added.(agencies)

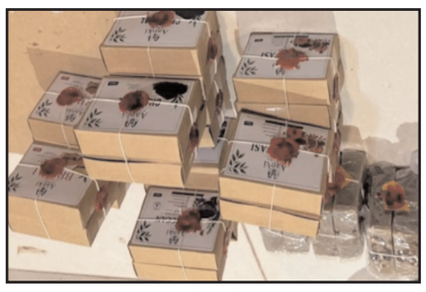
Gujarat firm found manufacturing, repackaging cosmetics without licence; Rs 2.68 lakh stock seized

Ahmedabad, Gujarat's Food and Drugs Control Administration (FDCA) has seized cosmetics and related material worth more than Rs 2.68 lakh from a firm in Ahmedabad's Tragad area after finding that products were allegedly being manufactured and repackaged without the required licence and quality testing.

Acting on confidential information, an FDCA team carried out surprise checking at 'Aanki Herbal' on August 25.According to the department, the firm was manufacturing cosmetics and repackaging products from bulk packs without obtaining the necessary licence or conducting quality tests.

Officials seized stocks including fairness cream, dark-circle cream, shampoo, hair oil, body wash, face wash, scrub, solid perfume and glycerine-based soap.Raw material, packing material and printed labels were also seized, taking the total value of the material to more than Rs 2.68 lakh.The department's investigation found that bulk material used in the activity was allegedly purchased from 'Ravi Marketing' in Odhav area of Ahmedabad."Cosmetics were repackaged and glycerine soap manufactured illegally at a flat in Shivanta Regal," the department said.

The investigation has been extended to Ravi Marketing. FDCA officials also collected samples of 10 different cosmetic products from the premises and sent them to a laboratory for analysis to assess their quality.



The action comes as the state Food and Drug Regulatory Administration steps up enforcement against unauthorised cosmetic manufacturing and repackaging.The department said further legal action would be taken against activities found to compromise public health and safety.

Health Minister Praful Pansheriya said: "The government would maintain a 'zero tolerance' approach towards such activities and continue strict legal action against those found violating regulations."Separately, the Ahmedabad City Crime Branch and FDCA have busted an interstate syndicate allegedly involved in manufacturing, procuring and distributing counterfeit blood-pressure medicines, with three people arrested from Ahmedabad and Lucknow.The investigation began after a pharmaceutical company based in Ankleshwar alerted the FDCA about counterfeit versions of Nicardia Retard 10, a nifedipine sustained-release medicine used for high blood pressure, being sold in the market.Investigators traced suspected counterfeit stock to medical stores and agencies in Gujarat and identified links to suppliers in Lucknow and Jaipur.Thirty strips of the suspected counterfeit medicine were recovered from Kishan Medical Store in Nadiad, while further stock was recovered from Navkar Medical Agency and Mahadev Medical Agency in Bhuj, according to the investigation.The Kutch supply was allegedly linked to AVR Medicos in Jaipur. The three arrested accused were identified as Dashil Sanghavi, 39, of Ahmedabad, and Devendra Yadav, 39, and Umang Rastogi, 34, both from Lucknow.

A case has been registered with the Crime Branch as the investigation continuing.Pansheriya congratulated the Ahmedabad City Police Commissioner and personnel of the Crime Branch and FDCA for the operation.(agencies)

Govt committed to taking Chhattisgarh's sporting talent to global platforms: CM Vishnu Deo Sai

Raipur, (VW) Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai honoured 126 outstanding players and coaches with State Sports Awards for three consecutive years (2023-24, 2024-25, and 2025-26) at a ceremony held at Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Auditorium in Raipur on National Sports Day. The Chief Minister also distributed cash incentives to 540 other players, bringing the total tally to 666 sportspersons and coaches who received financial assistance and awards amounting to ₹1.74 crore. Congratulating the sportspersons on the birth anniversary of hockey legend Major Dhyan Chand, Chief Minister Sai said their discipline and hard work bring pride to both Chhattisgarh and the nation. He emphasised that state athletes are proving their mettle nationally and internationally, and the government remains committed to ensuring that a lack of resources or opportunities does not hamper deserving talent.

Chief Minister Sai announced that the state government is taking concrete steps to secure the future of outstanding athletes. A merit list of 156 sportspersons has been released to pave the way for their direct appointment to government services. Providing career security alongside training, modern infrastructure, and exposure will encourage the youth to pursue sports professionally, he added.

Highlighting the sporting potential of tribal regions, the Chief Minister noted that the Bastar Olympics has emerged as a major platform for nurturing grassroots talent. Youth participation rose from 1.65 lakh in the first edition to 3.91 lakh in the second edition, reflecting growing enthusiasm and positive socio-economic transformation in the region. Similarly, the Surguja Olympics and the successful hosting of the Khelo India Tribal Games have strengthened the state's athletic environment.

To elevate state sports infrastructure, Chief Minister Sai outlined plans for the Mukhyamantri Khel Utkarsh Mission, backed by a budget provision of ₹100 crore. The mission aims to build a comprehensive ecosystem covering early talent identification, professional coaching, modern equipment, and competitive exposure.

Modern sports facilities are being developed rapidly across the state, including sports complexes in Kunkuri, Raigarh, and Raipur. A dedicated sports academy is under construction in Nava Raipur at a cost of nearly ₹67 crore to provide world-class facilities to archers. Additionally, an archery academy at Pandrapat, being built for ₹18 crore, will specifically train youth from the Pahadi Korwa community.

Deputy Chief Minister and Sports Minister Arun Sao noted that athletes like Geeta Yadav and Madhu Sidar from the Bilaspur Sports Academy-recently selected for the Indian national team for the Asia Cup-have brought immense pride to Chhattisgarh. Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu and Lok Sabha MP Brijmohan Agrawal also addressed the gathering.

Honourees across categories

- **2023-24:**
  - Shaheed Rajiv Pandey Award: Monika Sahu (Fencing), Subhash Lahre (Weightlifting), Anup Yadu (Netball), Rajesh Rathore (Netball), Bhupendra Kumar Gadhe (Softball), and Parmanand (Para Swimming).
  - Shaheed Kaushal Yadav Award: Dipanshi Netam (Fencing), Mahendra Dhurve (Volleyball), Amit Kumar (Athletics), and Rakesh Kadti (Softball).
  - Veer Hanuman Singh Award: Vikas Dhidhi (Para Judo).
  - Shaheed Pankaj Vikram Samman: Sita Sahu (Para Wheelchair Fencing), Karan Bharti (Wushu), Priyanka Thakur (Wushu), Shashank Masih (Rifle Shooting), Rajiv Sahu (Table Tennis), Kajal (Table Tennis), Bhumika Upadhyay (Hockey), and Ajinkya Singh (Swimming).
  - Shaheed Vinod Choubey Samman: Pravesh Chadha (Shooting), Vijay Bahadur (Handball), Laxman Lal Sahu (Wrestling), K Ravi Shankar (Table Tennis), and Giriraj Bagri (Table Tennis).
  - Chief Minister Trophy: Bilaspur Para Wheelchair Fencing Team (Senior Category).
- **2024-25:**
  - Shaheed Rajiv Pandey Award: Gyaneshwari Yadav (Weightlifting), Ishan Bhatnagar (Badminton), Divyanshu Netam (Fencing), Bhoomi Gupta (Swimming), Sonam Sharma (Netball), Kalaram Patel (Para Athletics), and Lomendra Sahu.
  - Shaheed Kaushal Yadav Award: Manas Bhattacharya (Badminton) and Sukhdev (Para Athletics).
  - Veer Hanuman Singh Award: Ashok Kumar Sahu (Kayaking and Canoeing).
  - Shaheed Pankaj Vikram Samman: Suman Yadav (Football), Rohit Rajak (Hockey), Geetanjali Nirmalkar (Hockey), KS Sai Prashant (Table Tennis), Sushmita Som (Table Tennis), Ramkrishna Sahu (Para Swimming), Swati Sahu (Para Wheelchair Fencing), Saket Samuel (Rifle Shooting), Aman Tiwari (Wushu), and Mansi Dumbre (Wushu).
  - Shaheed Vinod Choubey Samman: Prabha Hussain (Athletics), Sangeeta Rajagopalan (Badminton), Gama Yadav (Wrestling), and Pranay Nand Mazumdar (Table Tennis).
  - Chief Minister Trophy: Bilaspur Archery Team (Senior Women's Category).
- **2025-26:**
  - Shaheed Rajiv Pandey Award: Vikas Kumar (Archery), Kiran Pisda (Football), Dipanshi Netam (Fencing), Sujay Tamboli (Badminton), Ayush Makhija (Badminton), Sanju Devi (Kabaddi), Reema Rai (Soft Tennis), Misha Kumari (Netball), and Lucky Yadav (Para Athletics).
  - Shaheed Kaushal Yadav Award: Divyanshu Dewangan (Shooting), Vikram Raj (Archery), Divyansh Agrawal (Badminton), Sonika Rajwade (Athletics), Swapnil Pradhan (Wushu), Bhumika Choudhary (Netball), Pooja (Netball), and Nikhil Kumar Yadav (Para Athletics).
  - Veer Hanuman Singh Award: Ajay Deep Sarang (Weightlifting).
  - Shaheed Pankaj Vikram Samman: Sanskar Diwan (Wushu), Vidya Singh (Wushu), Ankush Singh (Kho-Kho), Jhamita Sahu (Kho-Kho), Hemshikhar (Volleyball), Arandim Debnath (Table Tennis), Sneha Niyogi (Judo), Anmol Singh (Judo), Yash Kerketta (Boxing), Tukesh Sahu (Gymnastics), Semeshwar Singh (Para Swimming), Shrikant Pandey (Para Judo), and Khushal Yadav (Hockey).
  - o Shaheed Vinod Choubey Samman:Gangeshwar (Athletics), Khwaja Ahmed (Volleyball), Evan Kumar Jain (Weightlifting), Mohd Akram Khan (Volleyball), and Pradeep Joshi (Table Tennis).
  - Chief Minister Trophy: Senior Women's Archery Team and Junior Girls' Soft Tennis Team.

Culture Minister Rajesh Agrawal, Technical Education Minister Guru Khushwant Saheb, MP Vijay Baghel, and MLAs Purandar Mishra, Motilal Sahu, and Sunil Soni were also present.

Where guns once ruled, a thread of trust: Former woman Naxalite ties Rakhi to security personnel in Bastar

Raipur, (VW) Former Naxalite cadre Meena, who spent nearly 25 years inside dense forests participating in armed insurgency, tied a Rakhi to security personnel at a security force camp in Bhanupratappur, Kanker district, marking a symbolic shift from hostility to social integration in conflict-torn Bastar. Security forces welcomed Meena and other surrendered women cadres as sisters, presenting them with traditional gifts and sweets during the Rakshabandhan celebration.

The event witnessed active participation from female police personnel alongside surrendered women cadres, turning a security establishment into a venue for community integration. The initiative forms part of the state government's ongoing rehabilitation and trust-building drive aimed at encouraging active insurgents to lay down arms and return to the social mainstream. Kanker Superintendent of Police Nikhil Rakhecha termed the initiative a symbolic step toward resolving the Naxalite problem through trust-building. "This Rakshabandhan is a unique endeavor reflecting our progress toward ending Naxalism. Tying this thread of relationship will help normalize ties between former cadres and security forces, while accelerating the integration process," Rakhecha said.

For Meena and her companions, transitioning from a quarter-century of insurgent life in the jungle to civilian society presents complex social challenges. Officials noted that public gestures of acceptance by security forces help rebuild mutual confidence, reassuring surrendered cadres that the state provides safety and social security. The event reflects broader socio-economic shifts across the Bastar region under Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai's administration. Beyond security operations, the state government has accelerated infrastructure development, including road construction, schools, and healthcare facilities across remote villages.

बैंक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र
Bank of Maharashtra
भारत सरकार का उपक्रम

JABALPUR ZONAL OFFICE, WRIGHT TOWN, JABALPUR PH: 0761-2480065,67,68

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR SALE

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower/s and Guarantor/s that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/charged to the Bank of Maharashtra, the possession of which have been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Maharashtra, will be sold on **"As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" & "WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS" on 15.09.2026**, for recovery of the balance due to the Bank of Maharashtra from the Borrower (s) and Guarantor(s) as mentioned in the table. Details of the Borrower/s and Guarantor/s, amount due, Short description of the immovable property and encumbrances known thereon, possession type, reserve price and the earnest money deposit are also given as under-

Name & Address of Borrower / Guarantor	Outstanding Dues for Recovery of which Property are being sold	Description of properties	Type of Possession	Reserve Price / EMD Amount / Bid Increase Amount
1) Branch - Asset Recovery Branch Borrower : M/s. BAKD Steel Pvt. Ltd.Directors: (1)Mr. Ganesh Parida s/o Mr. Raghunath Parida (2)Mrs. Ratnaoraha Parida w/o Mr. Ganesh Parida Address: Near Bhanpuri Sub- Station, Ward No. 19, Urkura, Raipur (C.G.) 493221 Guarantor: (1) Mr. Ganesh Parida s/o Mr. Raghunath Parida (2) Mrs. Ratnaprabha Parida w/o Mr. Ganesh Parida (3) Mr. Kartikchandra Parida s/o Mr. Raghunath Parida (4) Mr. Sankarshan Parida s/o Mr. Balram Parida. Village-Birgaon, Raipur (C.G.) 493221	Rs.3,53,78,712.78/- (Rupees Three Crore Fifty three Lakh seventy Eight Thousand Seven Hundred twelve rupees and Seventy eight paise only) (Ledger Bal: Rs. 3,53,78,712.78/- + unapplied interest of Rs.28,96,121/- upto 15/08/2023 + penal interest @ 2.00% p.a. other expenses w.e.f. 16.08.2023 + penal interest and other charges / expenses	(A) Diverted Plot bearing Kh. No 84/128, P.H. No. 108/40, Area admeasuring 3200 Sq. feet located at Village – Urkura, ward no. 19, (Madhav Rao Sapre ward) RIC – Raipur, Tehsil & Distt-Raipur (C.G.) in the Name of Mr. Sankarshan Parida s/o Mr. Balram Parida (B) Diverted Plot bearing Kh. No 84/127, P.H. No. 108/40, Area admeasuring 3100 Sq. feet located at Village – Urkura, ward no. 19, (Madhav Rao Sapre ward) RIC – Raipur, Tehsil & Distt-Raipur (C.G.) in the Name of **Mr. Kartikchandra Parida s/o Mr. Raghunath Parida** **Note -** The sale is subject to order/outcome of S.A. No. 1149/2023	Symbolic	Rs.9360000/- Rs. 936000/- Rs. 10000/-
2) Branch - Asset Recovery Branch, Jabalpur (1) Shubhankar Marketing Pvt. Ltd. Address: C/o Ashirvad traders, 76/3, Nehru Nagar(East), Opposite to Shivaji Square, Bhilai, Distt Durg(C.G.) Directors: 1) Abhilash Joshi s/o Manohar Joshi 2) Manohar Joshi (Deceased) Guarantor: 1) Abhilash Joshi s/o Manohar Joshi Address: B/52, Phase 2 Surya Vihar Colony, Near TI Mall, Junawani, Bhilai Distt Durg (C.G.) 2)Smt. Sudha Joshi; Address:HIG 153, Padmanbhpur, Durg(C.G.) 491001 3) Subodh Joshi; Address: HIG 153, Padmanbhpur, Durg(C.G.) 491001 4) Sudhir Joshi; Address: HIG 153, Padmanbhpur, Durg(C.G.) 491001 5) Vardha Joshi Address: HIG 153, Padmanbhpur, Durg(C.G.) 491001	Rs.63,05,781/- (Rupees Sixty three lakhs five thousand seven hundered and eighty one only) + unapplied interest and penal interest + other charges / expenses w.e.f. 01.01.2021.	Flat no-37-E, Kh.No.1347/2,P.H.No.16, Second Floor, Ayodhya Apartment, Ward no.24, Deepak Nagar, Durg, R.N.M Durg-1, Tehsil & Dist: Durg	Physical	Rs.2070000/- Rs.207000/- Rs. 10000/-
3) Branch - Asset Recovery Branch, Jabalpur Shri Dilip Tiwari Smt. Rupa Tiwari	Rs. 7,68,000/- (Rupees Seven lakhs Sixty Eight thousand only) + unapplied interest and penal interest + other charges / expenses w.e.f. 25.10.2017	Open Land at Kh.no. 311/193 (part) P.H no. 46, Ward no.10, Shankar Nagar Kumhari, Tehsil- Dhamdha & Dist: Durg area admeasuring 1312.00 sq.ft.	Physical	Rs.1100000/- Rs.110000/- Rs. 10000/-
4) Branch - Asset Recovery Branch, Jabalpur Shri Ashok Tripathi Smt. Sarla Tripathi	Rs. 31,07,000/- (Rupees Thirty One lakhs Seven thousand only) + unapplied interest and penal interest + other charges / expenses w.e.f. 06.02.2018	House no. G-5, Sun City, Heerapur- Mohaba Bazar Road, Tatibandh, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Ward No.13, Tah/Dist: Raipur, area admeasuring 850 sq.ft	Symbolic	Rs. 4000000/- Rs.400000/- Rs. 10000/-
5) Branch - Asset Recovery Branch, Jabalpur M/s Jubilee Enterprises Prop. - Mr. S K Mujibur Rahman Ali	Rs. 21,74,000/- (Rupees Twenty One lakhs Seventy Four thousand only) + unapplied interest and penal interest + other charges / expenses w.e.f. 29.12.2025	Flat no.A-609, Block- A.6th Floor. Khairpur, Raigarh, Tehsil & Dist: Raigarh area admeasuring built up area 760 sq. ft.	Symbolic	Rs. 2660000/- Rs.266000/- Rs. 10000/-
6) Branch - Asset Recovery Branch, Jabalpur M/s Chhabra Sales Prop. - Shri Jasvinder Singh Chhabra.	Rs. 31,78,000/- (Rupees Thirty One lakhs Seventy Eight thousand only) + unapplied interest and penal interest + other charges / expenses w.e.f. 15.11.2019	Land and Double Stories Shop Building at Plot no. 104 & 105, Transport Nagar Scheme, Muza - Parsada, Bilaspur, Tehsil & Dist Bilaspur area admeasuring 900 sq.ft	Symbolic	Rs. 4800000/- Rs.480000/- Rs. 10000/-

Inspection of Properties by bidder: 10.09.2026 to 11.09.2026 between 11:00 am. and 4:00 pm
Last Date & Time for Submission of Bid application/KYC documents/EMD etc. 15.09.2026 up to 11.00 a.m.
Date & time of E-auction with auto extention for 10 minutes- 15.09.2026 between 12.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m.

The auction sale will be On-line E-Auction / Bidding through website **https://baanknet.com, email: support.baanknet@psballiance.com. Mob.- 8291220220** The intending Bidders / Purchasers are requested to register on portal using their mobile number and email id. Please take note that the registration and KYC approval etc take 2-3 working days. For detail terms and conditions of sale please refer to the link provided in **https://bankofmaharashtra.bank.in/asset-for-sales-search** and **https://baanknet.com** .Also prospective bidders may contact the authorized officials **Contact details: Shri Onkar Kumar (Zonal Manager) - 9823296164, Shri Nikhil S Patil (DZM) - 7387211200, Shri Bhushan Mohite (CM Recovery - Z.O.) - 9923257090, Dr. Ravikumar Verma (Sr. Manager) (9300955688) & Shri Hariom Trivedi (CM & Authorised Officer) - 9405719723**
Note - The sales are subject to the order/outcome of any case pending/filed if any before Court/Tribunal

Sale Notice to Borrower/Guarantors/Legal Heirs(LR's:)/Coparceners
The above shall be treated as Notice of 15days u/r 9(1) of security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002

Date: 30/08/2026

Authorised Officer, Bank of Maharashtra

Contd. from page 1

Nepal tragedy: ...

Mountain Development (ICIMOD), an intergovernmental knowledge and learning centre working on behalf of the people of the HKH.

Participants said the disaster highlighted the importance of collective action, stronger preparedness, and sustained regional cooperation to reduce climate-related risks and build resilience across the HKH region. ICIMOD is based in Kathmandu, and works in and for eight regional member countries - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. The body later examined satellite imagery and concluded that "a massive rock-ice avalanche occurred in Nepal, blocking the Lhende River and triggering cascading floods downstream".

Their assessment pointed not to tectonic activity but to glacial instability, a phenomenon increasingly linked to climate change. This was corroborated by the US Geological Survey (USGS), which earlier took the tremor as an earthquake.

In a revised statement, the USGS stated that additional analysis of seismic waves and satellite imagery led to the determination that the seismic event was rather a glacial collapse and debris flow, and that no earthquake had occurred. Global warming and construction in nearby areas are largely being seen as the reason for the avalanche, though the actual reason may take some time to be identified, pointed reports.

Some experts compared such glaciers on mountains to cement that helps hold a building together. Mongabay, a US-based non-profit conservation and environmental science news platform, also said that the floods were triggered by a glacier collapse and landslide into a river on the Tibet-Nepal border.

Like other reports, it assumed climate change had loosened the ice "till the entire mountainside, including a glacier clinging to it, collapsed into the river flowing some 3,000 metres below".

Pointing out that no early warning system would have helped those who were close downstream when the huge chunk and debris fell on Wednesday, the article stated that one way to manage this risk is to be able to predict such a disaster with a credible probability level, so that governments can take protective action. This, it emphasised, would need countries to comprehensively map all icebound slopes above a certain gradient. In the face of such reports, the HKH countries would need to step up research, share data, and coordinate seamlessly to be prepared for such calamities. (agencies)

'Water up ...

or talk...the driver ran away, they then came down from the bus, (my mother-in-law) climbed a tree and stayed there for three to four hours. After that, they were rescued by Nepal military personnel," he added.

Another Chennai resident, who safely returned from disaster-hit Nepal, recounted the horror, saying: "We prayed thinking that we just have to escape from the situation....The government had initiated steps for taking us to Kathmandu. Later, the ambassador met and consoled us and we were provided food and stay. The following day, we were allowed to move to the airport."

After the first batch of 106 stranded Maharashtra tourists reached India, people thanked the Indian and Nepalese authorities for facilitating the rescue.

In Nagpur, a woman told IANS: "We were constantly worried about whether or not we would make it out of there alive. But our two children, helped us a lot... Initially, we did not listen because there were 106 people with us, and we wanted to leave together...but after the situation escalated, we agreed to board the flight. Even though we didn't have the required documents, the (Nepal) administration helped us a lot."

Another passenger added: "We were fine for about seven or eight days. But then the situation changed. We had initially travelled in large vehicles, but later the police stopped us and our vehicles could not proceed because of the disaster. The roads were blocked and bridges had been washed away."

While expressing happiness on meeting his family, he thanked Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis for making arrangements to bring them back.(agencies)

PSU lenders ...

case filed by Indiabulls Housing Finance.

Under the NCLT order, Chandra will pay Rs 6.5 crore to settle admitted creditor claims of more than Rs 22,000 crore.

However, private lender HDFC Bank is also exploring an appeal against the order.

"HDFC Bank had opposed and voted against this resolution, which was approved by the majority. The bank is exploring filing an appeal at the NCLAT," the lender had said earlier in August.

HDFC Bank said only 3.2 per cent of its total claim amount had been admitted under the NCLT order. It added that the loan facility had been inherited from its parent, HDFC, before the merger of the two entities.(agencies)

India's forex ...

allowing lenders to offer more attractive interest rates to overseas customers.

The cost of raising these funds has become particularly high as US interest rates remain significantly above the levels seen in 2013, when the RBI last turned to overseas residents to shore up foreign exchange reserves.

Analysts have pointed out that the RBI generally invests the dollars raised through such programmes in relatively low-yielding assets. The return on these assets can be considerably lower than the cost of raising the funds, creating what has been described as a "carry cost" for the country.

The annual cost of this arrangement could be around $5.7 billion, according to estimates cited in the analysis.

Earlier this month, the RBI unexpectedly advanced the closure of the special diaspora deposit programme, with Governor Sanjay Malhotra saying that inflows had been stronger than anticipated.(agencies)

GST Council ...

tax liability does not exceed Rs 2.5 lakh, including CGST, SGST/UTGST and IGST, can opt for the facility.

The proposed changes are aimed at further streamlining GST registration and related processes and improving ease of compliance for businesses.(agencies)

NEET-PG 2026 ...

to ensure a candidate-friendly examination experience.

Several student-centric reforms have been introduced this year.

According to information, candidates could indicate three state preferences for test centres, with their correspondence state as the mandatory first preference.

"The information regarding the test city was communicated nearly three weeks in advance. With this communication, students got sufficient time to plan travel and accommodation," officials added.

The examination pattern has also been revised to 180 questions to be completed in 210 minutes. This would ensure that candidates have more time per question.

Aadhaar-based authentication has been integrated during both registration and examination.

Similarly, iris-based biometric verification will serve as a backup where fingerprint authentication fails.(agencies)

After CM ...

he has directed the police to register an FIR against his predecessor in the matter. Adhikari said that he had also directed the police to approach the Calcutta High Court in the matter, informing the latter of how the court-fixed restrictions were violated.

"The Court clearly directed them to conduct the rally keeping one of the two lanes free for traffic movement. The former Chief Minister assembled people and blocked both the lanes. I have directed the police to register an FIR in the matter. I have also directed the police to approach the Calcutta High Court in the matter. The matter will not be taken so easily," the Chief Minister said earlier in the day.(agencies)

US clears ...

time to wrap up their lives," Bhutoria said. He warned that affected families may not have sufficient time to manage their homes, children's education and other personal matters after an unexpected termination.

Bhutoria said he had secured unanimous support from the White House advisory commission in 2023 for a recommendation to extend the grace period from 60 days to 180 days.

He argued that recruitment in technology, healthcare and engineering frequently involves several interviews, followed by immigration paperwork required to transfer a worker's status to a new employer.

"Eliminating the 60-day grace period for retrenched H-1B workers is a drastic step backward. When I presented my recommendation to the White House AANHPI Commission in March 2023 to extend the window to 180 days, it was grounded in the reality of corporate hiring-where multi-stage interview cycles and visa transfer paperwork take months to complete," Bhutoria said.

"Removing this window entirely will force skilled Indian professionals and their families out of the country overnight. I call on community organizations and business leaders across the U.S. to mobilize and submit public comments against this regulation as soon as it opens in the Federal Register," he added.

The 60-day provision became effective in January 2017 as part of a broader regulation covering high-skilled immigrant and non-immigrant workers. It permits the grace period once during each authorised validity period but allows immigration authorities to shorten or deny it as a matter of discretion.

The H-1B programme permits American employers to hire foreign professionals for specialised occupations requiring advanced knowledge. Technology companies are among its largest users, and Indian nationals have consistently accounted for a substantial majority of approved H-1B beneficiaries.(agencies)

Bihar: Reservation debate create differences within NDA

Patna, Differences within the NDA over Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe reservation came into sharp focus in Bihar on Saturday, with Union Minister Chirag Paswan strongly opposing former Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi and his son, state minister Santosh Suman, on their demand for changes to the system.

Chirag objected to calls for introducing a "creamy layer" provision in SC/ST reservations, insisting that those advocating such a move should first resign from their positions. He stressed that the reservation policy was not based on economic status but was designed to address centuries of social discrimination, exclusion and untouchability. He maintained that any proposal to alter the framework was highly sensitive and should be debated in Parliament rather than reduced to political rhetoric.

Manjhi and Santosh Suman have been pressing for sub categorisation and a "quota within a quota" in SC/ST reservations, arguing that benefits have not reached all communities equally. Santosh Suman said their demand was not aimed at ending reservations but at ensuring deprived groups received their share. Chirag countered that viewing reservation through the lens of economic status could dilute its original purpose. He called for a broader constitutional and parliamentary debate before any changes were made.

Turning his criticism towards the Congress, Chirag questioned the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi and his party's responsibility, given its long tenure in power, arguing that if social discrimination persisted, Congress must also answer for it.

The disagreement is significant for Bihar's Dalit politics, as Chirag and the Manjhi Suman camp both seek to position themselves as champions of marginalised communities but differ sharply on the future of the reservation system.

The developments have raised questions about whether the NDA's constituent parties can arrive at a common position on the sensitive issue or whether differences will deepen in Bihar politics.(agencies)

Bengal: Fresh row over Abhishek Banerjee's Camac Street office

Kolkata, A fresh controversy surfaced on Saturday about the party office of Trinamool Congress general secretary and Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha member Abhishek Banerjee at Camac Street in central Kolkata, which was already in dispute following Thursday's row over the removal of an illegal billboard by Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) and Kolkata Police.

Rama Devi Goenka, the owner of the building, served a legal notice to Trinamool, accusing the party of violating the rent agreement for hiring space in the building for its office. It is learnt that the agreement between the owner of the building at 9 Camac Street and the youth wing of Trinamool was signed in 2020. Goenka's counsel Sagnika Chattopadhyay told media persons on Saturday afternoon that in the legal notice the occupant had been asked to vacate the space, failing which legal steps would be initiated. According to her, a lease a reement was signed on March 1, 2020 between the building owner and the All India Youth Trinamool Congress.

"The agreement was for ten years. There was a clause which said the owner would first give a completion certificate and only after that Trinamool Youth Congress would take possession of the sixth and seventh floors. But before that certificate was provided, the two floors were forcibly occupied," she said. It is learnt that on behalf of the youth wing, the agreement was signed by former councillor of the then Trinamool run Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation, Debraj Chakraborty, who is currently behind bars in a disproportionate assets case. The building owner's counsel alleged that despite repeated requests to vacate the two floors, the occupants did not comply. "The occupants said they would take up the matter of the completion certificate with KMC authorities. We were unable to do anything then since Trinamool was in power in West Bengal. Now that the regime has changed, we have gained courage to approach the matter," she said.

She further alleged that the billboard removed by KMC and Kolkata Police on Thursday had been installed illegally without the owner's permission. "We served the legal notice on August 25, and only after that the billboard was removed," she said.(agencies)

MP Congress questions school education performance, says no district crosses 60 pc mark

Bhopal, The Opposition Congress in Madhya Pradesh has questioned the state government's school education performance, saying no district in the state crossed the 60 per cent mark in the Union Education Ministry's Performance Grading Index for Districts (PGI-D) 2025-26.

State Congress president Jitu Patwari, in a letter to Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Saturday, mentioned that the best-performing district scored 333 out of 600 points, or 55.5 per cent, in the assessment. "The situation of Madhya Pradesh in this report should be considered a serious report card of your government's education system. Not a single district of Madhya Pradesh has crossed the 60 per cent mark," Patwari said. The PGI-D 2025-26 assessed the school education system in 784 districts across the country on 70 indicators, including learning outcomes, infrastructure, school safety and child protection, digital learning and governance. Patwari cited the performance of several districts to highlight gaps in the state's education system.

He said Bhopal scored around 47 per cent in learning outcomes and 37 per cent in school safety, while Indore recorded around 41 per cent in school facilities and 47 per cent in learning outcomes. Digital learning was particularly weak in several districts, he said. Sagar scored around 24 per cent, Barwani 16 per cent, Agar-Malwa 28 per cent, and Dhar 20 per cent in the parameter.

"These figures have not been arrived at through a Congress survey. They are based on the assessment system of the Union Ministry of Education," Patwari said, adding that the data was based on government sources, including UDISE+, PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024 and PRABANDH.

He demanded a district-wise public review of the PGI-D results and time-bound plans to improve learning outcomes. The state Congress chief also sought audits of digital resources, internet connectivity, smart classes and teacher training in districts where digital learning scores are below 30 per cent.

Patwari also demanded safety audits in districts performing poorly in school safety and child protection and quarterly reviews of learning outcomes at the Chief Minister's level. "The future of children in Madhya Pradesh is not a subject for political propaganda. You are running the government, so you will have to answer," he wrote in the letter.(agencies)

No problem in singing Tamil Nadu state song first: BJP's Narayanan Thirupathy

Chennai, Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Tamil Nadu Chief spokesperson Narayanan Thirupathy said on Saturday that there was no issue in singing the state song before the national anthem and the national song, asserting that the order of rendition of the three did not matter as the state is also an integral part of India.

Speaking to IANS, Thirupathy said: "Tamil Thai Vazhthu (state song), our national song and our national anthem are all equally important. Whether one is sung first, second or third does not matter. If someone wants 'Tamil Thai Vazhthu' to be sung first, there is no problem. Everything is our lifeline."

"Let us not take this as an issue and create a controversy. If people want to sing it (Tamil Nadu state song) first, no problem...there should not be an issue. After all, Tamil Nadu is also an integral part of India. So, we have no problem (with the order of singing), just that it should be sung," he added.

Meanwhile, he accused Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker JCD Prabhakar of attempting to promote Christianity.

A controversy erupted after Prabhakar attended the 5th National March for Life, an anti-abortion rally, as a chief guest on August 8 and 9 in Chennai.

Calling out the TVK leader, BJP's Narayanan Thirupathy said: "We have seen that JCD Prabhakar has been supportive of Christianity from the very beginning and has been trying to promote the Christian religion. There is no problem with him having faith in his religion, but in a democracy, he should not use his position to emphasise or promote his own religion."

"That is not appropriate. I am surprised that others have not condemned this. If someone had made a similar statement about the Hindu religion, they would have been branded as communal. But why they are not doing is because they are pseudo secular," he remarked. Condemning Prabhakar's actions, the BJP leader said that Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay "should advise him not to do such things which is going to affect the TVK-led government itself".

Meghalaya CM assures restoration of vandalised Netaji bust

Shillong, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Saturday visited the R.R. Colony in Rynjah and met members of the local non-tribal community following the vandalism of a bust of freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose during a recent protest by the Khasi Students' Union (KSU).

Conrad Sangma inspected the damaged bust and interacted with residents to hear their concerns following incidents of violence and vandalism reported at different places in Shillong during the KSU's black-flag motorcycle rally.

The Chief Minister assured the residents that the damaged bust would be restored and sanctioned Rs 5 lakh for the restoration work.

Chief Minister Sangma said the state government would not tolerate acts of vandalism or any activity that could disturb peace and communal harmony in Shillong and other parts of Meghalaya.

He reiterated the state government's commitment to maintaining peace, unity and harmony among different communities residing in the state.

The vandalism took place during the KSU rally, which was organised to press for various demands raised by the student organisation.

The motorcycle rally witnessed incidents of violence and damage to property at several locations in Shillong, prompting concerns among residents.

The state government has said that individuals found responsible for the violence and vandalism would face action in accordance with the law.

The vandalised bust holds particular significance because of Netaji's historical association with Shillong.

Subhas Chandra Bose first visited the hill city in 1927 and returned in 1938 when he was serving as President of the Indian National Congress.

The bust at R.R. Colony was installed on January 23, 2023, to mark the birth anniversary of Netaji.

During his interaction with residents, CM Sangma sought to reassure the community that the state government would take steps to protect the city's peaceful social fabric and prevent incidents that could create tension between communities.

The Chief Minister's visit comes amid efforts by the state administration to restore normalcy following the disturbances linked to the KSU rally and address concerns raised by residents affected by the incidents.(agencies)

Manipur reserves 5 pc quota in Home Department jobs for outstanding sportspersons

Imphal, Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Saturday said that five per cent reservation in government jobs in the state Home Department would be provided to outstanding sportspersons who have brought laurels to the state, in recognition of their achievements and services. The Chief Minister added that if a sportsperson fails to perform for three consecutive years, he or she would be withdrawn from sports-related duties and reassigned to their regular duties.

Khemchand Singh on Saturday met Ariha Pangambam, the first Indian to win a gold medal in the recently concluded 10th Aerobic Gymnastics Asian Championships held in the Philippines this month and Anjori Pangambam, who secured 7th position in the same event. The Chief Minister appreciated their commendable performances in the recently concluded Asian Championship and also encouraged them to continue their hard work and bring more laurels to the state and the nation in the future. Later, he launched a booklet published by the Manipur Olympic Association. During the launch, the Chief Minister informed that a special recruitment policy for sportspersons who brought laurels to the state was approved in the Cabinet meeting held on Friday. He added that under this policy, sportspersons would be recruited by the state government with complete transparency and strictly based on merit. Meanwhile, the Manipur government on Friday announced a 'Women Empowerment' scheme aimed at benefiting 3.5 lakh women in the state, officials said.

A senior official of the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said that the state cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh, approved the 'Women Empowerment' scheme. The official said that the new scheme would benefit 3.5 lakh women who are members of recognised Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across the state. Under the scheme, each woman beneficiary will receive a grant of Rs 10,000 in the first year, followed by interest-free loans in the second and third years, he said.(agencies)

K'taka: New police commissioners appointed for Hubballi-Dharwad, Belagavi

Bengaluru, The state government has issued an order appointing IPS officer Bhushan Gulabrao Borase as the Hubballi Dharwad Police Commissioner.

Borase, a 2009 batch IPS officer who was serving as Deputy Inspector General of Police and Commissioner of Police, Belagavi City, has been transferred with immediate effect. He has been appointed as Deputy Inspector General of Police and Commissioner of Police, Hubballi Dharwad, in an upgraded post, according to a government notification issued on Saturday.

Hubballi Dharwad Police Commissioner N. Shashi Kumar, IPS, has been transferred from the post, and Borase has been appointed in his place. The order said Borase would hold the new post until further orders.

Nikam Prakash Amrit, a 2012 batch IPS officer awaiting posting, has been appointed as Deputy Inspector General of Police and Commissioner of Police, Belagavi City, replacing Borase.

As part of the reshuffle, several senior IPS officers have also been transferred and given new postings.

Harishekaran P., a 1996 batch IPS officer, Additional Director General of Police, Crimes and Technical Services, Bengaluru, has been transferred and posted as Additional Director General of Police, Directorate of Civil Rights Enforcement, in an upgraded post. He will replace Umesh Kumar, IPS, who has been relieved of the concurrent charge.

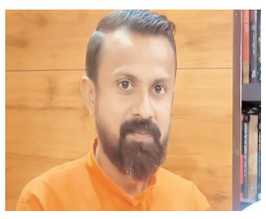
M. Nanjundaswami, a 1997 batch IPS officer, Additional Director General of Police, Karnataka State Fire and Emergency Services and SDRF, Bengaluru, has been transferred and posted as Additional Director General of Police, Grievances and Human Rights, in an upgraded post, replacing Devajyoti Ray, IPS.

Devajyoti Ray, a 1999 batch IPS officer, has been transferred from Grievances and Human Rights and posted as Additional Director General of Police, Crimes and Technical Services, Bengaluru, in place of Harishekaran P.

Amit Singh, a 2007 batch IPS officer, Inspector General of Police, Western Range, Mangaluru, has been transferred and posted as Inspector General of Police, Karnataka State Reserve Police, in an upgraded post.

R. Chethan, a 2010 batch IPS officer awaiting posting, has been appointed as Deputy Inspector General of Police, Western Range, Mangaluru, replacing Amit Singh in the downgraded post.(agencies)

Bengal: BJP suspends Sudeep Ram over Entally police station protest



Kolkata, The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has temporarily suspended local leader Sudeep Ram for staging a protest by locking the main gate of the Entally police station in Kolkata, a party leader said on Saturday.

According to him, Ram was given a show cause notice yesterday and asked to provide a satisfactory explanation within seven days as to why he did so on the night of Independence Day. It was also mentioned that he would remain suspended until the top leadership issued further instructions.

After the change of government in the state, Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari repeatedly said there would be no compromise on law and order and strict action would be taken if the force was attacked. Accordingly, the decision to suspend the leader was taken.

Sudeep has been suspended by the BJP's disciplinary committee. The order was issued by BJP state president Samik Bhattacharya.

Party insiders said there is a long standing division between two groups of the BJP in the Entally Assembly constituency. On one side is Priyanka Tibrewal's group, while on the other are brothers Dilip Ram and Sudeep Ram.

According to sources, Dilip and Sudeep's group was planning to hold Durga Puja in ward number 54 of Padmapukur. Khuti puja in this regard was also held. However, Priyanka's group allegedly stopped it, though they claimed residents had clashed with Dilip Sudeep's group over the puja.

The dispute erupted during the Independence Day celebrations. It was alleged that a few people went on a rampage at a function organised by Dilip Sudeep's camp and some were beaten up. In protest, members of the affected group surrounded the Entally police station and allegedly locked its gate.

Top police officers reached the station late at night and mediated to resolve the chaos. The Dilip Sudeep group claimed none of them locked the gate, alleging police personnel had done so themselves. However, police sources said an FIR was registered against Dilip and Sudeep at Entally police station.

Local rebel Trinamool Congress MLA Sandipan Saha was also implicated in the dispute between the two BJP groups in Entally. It was alleged that his close associates were fuelling the dispute by instigating one group. None of the leaders of the two groups wanted to comment publicly on this.(agencies)

Trinamool billboard row: One more party activist arrested, total arrests rise to 14

Kolkata, Kolkata Police have arrested one Trinamool Congress activist in connection with the row over the removal of an illegal billboard from the roof of Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee's house on Camac Street in Kolkata on Thursday. The arrested person has been identified as Toufik. According to a city police officer, the arrested person took a lead role in the creating obstructions for the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) and the police personnel on Thursday afternoon.

Toufik had been arrested by the sleuth of the Anti-Rowdy Squad (ARS), a wing of the detective department of the city police. However, after arresting Toufik, the ARS sleuths have handed him over to the police personnel of the Shakespeare Sarani Police station, where three FIRs have been registered in relation to the billboard row earlier in the afternoon. With the arrest of Toufik, the total number of arrests in the matter had increased to 14. The 13 persons who were arrested earlier by the police in the same matter were produced at a lower court in Kolkata on Friday and the judge of that court remanded them to judicial custody till September 3. Their bail pleas by the counsels of these 13 persons were rejected.

Of the three FIRs registered at Shakespeare Sarani Police Station, one had been filed based on a complaint lodged by a police officer of the same police station, the second based on a complaint by a cop posted with adjacent Park Street Police Station and the third based on a complaint lodged by the KMC. The two FIRs, filed on the basis of the complaints filed by the officer of Shakespeare Sarani Police Station and the KMC, named Abhishek Banerjee, the nephew of former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee; Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha member Derek O'Brien; and party leaders like Humayun Kabir and Baishwanar Chatterjee, among others.

Tension broke out in front of Abhishek Banerjee's Camac Street office on Thursday afternoon, after the KMC officials, accompanied by Kolkata Police personnel, reached there to remove the illegal billboard. Abhishek Banerjee, O'Brien and their other Trinamool Congress aides blocked the way of the KMC staff and the police personnel, with the Diamond Harbour MP challenging the legal validity of the KMC order for removal of the billboard. The Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha MP said that the notice was invalid because the billboard picture was not attached to the order copy. The KMC officials returned to get a revised order.

They returned soon with the revised order, and this time the police cordoned off the entire area. Thereafter, KMC officials, accompanied by the cops, climbed the stairs to reach the roof of the building to remove the billboard. Abhishek Banerjee's aides tried to block their movement by forming human walls on the staircase. Those blocking the path included some Trinamool women activists. A scuffle between the police and Trinamool supporters followed. Finally, the police cleared the way for KMC officials to reach the roof, break the billboard and remove it.(agencies)

Vice President Radhakrishnan urges educational institutions to become global research hubs

New Delhi, Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan said on Saturday that educational institutions should go beyond imparting basic education and evolve into global centres of knowledge, research and innovation.

The Vice President made the remarks while addressing Founders' Day celebrations and inauguration of 'Arivukoodam'- a Research Park of the Kongu Vellalar Institute of Technology (KVIT) Trust at Perundurai, Erode.

Radhakrishnan urged students to move from basic education toward research oriented learning, adding that research, innovation and industry-academia collaboration is key to India's progress.

He called upon them to engage in research, innovation and patents and prepare themselves for emerging fields such as AI, robotics, semiconductors, quantum technology, biotechnology and digital technology.

The Vice President appreciated the vision of the 41 founders and noted that nearly one lakh people have received education through KVIT institutions, the statement from the Vice President's Secretariat said.

He said their contribution has played a significant role in the growth of education in the Kongu region and commended the institutions for their global linkages with countries including Germany, the US, France and Japan.

CP Radhakrishnan emphasised that "change is the only constant", and urged young people to recognise their strengths, set clear goals and persevere without comparing themselves with others.

He also highlighted the importance of yoga and meditation for mental peace and sharper intellect, and quoted Swami Vivekananda: "You become what you think."

The Vice President expressed confidence that 'Arivukoodam' would become a hub for research, innovation and knowledge creation, strengthening the institutions as global knowledge centres contributing to social transformation and national development.

He visited an exhibition organised by the Technology Business Incubator of Kongu Engineering College showcasing innovative projects and technological solutions. MoUs were exchanged between Anchor Industries and Arivukoodam, further strengthening collaboration between industry and academia and promoting research and innovation.(agencies)

Rijiju's hint at special Parliament session triggers political exchange

New Delhi, The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) on Saturday backed Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju's indication that a special session of the Parliament could be convened, while the Opposition hit out at the Centre, accusing it of "misleading people" by attempting to implement delimitation in the garb of women's reservation.

This comes after Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking whether the government planned to convene a special session of Parliament to pass the proposed delimitation Bill. Kharge said he was reiterating the demand after Rijiju reportedly indicated in a television interview that a special session could be convened.

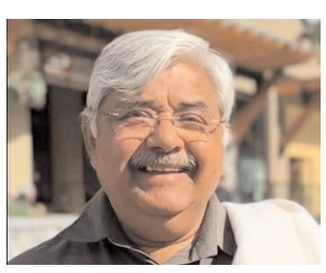
Shiv Sena Spokesperson Shaina NC supported Rijiju, saying: "As the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, he has always reached out to the Opposition...if a special session is announced, it is the prerogative for all stakeholders to partake and understand their parliamentary responsibilities." BJP spokesperson Pratul Shahdeo said that the government had "resolved to re-introduce the women's reservation and delimitation bill" when the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 was defeated in the Lok Sabha.

"It is Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah's resolve that we will implement women's reservation and coming to delimitation, it has taken place in the past as well. People are being misled (by the Opposition) that the number of seats will go down...they (Opposition) are indulging in negative politics and will be exposed if a special session (of the Parliament) is convened," he told IANS. However, the Opposition hit back, with Purnia MP Pappu Yadav saying that Kiren Rijiju as well as the entire government "is frustrated".

"They (government) have got nothing to do with the country's future...The women's reservation Bill was passed three years ago, but they do not seem to be serious about women's reservation, specially the poor and middleclass women," he told IANS. Congress leader Rakesh Sinha echoed the sentiments, stating, "The Women's Reservation Bill has already been passed by Parliament (in 2023). So, what Women's Reservation Bill are they going to bring now? The Congress party is saying that implement women's reservation based on 543 seats (of Lok Sabha) from today itself."

He asserted that the implementation of the Women's Reservation Act, 2023, on the existing Lok Sabha strength will be supported by the opposition parties. "But they want to mislead the public in order to implement delimitation, which will especially impact the southern states. What blueprint do they have about delimitation? That should be made public after calling an all-party meeting," Sinha added.(agencies)

'Propaganda by vested interest group': VHP chief questions 'selective' freedom of speech on NY RSS event row



New Delhi, Without taking names, Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) International President Alok Kumar on Saturday accused a section of population of being 'selective' in their propagation of freedom of speech and expression and claimed that the "efforts to stop" the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Chief Mohan Bhagwat's scheduled event in New York, is a "propaganda by vested interest group".

This comes after a controversy erupted over New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani's remarks that he did not support the rally but was unsure whether the city had jurisdiction to cancel a private event.

Speaking to IANS, the VHP Chief said: "I am surprised that a majority of those people who talk about freedom of speech and expression, make us understand that minorities have equal rights to express their opinions, the same people and their supporters are today saying in America that this person (RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat) should not have the right to speak." "Will the freedom of speech and expression, freedom to assemble peacefully without arms, freedom of forming associations and unions, be selective? One (Muslim) community will be allowed to speak and if the Hindus want to speak on inclusivity, they will be stopped?" he asked. Alok Kumar asserted that the democratic values inherited by India and America, includes freedom of speech and expression for all. "People may agree or not (to a certain opinion) but the right to hear and speak is for everyone," the VHP Chief stressed.

He also said that the alleged efforts to stop RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat, "violates the established norms of human freedom and values, which are respected by both India and America". "I consider such efforts as propaganda by some vested interest group and believe that this won't be accepted by the people in America," the VHP Chief added. Meanwhile, two Hindu American groups have issued safety advisories ahead of RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat's address at the Madison Square Garden, urging attendees and Hindu institutions in New York to remain vigilant amid protests and demands to cancel the event.

The Hindu American Foundation, or HAF, issued what it called a "community advisory alert" on Wednesday (local time) for people attending the August 29 'Universal Oneness Celebration'.

"Stay vigilant, remain situationally aware, and keep interactions civil," HAF said in a post on social media platform X.(agencies)

BJP, Congress spar over Penguin India's decision not to publish Sonia Gandhi's book

New Delhi, A political controversy has erupted over Penguin India's decision not to publish Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) Chairperson Sonia Gandhi's memoir, with BJP leaders dismissing allegations of government interference and a Congress MP claiming that the publisher may have faced "backdoor" pressure from the Centre. Reacting to the issue in Jaipur, Rajasthan, Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said the disagreement appeared to be between the author and the publisher and should not be politicised.

"There is some kind of disagreement between the author and the publisher. The publisher has their own prerogative, and the author has their own viewpoint. Instead of bringing it into politics, they could have found another publisher. What is the need to bring the Government of India into this?" Shekhawat said. In Patna, Bihar Minister Ram Kripal Yadav also said the government had no role in the matter. "A book has been written on the biography of Madam Sonia ji, but it has not been published. The government has nothing to do with it. If the publisher is not publishing it, then the matter concerns the Congress party, the people who wrote the biography and the publishing house. The government has no interference in it," he said.

BJP leader T.R. Srinivas, speaking in Hyderabad, said the book, titled 'Belonging: A Journey of Love', had generated a major controversy. He questioned the timing of the decision and alleged that the book contained selective references to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the RSS and China. "The timing looks political, non-literary," Srinivas said, alleging that Penguin had objected because "anytime when you publish a book, it has to be factual."

BJP National Vice President, M. Nagaraja, however, struck a more cautious note. "Regarding Sonia Gandhi's autobiography, Penguin has already said that they are not publishing it. We have not seen or read the book, so it is too early to comment on it," he said. Congress MP Akhilesh Prasad Singh, meanwhile, claimed that the publisher could have faced government pressure. "This is absolutely wrong. No publisher can put pressure on an author. An author has their own views and experiences, which they write about in their book. There must have been pressure from the government on the publisher through the backdoor," he said. Earlier on Friday Penguin Random House India announced that it will not publish Congress leader Sonia Gandhi's much-awaited autobiography,' Belonging: A Journey of Love'.

"Any suggestion that Penguin Random House India decided not to publish 'Belonging' because the author declined editorial changes does not accurately reflect the circumstances," the publisher said in a statement. The publisher also defended its editorial process, saying, "As a publisher, it is both our prerogative and our responsibility to fact-check and provide authors with recommendations that are in the best interests of their books."(agencies)

NTA releases admit cards for 49 AIAPGET aspirants eligible to appear in re-exam in Jaipur on Sept 1

New Delhi, The National Testing Agency (NTA) on Saturday announced the release of admit cards for 49 candidates eligible to appear in a re-examination of All India Ayush Post Graduate Entrance Test (AIAPGET) to be held in Jaipur on September 1. On August 22, the NTA decided to conduct a re-exam on September 1 for the 49 candidates who could not complete the All India Ayush Post Graduate Entrance Test (AIAPGET) due to a power failure at their Jaipur centre - Shri Satya Sai PG College.

The re-exam scheduled for these 49 candidates on September 1 will be held from 10 a.m. at Rajasthan College of Engineering for Women, Jaipur, according to a statement. On Saturday, the NTA said, "Admit cards for the re-examination have now been released for all the 49 affected candidates. The candidates are advised to download their Admit Card from the official AIAPGET website and carefully check the details mentioned therein." The statement, issued by NTA's Director (Exam), said, "The candidates are required to appear at the examination centre mentioned in the Admit Card on 01 September 2026 and report as per the reporting time specified therein." "Candidates must bring a printed copy of the Admit Card along with the other documents/items as specified in the Admit Card. The candidates are advised to regularly visit the official NTA website for the latest updates regarding the examination," it said.

In an earlier message on X, the NTA had said, "The AIAPGET examination was conducted for 36,979 registered candidates in Shift-I on 22 August 2026, in which 35,837 candidates appeared at 200 centres across the country." "The examination was completed for 35,788 candidates. However, at Shri Satya Sai PG College Centre, in Jaipur, where 192 candidates appeared for the examination, 49 candidates could not complete the examination due to a power failure at the centre, attributed to Eduquity Career Technologies Private Limited, the exam-conducting agency," it said. Later, the NTA issued a show-cause notice to Eduquity Career Technologies Pvt Ltd for the lapses in the conduct of the AIAPGET examination at a centre in Jaipur on August 22.(agencies)

Red Fort blast case: Delhi court takes cognisance of NIA chargesheet against 13 accused

New Delhi, A Delhi court on Saturday took cognisance of the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) chargesheet filed in connection with the deadly Red Fort blast case that claimed 11 lives and left several others injured. Special NIA Court listed the matter for further hearing on September 9. The anti-terror agency has chargesheeted a total of 13 accused in connection with the November 10, 2025, car bomb explosion near the Red Fort, including prime accused Dr Umer Un Nabi, who was killed in the blast.

The high-intensity Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) blast had triggered a nationwide security alert and caused extensive damage to surrounding property. Earlier, the anti-terror agency had filed a voluminous chargesheet running into around 7,500 pages against 10 accused under various provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Explosive Substances Act, Arms Act and Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act.

According to the NIA, the accused were allegedly associated with Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (AGuH), an outfit considered an offshoot of Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS).

Among those named in the initial chargesheet was the alleged mastermind, Dr Umer Un Nabi, a Pulwama-based former Assistant Professor of Medicine at Al-Falah University in Haryana's Faridabad. The NIA had proposed abatement of charges against him following his death in the blast.

The other accused named in the initial chargesheet included Aamir Rashid Mir, Jasir Bilal Wani, Dr Muzamil Shakeel, Dr Adeel Ahmed Rather, Dr Shaheen Saeed, Mufti Irfan Ahmad Wagay, Soyab, Dr Bilal Naseer Malla and Yasir Ahmad Dar.

The NIA's investigation had covered Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and the Delhi-NCR region, involving examination of 588 witnesses, more than 395 documentary records and over 200 seized exhibits and material objects.

Subsequently, on June 27, the NIA filed a supplementary chargesheet against three more accused -- Zameer Ahmad Ahanger, Tufail Ahmad Bhat and Muzafar Ahmad alias Faraz alias Zafar, all residents of Jammu and Kashmir, taking the total number of chargesheeted accused to 13.

According to the NIA, absconding accused Muzafar Ahmad, a paediatrician and elder brother of co-accused Adeel Ahmed Rather, was a founding member of "AGuH Interim", an offshoot of Al-Qaeda, and one of the prime architects of the conspiracy along with Umer Un Nabi, Muzammil, Adeel and Mufti Irfan.

The investigation revealed that Muzafar had attended a secret Eidgah meeting in Srinagar in June 2022, during which the AGuH Interim terror module was established.

The NIA further claimed that Muzafar was involved in the manufacture, testing and safekeeping of TATP-based IEDs at a clandestine facility operated by Umer and Muzammil at Al-Falah University in Faridabad.

A Non-Bailable Warrant (NBW) has been issued against Muzafar, who is absconding, and efforts are underway to trace and arrest him, the agency has said.

The NIA has alleged that Zameer, an overground worker (OGW) of AGuH Interim, remained in contact with handlers and acted as a courier for arms, ammunition and cash for the terror module.

Tufail, a former OGW of the proscribed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), allegedly acted as an arms supplier and procured one AK-47, one Krinkov rifle, one pistol, magazines and live ammunition through dead drops arranged by a handler. The weapons were allegedly delivered to Umer Un Nabi for Rs 3 lakh.

The anti-terror agency has also claimed to have established linkages between the accused through multidisciplinary scientific investigation, including forensic examination, geo-location mapping of conspiracy sites and detailed financial-trail analysis.(agencies)

India's relief efforts in Nepal earns Opposition's praise, latter urges Centre to act in 'mission mode'

New Delhi, A slew of Opposition leaders lauded the efforts of government in bringing back stranded Indians in Nepal following the devastating natural disaster and urged the Centre to act in 'mission mode,' deploy all available resources to trace the missing citizens and ensure their safe return.

JMM spokesperson Manoj Pandey said the number of casualties could be much higher than currently reported, based on unconfirmed information. "The number appears to be very high, based on the unconfirmed reports coming in. I believe it could cross into the thousands. There is still no information about many people from our country, including tourists and pilgrims who had travelled to Mansarovar. This is a massive disaster, and I believe the Central Government is not doing enough to provide relief to our people. The government should act in mission mode, deploy its resources, search for our citizens, ascertain their safety and ensure that they are brought out safely," he said. Congress media in-charge Rakesh Sinha described the natural disaster in Nepal as extremely devastating and expressed solidarity with the people of the neighbouring country. "The natural disaster that has struck Nepal is extremely devastating. Our condolences are with all the people of Nepal. We also urge the Government of India to act swiftly to locate the Indian people who have gone missing in this devastating tragedy and extend support to the people of Nepal. The Government of India should act on this issue with utmost seriousness," Sinha said. Trinamool Congress MP Saugata Roy termed the incident serious and highlighted the scale of the disaster.

"It is a very serious incident. There are 2,482 people missing, including 320 Indians. Around 584 people have lost their lives in Nepal. The Indian government has sent three planes carrying relief materials. This is a good effort," he said. RLM MP Upendra Kushwaha called the incident extremely unfortunate and expressed grief over the loss of lives. "This is a very unfortunate incident. It is a natural disaster, and humans cannot control nature. We express our grief over this incident. We pray to God that the departed souls rest in peace and give strength to their families to bear this immense loss," he said.

BJP Uttar Pradesh president Pankaj Chaudhary said the tragedy was heart-wrenching and assured that India would continue to support Nepal. "The incident that took place in Nepal is heart-wrenching for all of us. We all stand with the people affected by it. As a good neighbour, the Indian government sent help. The government will continue to provide assistance in the future," Chaudhary said. Bihar Minister Ashok Kumar Choudhary said the disaster underlined the need for stronger preparedness and long-term planning to minimise the impact of natural calamities.

"It is a very tragic incident. But what is important is that we need to work on how we can better prepare ourselves and prevent the impact of natural calamities. Nepal is a very fragile country. As far as I can remember, over the past three or four years, Nepal has repeatedly faced one disaster or another. India is already doing its part to help, but other countries should also come forward and work together on how we can protect Nepal," he said.

Union MoS Kirti Vardhan Singh sais, "On the day this very tragic incident occurred, our mission immediately started a 24-hour helpline and provided a helpline number so that we could keep a watch and monitor where what was happening, where anything was needed, especially, and also get information about our Indian citizens who were stranded there or were present there, and address any difficulties they were facing."(agencies)

Going beyond the annual flood response with district level plans

Promit Mookherjee

More than 2.5 million hectares of cropland affected, over ?400 billion in damages, and 1,215 lives lost. This is the cost of floods in Assam over a decade, between 2012-2022, and these are simply the quantifiable impacts from available official data.

These numbers indicate a crisis that should be a national priority. Yet, every year, the response to the Assam floods follows a predictable pattern - brief outcry on social media, civil society-led relief efforts, hasty explanations on the causes of the flood, and promises of improved embankment repairs. There is little discussion about the systemic governance gaps that perpetuates this cycle of devastation.

As per the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the risk of damage from floods for a particular region can be seen as a function of three factors. First is the hazard or the potential for occurrence of a flood determined by climatic factors like rainfall intensity and physical factors such as drainage density. Second is exposure or the number of people and assets that lie directly in the path of the flood. Finally, there is vulnerability which represents how badly a region's population is likely to be impacted when a flood does occur. This depends on socio-economic conditions that determine how easily people are harmed (sensitivity) and how well they can recover (adaptive capacity).

In Assam, the primary flood management strategy has been to build embankments and other river control structures. The state has built around 423 embankments covering more than 4,800 kilometres. The focus, therefore, has been on creating physical barriers to reduce the flood hazard.

The planning for these flood responses is primarily done by the Brahmaputra Board, whose Master Plans for the Brahmaputra and Barak basins serve as important planning documents guiding embankment construction and erosion control measures. The implementation of these projects is done by the Brahmaputra Board itself in conjunction with state bodies such as the Water Resources Department. This is also complemented by flood management projects financed through loans from multilateral banks.

The question, then, is why has this approach been inadequate in reducing flood risks across the state? Answering it requires understanding a few key aspects of Assam's floods.

Assam's history of floods

Assam has a long history of floods. Typically, heavy rainfall in the catchment areas of the Brahmaputra, and to a lesser extent the Barak, causes these rivers to overflow, a risk compounded by high sedimentation levels that have progressively raised the riverbed. As a result, about 40% of the state's land area is vulnerable to floods. The current planning for flood management is largely based on these patterns.

However, flood patterns are shifting due to climate change induced erratic rainfall patterns. This year's floods, for instance, occurred due to overflowing of the south bank tributaries of the Brahmaputra and not from the main river itself. Heavy rainfall in the catchments of these tributaries, mainly in the hills of Nagaland, was the trigger.

As patterns change, physical infrastructure and warning systems needed to reduce flood risks across districts must also evolve. This leads to a constant cat and mouse dynamic, made worse by the fact that building embankments requires both heavy capital and time investment. Even now, an estimated 60% of Assam's existing embankments need repair. Rather than fighting the river many experts have proposed a shift towards learning to live with the river. This would involve understanding flooding challenges at a more local level and implementing nature-based solutions such as reviving wetlands and reforestation to improve drainage of the floodwater.Floods in Assam in 2012. Flood patterns are shifting due to erratic rainfall patterns. Physical infrastructure and warning systems needed to reduce flood risks across districts must also evolve. Image courtesy of EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid via Flickr (CC BY-SA 2.0).

While flood hazards are shifting due to climate change, vulnerabilities also differ greatly across districts. A 2026 study by researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, estimated district-wise flood damage and found that districts with high poverty, poor connectivity, limited healthcare access and a prevalence of kutcha housing are more vulnerable to flood damage. Thus, flooding of similar magnitude can have vastly different impacts across districts.

The priority, then, must also be to reduce district-level vulnerabilities by accounting for each district's unique circumstances. This will require a shift towards more non-structural interventions: stronger social protection, updated building guidelines, tailored early warning systems, among others.

[Commentary]

District level adaptation plans a possible solution

Thus, reducing flood risks in Assam will require complementing existing built engineering solutions with more nature-based approaches while also dedicating additional resources to reducing vulnerabilities of local communities. This can best be achieved by adopting a more localised planning approach. For instance, hydrological analysis might reveal natural drainage paths for floodwaters, but local communities often hold historical knowledge of where waterbodies once stood. Combining science with local realities will be key to effective flood management.

Existing planning instruments are currently inadequate for local level planning. At present, the only localised planning instruments are the district level disaster management plans (DDMPs). However, these plans focus on immediate response mechanisms to floods and not systematic adaptation interventions. District-level adaptation plans or slightly more ambitious basin level adaptation plans could bridge this gap.

The first stage of these plans involves mapping localised climate risks, both short- and long-term. This requires projecting how different warming scenarios will affect temperature, rainfall, and other variables at the district level. The next step is to combine this data with local physiography to see how climate hazards like floods are likely to evolve in a district over time. Layering in socio-economic data then allows for sector-specific vulnerability assessments, showing how key sectors such as infrastructure, agriculture, and health are likely to be affected in the years ahead. This eventually allows planners to base their decisions on district specific future expectations rather than past data.

Once vulnerabilities are known, the next step is setting adaptation priorities for each sector, through extensive consultation with local stakeholders. The priorities can draw on solutions already proposed in basin-level master plans, as well as more localised measures rooted in traditional practice. This marks a key departure from centralised planning: priorities are built from the ground up, incorporating local lived experience and generating buy-in, without ignoring basin level realities and solutions.

The final step is to identify concrete projects for each priority, the financing mechanisms to fund them, and the agencies responsible for implementing them.

Some concrete benefits

Timely flood information is the first line of defence. Yet this year's flood shows that the current early warning systems (EWS) can often be inadequate. The issue is twofold. First the current EWS are designed to monitor river water levels that rise gradually over several hours or days and the flash flood guidance systems lack granularity to detect extremely localised extreme rainfall events. This year for instance, the cause of flooding was not a cloudburst but a sustained bout of heavy rainfall in Mon district of Nagaland which lasted for around eight or nine hours, but locals downstream were still not alerted in time. Second, because the current system is centralised, district level officials are the last to get the required data.

Another issue is that housing in most districts is poorly adapted to flooding. At a press meet after this year's floods, Assam's Chief Minister noted that in some regions, 100 percent of houses had been damaged, and proposed a model housing scheme. But what counts as a model house will differ by district. For instance, stilt houses or chang ghars have received attention as a traditional flood protection practice. For some districts where these practices have been prevalent a model housing guideline may take design elements from traditional stilt houses. Yet Assam also sits in India's highest seismic risk zone, with some districts on active fault lines or seismically vulnerable soil, which will also have to be taken into consideration.

Another persistent challenge for flood management is finance. Increasingly, state and central funds are being completed by loans from multilateral banks (MDBs) such as the ADB and World Bank. However, the flood management projects funded by these entities are carrying forward the existing focus on deploying embankments and engineered soil erosion measures partly because these institutions aren't always best placed to understand local realities and fund vulnerability-reduction efforts. The district level plans could be an important resource to direct some of these funds towards building adaptive capacity. The projects and priorities outlined in district plans could essentially serve as a new project pipeline for MDBs.

Effective planning is the first step to effective flood adaptation. District level plans could be a good complement to basin level or transstate initiatives, allowing Assam to shift beyond physical engineering solutions towards reducing the vulnerabilities of affected populations through local level planning.

Nepal disaster reinforces the need for regional preparedness

Joydeep Gupta

An entire mountainside of ice and rock fell into the Lhende Khola river on the Tibet-Nepal border, on the morning of August 26, triggering an earthquake and a flood that rose nine metres, killing hundreds, sweeping away at least six dams and hydropower stations, over a dozen crucial bridges, homes, roads and even a herd of elephants all the way downriver to India.

There was no rain, just the excessive heat caused by climate change that loosened the ice from the side of the 7,245-metre-high Langtang Lirung peak, till the entire mountainside, including a glacier clinging to it, collapsed into the river flowing some 3,000 metres below. There was no time for any "early" warning as the resultant wall of water, boulders and mud swept away within a minute the large three-storeyed Chinese government building that used to house the border land port at Jilong, facing Rasuwagadhi on the Nepal side.

A similar hillside collapse had triggered a devastating flood in the Chamoli region of Uttarakhand in February 2021.

And the danger is not over. A day later, debris was still blocking a part of the Lhende Khola, and water was accumulating behind the impromptu dam. More water, and that blockage is likely to give way, leading to a second flood. Authorities have already warned of fresh risk of flooding.

Regional strategy

Glaciologists have known for decades that a warming world is leading to faster glacier melting, formation of ever-larger lakes at their snouts, then the lakes bursting out of their unstable moraine bonds and flooding downstream in what is called a glacier lake outburst flood (GLOF). They have been emphasising the need to monitor these lakes, drain them slowly if possible and install early warning systems for people downstream.

But what can one do if the flash flood is not due to a GLOF but due to this kind of huge mountainside collapse that threatens to become more frequent in the Himalayas as global warming gathers more pace?

"The pace of change is so rapid that current efforts are struggling to keep up," said Mohammed Farooq Azam, senior cryosphere specialist at the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). "Today's disaster in the Lhende Khola underscores the need for stronger regional collaboration, with governments taking coordinated action to respond to cross-border hazards."

Just a few months before the latest disaster, researchers from ICIMOD and other organisations had presented a regional cryosphere strategy that would involve all countries sharing the Hindu Kush Himalayas (HKH) - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan - in four activities: Consolidating and institutionalising standardised monitoring of glaciers, snow, and permafrost; building sustained capacity through specialised regional capacity-building activities; establishing a Regional HKH CryoHub to ensure usable and policy-relevant data and knowledge services; and prioritising operational decision support services on seasonal snow watch for water and energy planning, hazard monitoring and early warning systems, and basin-scale assessments that link cryosphere trends to risks for people and infrastructure.

The strategy notes, "A basin-representative, quality-assured, and interoperable cryosphere observation and services system can strengthen regional resilience, reduce risks, and amplify the HKH voice in global climate dialogues. This institutional and technical architecture is designed to convert heterogeneous observations into policy-ready knowledge."

Refine predictions

No early warning system would have helped those close downstream of the August 26 mountainside collapse. The flood came too fast. One way to manage this risk is to be able to predict such a disaster with a credible probability level, so that governments can take protective action before a disaster. This would need countries to comprehensively map all icebound slopes above a certain gradient.

This would be a huge task, far tougher than monitoring the expansion of glacial lakes. But that monitoring has improved in recent years due to widespread use of satellite imagery. It is far from an ideal solution - glaciers should be monitored on the ground to get the actual mass balance and to see if they are losing more ice than it is gaining. But it is better than nothing. A monitoring of steep mountain slopes can be started through satellite imagery.

All of this assumes that countries sharing the Hindu Kush Himalayas will be willing to coordinate their cryosphere research efforts and seamlessly share data. Almost all joint research and policy work in the HKH has failed due to the absence of such cooperation. But the events of August 26 have once again underlined that there is no alternative to cooperation.

Crime content on social media threatens wildlife safety

Vandana K.

In 2025, P.M. Muthanna came across an Instagram reel that showed someone demonstrating how to capture wild animals. This was an activity that could not only harm wildlife but also violate wildlife protection laws. Muthanna, who heads field conservation at Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS), a wildlife organisation based in Karnataka, couldn't ignore the reel that seemed to normalise illegal handling of animals. "My co-workers and I started checking and compiling such videos being circulated on social media, particularly Instagram," he says.

Among the reels he stumbled upon were those showing a civet cat stuck in a jaw trap, which had over 25,000 likes; people hunting monitor lizards; a jaw trap manufacturing workshop, and more. In February 2026, he sent a letter to the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), a government body that combats organised wildlife crime, urging it to take action against eight Instagram accounts that show and sell jaw traps, devices that injure or harm animals, and demonstrate the illegal hunting of monitor lizards, which are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

These kinds of reels are playing on phone screens across India. Showcased as ordinary moments from the creators' lives, the content ranges from what an illegally-kept pet Indian star tortoise eats to going on a hunting trip. Cyber-enabled wildlife crime in India is a rapidly emerging threat which is subtle, sophisticated, and sometimes hard to identify, says Pradipty Bhardwaj, a Ph.D. scholar researching the adequacy of Indian law to combat such crimes. She also works with the UK-based charity Langland Conservation.

Moving wild species out of their native ecosystems can create opportunities for pathogens to cross species barriers, increasing the risk of disease spillover into humans and other animals. Illegal wildlife trade is the fourth largest illicit transnational activity globally. According to a 2021 investigation published by the nonprofit International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), nearly 1,200 online advertisements featuring almost 2,400 animals, animal parts, derivatives and products from protected species were found across 34 U.S.-based online marketplaces.

In India, no study has systematically measured the scale of cyber-enabled wildlife crime on social media. The existing research is limited to small case studies, which are platform-specific and rely on official case counts. Currently, there are very few initiatives to address this problem. Actions such as WCCB's Operation Wildnet, an intervention where authorities booked around 80 cases of cyber-enabled wildlife crime between 2017 and 2021, remain an exception.

Wildlife crime is burgeoning on social media

Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), a wildlife conservation nonprofit, has been diligently monitoring wildlife crime on social media for the past one and a half years. The arrival of high-speed internet through data penetration in India has aided content creation, says Debobroto Sircar, who heads WTI's wildlife crime control division. Social media platforms including Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are used for showing illegal wildlife content in India, with Instagram being the most prominent platform for such content, he tells Mongabay-India.

There is a wide range of videos that depict crimes against wildlife, Sircar says.

WTI collects information about such accounts to build evidence to alert law enforcement agencies and also reports such content to social media companies for its removal. Since January 2025, it has flagged a thousand YouTube videos and succeeded in getting over 90% of them removed. However, out of the content it flagged on Meta-owned platforms Facebook and Instagram, only 15% was removed.

Social media platforms are failing at content moderation. While reporting content, WTI noticed a pattern - when they reported content about wildlife crime, Meta removed only the videos regarding the sale of live wildlife and hunting, but not those featuring teeth, claws, or other body parts and extracts derived from wildlife. Despite Instagram's stated policy of working with wildlife organisations to remove content depicting poaching, animal abuse, and the sale of endangered species, the accounts listed in Muthanna's complaint to WCCB are still active and their content is available to watch, which raises questions about how and whether the social media platform enforces this policy.

Graphic hunting videos and exotic animal content can generate strong engagement, which recommendation algorithms may unintentionally amplify before moderators intervene, says Rohini Lakshané, an independent technologist and researcher, in an email to Mongabay-India. "Since moderation systems are primarily optimised around higher-profile harms such as terrorism, nudity, fraud, or political manipulation, wildlife trafficking might receive comparatively less investment and enforcement attention," she says. Platforms have also laid off their moderation teams in recent years and are understaffed, she says, while adding that they are increasingly using AI for moderation, which may lead to such content going undetected.

Presently, India lacks a law that explicitly covers cyber-enabled wildlife crime. However, cases can be booked under existing laws such as the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Using this, the forest department can reach out to social media companies, but the forest department officials often lack familiarity with the procedure and technology, notes Bhardwaj.

The law and the hurdles in its implementation make it difficult to check such crimes. "The Wildlife (Protection) Act is comprehensive but lacks specific provisions for electronic or online crimes, which were not considered when the law was framed back in 1972," says Bhardwaj.

Other challenges include proving the link between online content facilitating real-world crimes and the difficulty of booking cases without physical seizure of wildlife items, which is a core requirement of the Act, she emphasises. Additionally, advertisements about wildlife are not explicitly prohibited by Indian law, further complicating matters, she says.

Preventing cyber wildlife crime

Bhardwaj suggests a set of measures to curb cyber-enabled wildlife crime in India - amending the law to include the online aspect, updating social media policies based on Indian law, regulating advertising under the wildlife law and training the forest department to detect crimes online and file digital evidence effectively in court. There is also a need for public awareness on the illegality of owning wildlife species, she adds.

According to Sircar, social media companies need to partner with conservation organisations, wildlife experts and activists in India, to appoint them as a "Trusted Flagger", a status granted to civil society organisations in the European Union in 2025, enabling them to identify and flag illegal activities on platforms. Since India lacks such a system, WTI is seeking to join the YouTube Priority Flagger programme, through which government agencies and nonprofits can contact YouTube directly about content violating the platform's community guidelines. In June 2026, WTI also launched a campaign calling on citizens to report wildlife crimes online and demanding accountability from platforms.

Muthanna feels that social media giants have a moral responsibility to remove such content. But Bhardwaj explains that under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, social media companies' liability is limited to exercising due diligence and acting once they receive knowledge of illegal content. However, she adds that there is an ongoing discussion worldwide in the field of wildlife conservation about holding social media companies more accountable for their role in facilitating illegal activities.It has been over six months since Muthanna sent the letter to WCCB about the Instagram accounts that had posted jaw traps and hunting videos. And he is yet to hear back.

"Compared to Meta, NGOs like ours are very small. We operate in small pockets and do not have the resources to tackle companies like Meta. Our hope rests with the forest department, WCCB, customs and police. They have enough strength and means to tackle them," he says.

Substitute Sounds for Noise

Jonathan Power

Sweden Everyone has their favourite sounds- a ball on a cricket bat on a summer's afternoon, birds singing, waves breaking on the beach, the coffee pot perking on the stove, children playing Scooby-Doo. Mine are the quiet sounds of the English Lake District- William Wordsworth's:

"A flock of sheep that leisurely
pass by one after one;
the sound of rain and bees
murmuring; the fall of rivers,
wind and lakes, smooth fields;
white sheets of water, and pure sky."

Noise is less and less sweet sounds. It is cars and trucks, aeroplanes and builders, canned music in cafes, a symphony playing an atonal concerto. Some pop music makes so much noise that pure sounds no longer exist. Noise is the excreta of technological civilisation. One study predicts that exposure to loud music will cause 50 million Americans to suffer heavy hearing loss by 2050. Ex-President Bill Clinton has long worn a hearing aid because, in his youth, he enjoyed loud music.

When Noise Becomes a Health and Political Issue

Noise can make us ill- not just hearing loss (as I have from starting a dance club for Caribbean youth in an abandoned factory in London), but also high blood pressure, disturbed sleep and even heart disease. An article in a German trade union newspaper claimed that "noise sickness" tops the list of industrial ailments. Noise is a pollutant. It creates a lot of stress and strain for bodies and minds already taxed by a high-pressure economic system.

Noise is the silent political issue that grates on many people's nerves. In a poll, 45% of the German population said they believe that protection against noise is more important than building new roads. Tens of thousands of people who live near London's Heathrow airport have for years managed to stymie successive government plans to build a new runway. The government has approved the plan, but it still faces the possibility of mass demonstrations that could seriously hinder the work.

We are a long way from the hoped-for day when national political figures will ride to power quoting Wordsworth's poem, "On Westminster Bridge":

"The city now doth, like a garment, wear

the beauty of the morning, silent, bare."

But that doesn't mean battles can't be won on a smaller scale than defeating a plan at a big airport for noisier flights. Campaigners on the busy road where I used to live managed to close it to night-time traffic. Lake District lovers, aghast at a new main road through Grasmere sending shock waves up the fells, have struggled to make sure the mistake is not repeated. A friend of mine in central Copenhagen, whose balcony gives her a view of one of the peaceful canals, complains to me about the noise from the street below. Too many cars, motorbikes, tourist buses and delivery vans destroy what at first sight seems beautiful and tranquil.

Since 1994, Denmark has had noise control legislation, and many streets are now pedestrianised. Copenhagen is flooded with bicycle riders; cars and their noise in the inner city have been significantly reduced. But still the legislation is far from enough.

What Governments Can Do

Although noise is never likely to compete with other political issues such as unemployment and nuclear weapons in North Korea, political leaders, whatever their stripes and spots, are amenable to pressure. Classless in its impact, hurting rich and poor alike, protestors and agitators are pushing open a door. Many of the required changes have been tried and tested elsewhere.

" Gothenburg, Sweden: There are restrictions on the through passage of motorists and lorry drivers. Trams and buses have been given a reserved right of way and priority at signals. This makes public transport more attractive than driving a car-the result: reduced noise in the main shopping streets.

- Switzerland: Driving heavy trucks at night and on Sundays is prohibited.
- Britain: As far back as 1973, Parliament passed a law allowing building owners to seek compensation for property that depreciates because of new public works that cause noise, vibration, and dust. As far back as 2008, a woman was sentenced to 90 days in jail for violating a court order not to play loud music that had disturbed her neighbours eleven times. (But why did they have to wait until the eleventh time?)
- The US and Britain: In 1976, for the first time, they modified their noise regulations to require older aircraft to comply with the noise limits required for new aircraft. Over the years, the regulations have been toughened.

Lots of Sounds, Not Noise

Put these examples on Facebook, demand MORE, and distribute your demands far and wide to places where, as the poet Jeni Couzyn wrote:

"Under the screech and hiss
of progress, creeps an army of emptiness". Could we once again hear the sheep and the rain, the wind and the coffee pot, the sound of the bat on the ball and children playing? Lots of sounds, not noise. [IDN-InDepthNews]

Delhi BRICS Summit set to advance climate cooperation and global resilience

Cape Town, The expanding influence of BRICS in the global economy reflects a major transformation towards a more balanced, inclusive and multipolar world order. Against this backdrop, the September Summit in New Delhi could prove decisive in advancing deeper climate cooperation and shaping global resilience to climate change, a report has stated.For New Delhi, the host of this year's Summit, the term "Viksit Bharat", India's vision of becoming a developed country by 2047, is particularly apt - reflecting an aspiration that the country hopes can extend to all developing nations, according to a report in South African news website 'The National'.

"Developing countries will gather in New Delhi in September for the 18th edition of the summit, with a key pillar focusing on building resilience in agriculture and in disaster risk reduction. Climate-related risks are ever present in developing economies - severe droughts, floods, heatwaves, and cyclones-that threaten high-exposure infrastructure, food security, and macroeconomic stability, prompting coordinated disaster risk reduction frameworks and local-currency climate financing strategies," the report detailed.

"BRICS countries are adapting to climate change and introducing green energy as developing countries embrace the solutions for the challenges that will come in the years to come. Climate cooperation is essential to India's hosting of the summit, with climate experts stressing that the climate agenda is increasingly shifting from discussions about the pace of emissions reductions to practical adaptation measures," it added.

The report noted that climate cooperation has remained a key focus of previously held BRICS Summits. At the 2015 Summit in Ufa, Russia, member countries expressed their readiness to tackle climate change at both the global and national levels. Additionally, at the 17th Summit in Rio de Janeiro, leaders agreed on key documents, including the BRICS Leaders' Framework Declaration on Climate Finance and a broader Climate Leadership Agenda.

"Across BRICS nations, a clean energy transition is already full speed ahead, with wind and solar projects outnumbering planned fossil fuel plants. What is missing is a joint financial architecture to match that momentum. India's BRICS presidency is about a joint financial architecture to match the speed of the transition to clean energy and the opportunity to build it beyond declaration and toward delivery," The National mentioned.

According to the report, India as BRICS chair could accelerate the implementation of three specific mechanisms."First, BRICS can amplify the reach of Project Bridge, the blockchain-enabled multi-CBDC platform developed by BRICS' central banks, as a settlement layer for climate finance transactions, reducing dollar intermediation and transaction costs for cross-border green investment within the bloc. Second, India can push a formal framework for strategically utilising Gulf Sovereign Wealth Fund co-investment in NDB climate projects," the report highlighted"Third, accelerate the rupee bond program across BRICS currencies, leveraging India's expertise in building large-scale, low-cost digital public infrastructure (DPI) frameworks," it stressed.

Nepal President thanks India for 'generous support' after deadly flash floods

Kathmandu, Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel on Saturday expressed gratitude to his Indian counterpart Droupadi Murmu for her concern and the support extended by the government of India following the devastating flash floods in Nepal that left hundreds dead and caused widespread destruction.

"On behalf of the Government and the people of Nepal, I extend our deepest gratitude to Your Excellency SmtDroupadi Murmu for your kind concern and also for the generous support and solidarity extended by your government following the recent calamity in Nepal," the Office of the President of Nepal posted on X.

Paudel also conveyed condolences over the tragic loss of Indian lives in the aftermath of the catastrophic flood on Wednesday.

"We also offer our heartfelt condolences and profound sympathy to the Government and the people of India for the tragic loss of Indian lives in the disaster of August 26, 2026," he stated.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday stated that 149 Indian nationals crossed over safely into Nepal from China, while 320 people continue to remain missing or not contactable, in the wake of the deadly floods in Nepal.

The death toll from the flash floods reached 616 on Saturday morning, while hundreds remain missing, local media reported, citing officials.

The massive flood that struck Nepal's Rasuwa originated in the Tibetan region of China. It swept through the transboundary Bhote Koshi River, leaving a trail of destruction in the country.

Following the devastating floods, President Murmu on Wednesday expressed solidarity with Nepal and reaffirmed New Delhi's readiness to assist the Himalayan nation in its relief and rescue efforts.

"I convey my deepest sympathies to Rt Hon President Mr. Ramchandra Paudel and the people of Nepal on the devastation caused by the flash floods today. We express our solidarity with Nepal at this difficult hour. India stands ready to support the relief and rescue efforts of the Government of Nepal for those affected by this calamity," President's Secretariat posted on X.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday spoke with his Nepali counterpart Balendra Shah and offered condolences on the loss of lives due to the flash floods in the Himalayan nation. PM Modi also expressed India's readiness to provide all possible humanitarian assistance to Nepal.

"Spoke to Prime Minister Balendra Shah and conveyed condolences on the loss of lives due to the floods in Nepal. The people of India stand in solidarity with their sisters and brothers in Nepal at this difficult time," PM Modi posted on X.

"India is ready to provide all possible humanitarian assistance to Nepal. Our teams are coordinating closely on rescue and relief efforts," he added.(agencies)

Foreign policy remarks must reflect Bangladesh govt position, not minister's personal opinions: Report

Dhaka, The government of Bangladesh should ensure that remarks made by ministers on foreign policy matters convey the official position of the State, rather than the personal perspectives of the individual concerned, a report has stated.

Bangladesh's State Minister for Foreign Affairs, HumaiunKobir, said the country has expressed interest in joining the Mecca agreement involving Pakistan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. He has also argued that participation of Muslim-majority countries in such a security arrangement would not be unusual.

Reports, however, indicate that Dhaka has not formally decided to join the pact - a distinction that matters, a report in Bangladesh's 'Daily Sun' mentioned this week.

"If the government has decided to explore the possibility of joining the agreement, it should say so clearly. If discussions are still at an early stage, that should also be made clear. And if HumaiunKobir was merely expressing his personal assessment rather than announcing an official government decision, then the government should clarify that without delay," it mentioned,

The report further noted that controversy surrounding Kobir's dual citizenship should, for instance, have been relatively straightforward to resolve.

Questions have been raised over whether he formally renounced his British citizenship before joining the government.

In light of constitutional provisions governing foreign citizenship and eligibility to serve as a member of parliament, minister, state minister or deputy minister, such questions are not unreasonable, the report noted.

Fundamentally, this matter could have been easily settled by publishing the relevant documents.Instead, when journalists raised the issue, Kobir questioned which newspaper was pursuing it and brought up political events of 2008 and the caretaker government led by Moeen U Ahmed and Fakhruddin Ahmed. His response did little to answer the central question and, if anything, only deepened the controversy, the report mentioned.

"I am dealing with citizens, and you are talking about netizens! What netizens? I deal with citizens; I work. You talk about netizens! So which newspaper is it? Who is so upset that they will not let me work? Why are they so upset? Is it the itch of 2008 coming back? Is the itch of the Moeenuddin-Fakhruddin era flaring up again?" Daily Sun quoted Kobir as saying while responding to a journalist.The report stressed that although public officials deserve respect for the office they hold, legitimate questions raised by journalists should not automatically be interpreted as personal attacks.

"Journalists are not there to flatter ministers. Their job is to ask questions-and sometimes those questions will be uncomfortable. The controversy also raises a broader concern about Humaiun Kobir's approach to diplomacy," it noted.(agencies)

Willing to negotiate with US but remains wary: Iranian President

Tehran, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has said that Iran will negotiate with the United States, but remains wary of Washington, stressing that Tehran will honour its commitments only if the other side does the same.

Pezeshkian made the remarks in a televised interview broadcast on Friday night (local time), responding to questions about whether ongoing diplomatic efforts could revive the peace memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by Iran and the United States in June and restore the Iranian nation's rights."We can move forward" if Iran's actions are met with reciprocal and proportional actions from the other side, the Iranian president said, acknowledging that the two sides might not achieve all their objectives.

Under the MoU, the United States was expected to lift a naval blockade and oil and petrochemical sanctions against Iran and release Iranian frozen assets.

Pezeshkian said Iran had exported nearly 90 million barrels of oil during the period when the agreement was being implemented, reports Xinhua news agency.

"The main issue is that we must be committed to the MoU we have written. When we sit down at the negotiating table, we can talk to them," he said.

On June 18, the United States and Iran signed the deal on ending the war in the region on all fronts, including Lebanon. Under the MoU, they were scheduled to hold negotiations within 60 days, which ended on Aug. 17, to reach a final agreement.

The talks' fate remains unclear following the escalation between the two countries last month.Pezeshkian's comments came as Iran continues to grapple with economic pressures at home.In a separate message Friday marking Government Week, Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei called for "serious" attention to economic and livelihood challenges, including inflation, unemployment and the management of prices and markets.Iran needs stronger economic growth, increased investment and a production boost, Khamenei said, describing greater reliance on domestic production as key to addressing the country's economic difficulties.Where domestic production cannot meet demand, imports should be used "properly and wisely," he said.

Khamenei also called for maintaining national unity and protecting social cohesion, warning against using statements that lead to hopelessness and weaken national and public motivation.The remarks came amid intensified US economic pressure on Iran. Earlier this month, US President Donald Trump announced "the most crushing economic operation ever taken" against any country providing a lifeline to Iran.

"This will be Economic Warfare and Isolation on an unprecedented scale," Trump said in a social media post, calling the move "an ECONOMIC D-DAY."

Mecca agreement lacks binding political ideology: Report flags deep contradictions in trilateral pact

Ottawa, The contradictions underpinning the Mecca Agreement involving Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey could hardly be more glaring.

With no shared values, common interests or even a unified threat perception, and no common adversary to bind them, the trilateral pact faces the fundamental question of what will ultimately hold it together, a report has highlighted.

"The Iran war is changing Middle Eastern geopolitics. US bases across the Gulf have been repeatedly targeted and the US has been unable to open the Strait of Hormuz fully for maritime traffic and energy shipments. This has prompted Middle Eastern countries to look at diversifying their defence partners away from Washington. The most visible demonstration of this evolving strategy came in early August when Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan signed the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement," a report in Canada-based 'Geopolitical Monitor' mentioned.

The Mecca Agreement is being promoted as a NATO-like security pact, with a provision similar to NATO's Article 5 that considers an armed attack on any one of the three states an attack on all of them.

Highlighting the inherent contradiction in the Mecca Pact, the report said some members of the grouping have deep ties with adversaries of another. It asked whether Saudi Arabia, which has significantly strengthened ties with India over the past decade, would support Pakistan in a future conflict with New Delhi.

"In the past, Riyadh had asked Islamabad to send troops, ships, and aircraft for the war in Yemen. However, Pakistan's parliament voted against joining the war. Each country considers questions of war and peace based on its national interests, and hence, there are apprehensions about whether the three countries will help each other or not. And even if they decide to help their fellow signatory, the extent of the assistance they provide remains an open question," the report stated.

According to the report, NATO is the standard example of a successful military alliance, built on shared interests and common values. All its members are democracies committed to human rights and the rule of law, providing the alliance with a strong ideological glue. The Mecca Agreement, it said, by contrast, lacks any comparable binding political ideology.

"Saudi Arabia is a theocracy and seeks to maintain its position as the foremost Islamic state while launching internal reforms. Pakistan is a military-backed democracy. It deploys religion as a policy tool. Turkey is a strained democracy that champions the ideology of political Islam. Saudi Arabia believes that political Islam, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, poses a threat to its regime," the report mentioned.(agencies)

US judge again rejects Trump's bid to overturn hush money conviction

Washington, A federal judge has once again rejected US President Donald Trump's attempt to move his hush money case from New York state court to federal court, dealing another setback to his efforts to overturn his criminal conviction.Judge Alvin Hellerstein of the US District Court for the Southern District of New York said Trump's reasons for renewing his request were "neither new nor legally sufficient."In May 2024, Trump was convicted on 34 felony counts of falsifying business records related to a 130,000-dollar hush money payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels.Trump first sought to move the case to federal court on May 4, 2023. Hellerstein rejected the request on July 19, 2023, ruling that the alleged conduct was personal rather than related to Trump's official duties as President, reports Xinhua news agency.

Hellerstein rejected Trump's request a second time in September 2024, following Trump's conviction and the Supreme Court's July 2024 ruling that former presidents have immunity from federal criminal prosecution for certain official acts performed while President.In Friday's ruling, Hellerstein again maintained that the case concerned Trump's personal conduct rather than his official acts as President."Paying hush money to an adult film star or engaging in a cover-up of an embarrassment are not subsumed in presidential immunity," he wrote.Trump's legal team said in a statement that it would appeal the decision. A spokesperson for the team called the ruling "baseless and lawless." Juan Merchan, a New York judge who was overseeing the hush money case, had in January 2025 granted Trump an unconditional discharge in delivering the sentence, meaning the President will face no fine or probation supervision.Still, the sentencing formally designates Trump as a convicted felon, subject to the outcome of his future appeals.(agencies)

Nepal flash floods: 934 people linked to 11 hydropower projects remain out of contact

Kathmandu, As many as 934 people associated with 11 hydropower projects in Nepal's flood-affected Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts have remained out of contact, an association representing the country's private power producers said.

The Independent Power Producers' Association, Nepal (IPPAN), said 730 people associated with six hydropower projects in Rasuwa and 204 people linked to five projects in Nuwakot have remained out of contact following the devastating floods in the Bhote Koshi River on August 26.

The floods caused extensive damage to hydropower projects and other infrastructure in the two districts.

The 216-MW Upper Trishuli-1 Hydropower Project, which is under construction in Rasuwa, reported the highest number of people out of contact.According to IPPAN, 576 people associated with the project remain out of contact. The project is being developed by Nepal Water and Energy Development Company (NWEDC), a company backed by South Korean investors, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group and local partners.

Another 158 people associated with the 37-MW Upper Trishuli-3B Hydropower Project in Nuwakot remain out of contact, according to IPPAN.Similarly, the 111-MW Rasuwagadhi Hydropower Project reported that a total of 93 people associated with the project remain out of contact, making it the project with the third-highest number of people reported missing or uncontactable.The remaining 107 people are associated with eight other hydropower projects, some of which are under construction while others are already operational.According to IPPAN, the August 26 floods affected 13 hydropower projects in Rasuwa and Nuwakot, with a combined installed capacity of 675.6 MW.

According to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA), a total of 626 bodies recovered from the floods had been collected as of Saturday at 10 a.m. The authority said that as many as 2,426 people remained out of contact.The floods, triggered by a sudden surge in the Bhote Koshi River, caused widespread loss of life and extensive damage to hydropower projects, roads, bridges and other infrastructure in the affected areas.

Playing all sides, losing trust of all: Pakistan's mediator role comes under scrutiny

Washington, While Pakistan seeks to position itself as a mediator in the US-Iran conflict, its parallel defence commitments to Gulf Arab monarchies have fuelled Tehran's suspicions about Islamabad, a report has stated.

It noted that Pakistan's expanding agreements with Gulf states - including its pact with Saudi Arabia and a pending agreement with Kuwait - have reinforced Tehran's view that Islamabad is tilting towards US and Saudi security frameworks, further eroding trust.

Writing for American media outlet 'PJ Media', Turkish journalist Uzay Bulut questioned: "How efficient can Pakistan be as a mediator between Tehran, Washington, and Islamabad when it is attempting to play all sides while simultaneously losing the trust of all?"

Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Turkey signed the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement in Mecca on August 7, pledging to strengthen collective deterrence against acts of aggression. The agreement stipulates that an armed attack against any one of the signatories would be regarded as an attack against all three.Two days later, the Iranian-backed Houthis struck an oil facility on Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast, with the coalition yet to

respond to the attack, Bulut mentioned.Despite entering into a mutual defence agreement with Saudi Arabia last year, she said, Pakistan has refrained from any military response to Iranian attacks on the kingdom.

Bulut noted that Islamabad has rejected suggestions that its nuclear deterrent could be extended to its allies, clarifying that the pact does not include nuclear weapons.

According to the report, Iran-Pakistan relations have been strained for decades amid cross-border militant strikes and shifting regional alliances. "Pragmatic cooperation despite divergent strategic orientations traditionally characterises their relationship. Though both maintain robust trade links, periodic frictions have arisen over Pakistan's close defence cooperation with Saudi Arabia; Tehran's suspicion of Islamabad's alignment with US-led coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and mutual allegations of providing space for cross-border activities of terrorist groups such as Jaish ul-Adl and Baloch militant organisations," the report mentioned."Persistent mistrust between Iran and Pakistan causes frequent cross-border security friction, proxy competition, and diplomatic tightropes," it added.

The report further highlighted that Pakistan's "near-bankrupt" economy could collapse without continued international bailouts. The country is heavily dependent on energy imports, with Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Gulf states meeting more than 85 per cent of its oil requirements and almost all of its liquefied natural gas (LNG) needs.

With Islamabad projecting itself as a potential mediator for the ongoing Iran-US conflict, the report said, "Tehran's current narrative casts Pakistan as complicit in external aggression, limiting Islamabad's credibility as an impartial broker."(agencies)

Nifty, Sensex post notable weekly losses over caution on global interest rates

Mumbai, Indian equity benchmarks posted notable losses for the third consecutive week amid concerns over global interest rates and geopolitical uncertainty.

Nifty declined 0.31 per cent during the week and added 0.35 per cent on the last trading day to reach 24,175. At close, Sensex was up 330 points, or 0.43 per cent, at 77,264. It lost 0.36 per cent during the week.Analysts said that volatility surrounding the introduction of the Closing Auction Session (CAS) for F&O stocks also weighed on investor sentiment.

The monthly derivatives expiry witnessed sharp price movements during the closing auction, raising concerns regarding increased short-term volatility and price dislocations, particularly in heavyweight stocks.

Although markets recovered sharply on Friday, supported by strong buying in IT stocks following upbeat global technology cues, the benchmark indices remained under pressure.Comments from the US Federal Reserve Chairman at the Jackson Hole symposium kept investors cautious regarding the future trajectory of interest rates, with markets increasingly assessing the possibility of a less accommodative policy environment.Rising uncertainty around US inflation and bond yields could continue to influence foreign institutional flows towards emerging markets.

Sectoral performance remained mixed, with IT emerging as the strongest performer following renewed global technology optimism and encouraging Nvidia results. The Nifty IT index gained around 2.45 per cent during the week, while weakness in select banking and consumer stocks continued to weigh on the broader benchmarks.

Pharma and selected metal stocks also witnessed buying interest, while lower crude prices provided some relief to sectors sensitive to energy costs.

Crude oil prices, however, provided some relief during the week as Brent crude declined by over 4 per cent to around $88 per barrel as markets reacted to expectations of improved shipping conditions through the Strait of Hormuz.Nevertheless, geopolitical risks remain elevated and any renewed disruption to energy supplies could quickly reverse the recent decline in crude prices, analysts noted.

The 24,000-23,800 zone remains the immediate support area for Nifty, while 24,300-24,400 remains the immediate resistance zone.Immediate support for Bank Nifty is placed around 56,900-56,500, while the 57800-58000 zone remains the key resistance area, market participants said.Investors closely track domestic GDP data and global economic releases likely to determine market direction. US employment data and August non-farm payrolls report are scheduled to be released on September 4.(agencies)

Gold posts nearly 1.86 pc weekly dip over hawkish stance of US Fed Reserve

New Delhi, Gold prices dipped nearly 1.86 per cent as markets digested higher than expected inflation data and a hawkish debut speech by US Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh at the Jackson Hole symposium.

On Friday, MCX gold futures expiring in October dropped 1.63 per cent while MCX silver futures for September shed 1.66 per cent. Gold futures stood at Rs 1,56,400, while silver futures stood at Rs 2,36,651 per kg.

The price of 10 grams of 24-carat gold was at Rs 1,59,578 on Friday, down from Rs 1,62,603 seen on Monday at market opening, according to data published by the India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA).

After a strong surge earlier this week momentum reversed after July's US personal consumption expenditures (PCE) inflation reading came in at 3.7 per cent year on year, along with US labour and trade data pointing to a stronger than expected economy.

Renewed concerns about currency debasement and US Treasury support for long dated bonds had caused the bullion rally to multi month highs earlier in the week.

However, stronger-than-expected economic data led to market pricing in a higher probability of the Fed remaining restrictive for longer.

A hawkish speech from Kevin Warsh reset rate expectations, while oil eased from recent highs on fresh signs of diplomatic progress around the Strait of Hormuz.

Gold tumbled roughly $70 within minutes of Warsh's speech before recovering some ground, while silver also gave back gains from its earlier highs, analysts said.

Odds of a September rate hike jumped from roughly 1-in-3 to more than 2-in-5 on the CME FedWatch tool, and year-end rate expectations rose to their highest level in three weeks.

Silver mirrored the swings, climbing to a 10-week high before slipping back multiple times over the week, while copper touched fresh all-time highs before easing back.Immediate resistance is placed at $4,600-$4,630 zone, for Comex Gold, while support lies at $4,500-$4,470 zone, analysts said.For MCX Gold, immediate resistance is placed at Rs 1,59,200-1,60,000 zone, while the support lies at Rs 1,56,200-Rs 1,55,500, they added.(agencies)

Apparel exporters urge Piyush Goyal to regulate cotton yarn exports amid price surge

New Delhi, India's apex apparel exporters body -- Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) -- on Saturday urged Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh to take suitable measures to regulate cotton yarn exports amid a sharp rise in prices, saying competitive availability of the key raw material is essential for strengthening India's value-added garment exports.

In a letter, AEPC Chairman Dr A. Sakthivel sought the intervention of the government particularly to regulate exports of cotton yarn of 20s count and above.

Sakthivel said India needs to prioritise value-added exports such as finished garments, which generate substantially higher value realisation and employment compared with exports of raw cotton and yarn.

Raw cotton fetches around Rs 275 per kg, while cotton converted into yarn fetches approximately Rs 325 per kg. In comparison, a kilogram of finished garments can fetch between Rs 800 and Rs 1,200 after value addition, he wrote in the letter.

The industry body attributed the increase in yarn prices to supply-side constraints, including limited stock availability with ginners and reduced cotton arrivals, which have led mills to increasingly depend on Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) auctions.

It also flagged rising exports of Indian cotton and cotton yarn to apparel-producing countries such as Bangladesh and Vietnam following US restrictions on the use of Chinese cotton under the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA).

Apparel exporters, who largely procure fabric from the domestic market, said higher cotton and yarn prices are translating into increased fabric and garment manufacturing costs, affecting their competitiveness in global markets.The industry has highlighted that the issue assumes significance as India gains greater access to international markets, including through new free trade agreement (FTA) markets such as the UK and New Zealand.

The apparel industry has therefore urged the government to ensure adequate availability of cotton yarn at competitive prices and consider measures to stabilise the market.It said the move would help Indian apparel exporters remain competitive and take advantage of emerging opportunities in global markets while supporting greater domestic value addition and employment.

Cotton yarn prices have risen by around 60 per cent, from about Rs 250 per kg in early 2026 to nearly Rs 400 per kg currently, adding to cost pressures across the apparel manufacturing value chain.(agencies)

India's sustainable aviation fuel can achieve cost parity with jet fuel by 2036: Report

New Delhi, India's sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) industry could achieve cost parity with conventional jet fuel by 2036 with domestic production offering greater protection from currency fluctuations and global commodity price volatility, a report has said. The report by Gulf Times said that evaluating SAF projects only through single-year production costs gives an incomplete picture of their long-term economics.

It noted that while power-and-biomass-to-liquids (PBtL) fuel is estimated to cost $1.42 per litre in 2030, compared with $0.97 per litre for conventional jet fuel, the gap narrows substantially when costs are assessed over a 25-year project cycle.In addition, historical data between 2005 and 2025 showed wholesale jet fuel prices rising by 5 per cent annually in nominal rupee terms.About 1.9 per cent of the increase was at-

tributed to US dollar commodity inflation, while 3.1 per cent reflected rupee depreciation against the dollar.According to the report, domestic synthetic fuel plants can help reduce this currency vulnerability as major operational inputs can be secured through long-term, rupee-denominated power purchase agreements at fixed tariffs.

Taking these dynamics into account, researchers estimated the levelised cost of PBtL fuel from a plant commissioned in 2030 at Rs 127 per litre, only 18 per cent above the adjusted levelised purchase cost of conventional jet fuel over the same 25-year period.Under base-case market assumptions, new synthetic fuel facilities commissioned in 2036 are projected to achieve full levelised cost parity with conventional fuel, the report said.It also noted that the cost gap could close sooner if the wider economic benefits of green fuel are factored into policy decisions.

Moreover, monetising health benefits from reduced agricultural field burning could add an estimated $0.38 per litre in avoided societal costs, while applying carbon costs could add up to $0.22 per litre.These benefits could potentially bring SAF to commercial cost parity with conventional jet fuel as early as 2030, it said.Additionally, the report highlighted the potential for India's agricultural residue and low-cost renewable power to support a domestic SAF ecosystem while reducing exposure to imported crude oil and foreign exchange risks.(agencies)

BFSI emerges as top GCC occupier in H1 2026 with 7.32 mnsq ft transactions: Report

New Delhi, The banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) sector emerged as the leading occupier of office space driven by Global Capability Centre (GCC) activity in the first half of 2026, recording 7.32 million square feet of transactions across India's leading eight cities, a report said on Saturday. BFSI-led GCC transactions surged 70 per cent year-on-year in H1 2026 from 4.31 million sq ft in the corresponding period last year, according to a study by Knight Frank India.

The sector accounted for around 36 per cent of the total 20.6 million sq ft of GCC transaction volumes recorded across the eight major cities during the January-June period.

The data points to a structural shift in India's commercial real estate market, with GCC demand increasingly broadening beyond traditional technology occupiers. The BFSI sector's strong expansion has emerged as a key driver of office space demand in 2026.Demand from other service sectors also gained momentum during the period. Office transactions by non-tech service sector occupiers rose 16 per cent year-on-year to 5.10 million sq ft in H1 2026, compared with 4.41 million sq ft in H1 2025, indicating increasing diversification in India's office leasing market.Manufacturing-related office absorption, however, moderated slightly to 4.05 million sq ft in H1 2026 from 4.67 million sq ft in the year-ago period.The IT and IT-enabled services sector recorded a sharper correction, with total office absorption declining 28 per cent year-on-year to 4.13 million sq ft from 5.71 million sq ft in H1 2025. The decline reflects a period of recalibration in the technology sector amid changes in global strategies and operating requirements.

Viral Desai, International Partner and Senior Executive Director, Occupier Strategy Solutions, Industrial & Logistics, Capital Markets & Retail, Knight Frank India, said the country's commercial real estate market is undergoing a clear structural shift as GCC-led demand becomes increasingly diversified beyond traditional technology occupiers.

"The 70 per cent YoY surge in BFSI-led GCC transactions underscores the sector's growing appetite for high-quality office spaces, while the strong growth in other service sectors points to a broader expansion of India's services economy," Desai said.(agencies)

Govt rejects concerns over CBG price hike, says impact on CNG, PNG consumers will be negligible

New Delhi, The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on Saturday rejected concerns that the revised price of Compressed Biogas (CBG) under the GOBARdhan Scheme could place a significant additional burden on CNG and household PNG consumers, saying the assessment is based on inconsistent assumptions.

The ministry said the existing pricing mechanism links the price paid to CBG producers to 85 per cent of the retail selling price of CNG. Based on the latest revision, this translates into a CBG procurement price of around Rs 1,478 per MMBtu.

Under the revised GOBARdhan framework, the CBG procurement price has been fixed at Rs 2,110 per MMBtu, representing an increase of around 43 per cent over the prevailing price. However, the ministry clarified that this is the procurement price paid to CBG producers and is not the price directly paid by CNG or household PNG consumers.

The government will provide affordability support of Rs 10 per kg of CBG,

equivalent to approximately Rs 215 per MMBtu for CBG containing 95 per cent methane. This support will be funded by the government and will reduce the amount that needs to be recovered through gas consumers. After accounting for the government support, the effective CBG cost to be recovered through the gas consumer base would be around Rs 1,895 per MMBtu, compared with the prevailing effective price of Rs 1,478 per MMBtu. This translates into an effective increase of approximately 28 per cent, significantly lower than the headline increase in the procurement price.

The ministry further clarified that CBG is not sold to City Gas Distribution (CGD) entities at its procurement price. Instead, it is pooled with other domestically produced natural gas, with the cost distributed across the applicable domestic gas pool. Under the earlier framework, the cost of CBG was spread only across the limited quantity of Administered Price Mechanism (APM) gas allocated to the CNG transport and domestic PNG segments. Under the new framework, however, the net cost of CBG will be distributed across a domestic gas base that is approximately 2.5 to three times larger than the earlier base.(agencies)

India's 'Per Drop More Crop' scheme brings 115 lakh hectares under micro-irrigation, boosts income

New Delhi, The Central government's Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) has brought more than 115 lakh hectares under micro-irrigation as of July 2026 and has benefitted 12.30 lakh farmers, around 20 per cent of them women, an official factsheet said on Saturday. The centrally sponsored scheme, implemented under the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana since 2022-23, provides financial assistance for drip and sprinkler systems for up to five hectares per beneficiary.

"Independent studies report higher yields, significant water savings, lower cultivation costs, and increased farmers' incomes. PDMC is strengthening resource-efficient, sustainable agriculture by using every drop of water efficiently," the statement noted. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Rajasthan recorded the highest areas covered by micro-irrigation under PDMC.

Under the Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) scheme, Small and marginal farmers receive 55 per cent financial assistance or subsidy on the installation costs of micro-irrigation systems, and other farmers receive 45 per cent financial assistance. Central assistance of Rs 8,123.24 crore has been released in the last three years, the factsheet said. During 2025-26, a total of Rs 8,957.72 crore has been released/sanctioned for PM-RKVY, which includes Rs 3,226.36 crore specifically dedicated to the PDMC scheme.

Some state governments also provide additional subsidies from their own budgets. Farmers can receive assistance again for the same land after seven years.

The scheme also promotes fertigation to improve nutrient application efficiency and prioritises water-scarce and groundwater-stressed regions. Fertigation is the process of applying fertilisers with irrigation water directly to the region where most of the plant's roots develop. More than 80 per cent of India's available water resources are used for agricultural irrigation. However, only about 50 per cent of the net sown area has irrigation facilities and hence improving water use is a national priority, the statement said. Micro irrigation is an important solution for improving water use efficiency in agriculture as it delivers water directly to crops with minimum losses. (agencies)

ONGC's first Bengal Basin oil discovery moves closer to production: Hardeep Puri

New Delhi, Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Saturday said ONGC's first commercial hydrocarbon discovery in the Bengal Basin at Ashoknagar has moved a decisive step closer to monetisation, marking a significant development in India's efforts to strengthen energy security and boost domestic hydrocarbon production. In a post on social media platform X, Puri said that less than three months after the development well AS-1Z was spudded on May 30, 2026, ONGC successfully established the flow potential of light, high-quality crude oil from the field."In a significant step towards further strengthening India's unprecedented journey towards energy security and boosting domestic production of hydrocarbons under the dynamic leadership of PM Modi, the first commercial hydrocarbon discovery by ONGC in the Bengal Basin at Ashoknagar has moved a decisive step closer to monetisation," the minister said.

"In less than three months since the spudding of development well AS-1Z on 30 May 2026, ONGC successfully established the flow potential of light, high-quality crude oil," he added.He said the maiden consignment of crude oil from the Ashoknagar field was flagged off for transportation to Indian Oil Corporation's Haldia Refinery in the presence of Ashoknagar MLA Dr Sumay Hira and ONGC's Director of Exploration.According to Puri, the development marks an important transition from years of exploration and perseverance to actual production potential, bringing West Bengal more firmly onto India's hydrocarbon map.The minister described the development as a significant step towards strengthening India's energy security and increasing domestic production of hydrocarbons under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.The Ashoknagar discovery is expected to add momentum to exploration and production activities in the Bengal Basin, as India seeks to reduce its dependence on imported hydrocarbons and expand the contribution of domestic resources to its energy requirements.Puri also said the development reflects the progress being made in West Bengal's hydrocarbon sector, while crediting the state's leadership and ongoing efforts to advance its energy potential.(agencies)

Bangladesh gas crisis highlights logistics weakness, concentration risk: Report

New Delhi, Bangladesh's gas crisis amounts to a logistics failure and a huge supply shortfall, with total availability around 2,420 million cubic feet per day (MMcfd) in mid August against national demand of about 3,800 MMcfd, a new report has said.

The report from Bangladesh-based The Daily Star said the shortfall has hit factories, filling stations, households and power plants.

The supply disruption is due to the failure in the country's LNG import chain rather than a single procurement problem, especially as the Excelerate Energy's FSRU went offline following a fire and technical problems.

Further weather related unloading delays at a terminal left inventories exhausted and supplies interrupted.

"Excelerate's terminal later also exhausted its LNG inventory while waiting for its next cargo. These were separate incidents, but together they exposed the same weakness: the country's LNG supply chain does not have enough redundancy," the publication said.

Gas imported as liquefied natural gas (LNG) has to pass through a long physical chain consisting of procurement, cargo nomination, LNG shipping, vessel scheduling and navigation through the international sea routes.

Subsequently, it must arrive at Moheshkhali island, get transferred to a floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU), stored, regasified, transmitted through high-pressure pipelines, and finally distributed to power plants, industries, refuelling stations and households.

Even if one important link fails in this supply chain, the consequences can travel through the entire economy, the report noted.

Bangladesh imports LNG through its two Floating Storage and Regasification Units (FSRUs) established off Moheshkhali Island, which now supply an estimated 30-37 per cent of national gas needs.

The report argued that concentration creates a single point vulnerability, where a technical failure, marine accidents or shipping delays at Moheshkhali can quickly cascade down the supply chain.

"A port operator would hesitate to route a critical share of national trade through only two pieces of infrastructure located at essentially the same gateway," the report noted.

It also flagged that domestic production continues to decline, and replacement with imported LNG exposes the economy to international prices, foreign exchange requirements, and maritime disruption.(agencies)

Women's Asia Cup: India battle for continental glory as Thailand opener awaits

(preview)

New Delhi, The Harmanpreet Kaur-led Indian women's team will aim to put 2024's complacency behind them and show their muscle in a battle for Asia Cup glory. The continental showpiece, hosted in the UAE, kicked off on Friday with Thailand beating Hong Kong China in the opener, but the most successful side in the competition's history, India, will take the field on Sunday against Thailand.

India enter the Asia Cup on the back of their second consecutive group-stage exit at the T20 World Cup, despite an unprecedented ODI world crown to their name. They largely field the same squad that played the T20 World Cup in England earlier this year, with only Yastika Bhatia, Shreyanka Patil (fitness) and Jemimah Rodrigues (hamstring injury) missing from that roster.

Pratika Rawal's maiden T20I call-up for the Asia Cup, as a replacement for Rodrigues, came as a surprise to many, as she last played a T20 game in November 2024. The Women in Blue have dropped Yastika, while leg-spinner Prema Rawat, who replaced Shreyanka at the World Cup, kept her place.

The bowling front remains unchanged, with a Renuka Singh-led pace attack that also includes Arundhati Reddy, Kranti Gaud and Nandani Sharma, and will look to assert its authority. The spin department features Radha Yadav, Deepti Sharma and Shree Charani. Meanwhile, Vaishnavi Sharma, Pooja Vastrakar and Asha Sobhana have not made the cut for the squad.

Eyes will also be on how India field their Playing XI, especially who replaces Rodrigues, and the game against Thailand could offer a glimpse of their mindset when selecting combinations. Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma are likely to be at the top, while it could come down to Pratika or Kamalini battling for Rodrigues' spot at No.3. Harmanpreet Kaur, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh and Bharti Fulmali are likely to form the middle order, while the toss-up will be among the pacers. Radha Yadav and Charani will be pushing for a place if India decide to pick two spinners.

Thailand are coming into this tournament on the back of confidence. They won the Women's Premier Cup in June by beating the UAE in the final and have also started this tournament on a high note. Left-arm spinner ThipatchaPutthawong is their bowling lynchpin and is the highest wicket-taker in the history of women's T20I cricket, with 169 wickets to her name. She went past India's Deepti with a 1-23 against Hong Kong.

Off-spinner OnnichaKamchomphu is doing good work too. She took 3-27 in the opener against Hong Kong and reached her 150th T20I wicket. 25-year-old wicket-keeper NannapatKoncharoenkai is a rising star and their leading run-scorer with 2806 runs to her name. Eyes will also be on Phannita Maya and NatthakanChantham as Thailand eye a strong outing against favourites India.

When: Sunday, August 30, 8:30 PM IST

Where: Dubai International Cricket Stadium, Dubai

Where to watch: The match will be shown live on the Sony Sports Network and live-streamed on the SonyLiv app and website.

Squads:

India: Harmanpreet Kaur (capt), Smriti Mandhana (vice-capt), Shafali Verma, Pratika Rawal, Bharti Fulmali, Richa Ghosh (wk), G Kamalini (wk), Deepti Sharma, Radha Yadav, Prema Rawat, Arundhati Reddy, Kranti Gaud, Renuka Singh, N Shree Charani, Nandani Sharma.

Thailand: NaruemolChaiwai (c), NannapatKoncharoenkai, NatthakanChantham, Chanida Sutthiruang, Suleeporn Laomi, Onnicha Kamchomphu, ThipatchaPutthawong, Phannita Maya, Aphisara Suwanchonrathi, SunidaChaturongrattana, Chayanisa Phengpaen, Nannaphat Chaihan, KoranitSuwanchonrathi, ThanradaSeesawan, Naomi Hamilton.

Duleep Trophy semis: East face Central, North take on South

(preview)

New Delhi, Eyes will be on teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi once again when he takes the field in the Duleep Trophy semifinal for East Zone against Rajat Patidar's defending champions, Central Zone, while South Zone will face North Zone in the other semifinal. Both matches are set for Sunday.

East Zone won their quarter-final against North East Zone, as all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed starred with both bat and ball to lead the side to an innings-and-210-run win. Shahbaz (167) forged a strong 150-run partnership with the other centurion, Sudip Kumar Gharami (146), to power the Ishan Kishan-led side to a daunting 467. Medium-pacer Abhijit K Sarkar and Shahbaz then plotted the downfall of the North East side, with Abhijit taking 5-20 and Shahbaz 3-20 as they bowled Rongsen Jonathan's team out for 111 and enforced a follow-on.

North East Zone again faced the brunt of East Zone's bowlers and were bowled out for 146 in the follow-on, with no one scoring a half-century. Ankulul Roy starred with a five-wicket haul, while Sooryavanshi took two wickets in a surprise move. East Zone won by an innings and 210 runs.

However, a much tougher test will await them in the semi-final, when they will face the defending champions at the BCCI Centre of Excellence Ground 1. Central Zone have the much stronger personnel, with Patidar leading the way and the likes of Rinku Singh, Harsh Dubey, Yash Thakur and Saransh Jain posing a significant threat. Saransh made his India debut in Colombo against Sri Lanka and will be gunning for success in the domestic circuit.

Meanwhile, North Zone, who defeated West Zone in a close quarter-final, will face Tilak Varma's South Zone. Kanhaiya Wadhawan's North Zone defeated the Ruturaj Gaikwad-led West Zone by 52 runs, as Abid Mushtaq and Nishant Sindhu shared six wickets to deny West a chase of 286 on the final day of the quarter-final. North had scored 251 in the first innings after a late-order 60 from Anshul Kamboj, while Mushtaq took a five-for in the first innings, as his team took a 44-run lead.

North did enough in the second innings too, as Ayush Badoni hit 50 and Sindhu made 44, taking the team to 222. Mushtaq stood tall once again with the ball, taking 4-60 in the second innings, while Sindhu took 2-59 in a 52-run win.

South Zone will pose a significant threat to North's title hopes. The side is led by India T20I vice-captain Varma, while the likes of Smaran Ravichandran, Karun Nair, Shreyas Gopal and Narayan Jagadeesan add strength to the side.

When: Sunday, August 30, 9:30 AM IST

Where: BCCI CoE Ground 1 and BCCI CoE Ground 2

Where to watch: The match will be streamed live on the JioHotstar app and website.

Squads

East Zone Squad: Ishan Kishan (Captain & Wicketkeeper) (Jharkhand), Vaibhav Sooryavanshi (Vice-Captain) (Bihar), Denish Das (Assam), Abhimanyu Easwaran (Bengal), Sudip Kumar Gharami (Bengal), Shahbaz Ahmed (Bengal), Suraj Sindhu Jaiswal (Bengal), Mohd Shami (Bengal), Mukesh Kumar (Bengal), Kumar Kushagra (Wicketkeeper) (Jharkhand), Shikhar Mohan (Jharkhand), Anukul Roy (Jharkhand), Virat Singh (Jharkhand), Subhranshu Senapati (Odisha), Abhijit Sarkar (Tripura).

Central Zone Squad: Rajat Patidar (Captain) (Madhya Pradesh), Rinku Singh (Vice-captain) (Uttar Pradesh), Ayush Pandey (Chhattisgarh), Saransh Jain (Madhya Pradesh), Aryan Pandey (Madhya Pradesh), Arshad Khan (Madhya Pradesh), Kunal Singh Rathod (Wicketkeeper) (Rajasthan), Aryan Juyal (Wicketkeeper) (Uttar Pradesh), Zeeshan Ansari (Uttar Pradesh), Kunal Chandela (Uttarakhand), Aman Mokhade (Vidarbha), Yash Rathod (Vidarbha), Harsh Dubey (Vidarbha), Yash Thakur (Vidarbha), Nachiket Bhute (Vidarbha).

North Zone Squad: Kanhaiya Wadhawan (Captain & Wicketkeeper) (Jammu & Kashmir), Ayush Badoni (Vice-captain) (Delhi), Sanat Sangwan (Delhi), Yash Dhull (Delhi), Ayush Doseja (Delhi), Nishant Sindhu (Haryana), Anshul Kamboj (Haryana), Nikhil Kashyap (Haryana), Qamran Iqbal (Jammu & Kashmir), Abdul Samad (Jammu & Kashmir), Abid Mushtaq (Jammu & Kashmir), Sunil Kumar (Jammu & Kashmir), Yudhvir Singh (Jammu & Kashmir), Arshdeep Singh (Punjab), Arjun Sharma (Services). *Sahil Lotra has replaced Yudhvir Singh in the squad

South Zone Squad: Tilak Varma (Capain) (Hyderabad), Ricky Bhui (Vice-captain & Wicketkeeper) (Andhra), SK Rasheed (Andhra), K Sai Teja (Andhra), T Vijay (Andhra), Abhinav Tejrana (Goa), K Himateja (Hyderabad), T Thyagarajan (Hyderabad), R Smaran (Karnataka), Karun Nair (Karnataka), Shreyas Gopal (Karnataka), V Kaverappa (Karnataka), MD Nidheesh (Kerala), N Jagadeesan (Wicketkeeper) (Tamil Nadu), Aman Khan (Pondicherry).

'Ishan bhaiya felt he took risk, but I'm a wicket-taker': Sooryavanshi on his two-scalp burst in Duleep Trophy

New Delhi, 15-year-old sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi opened up about his recent bowling burst in the opening match of the Duleep Trophy 2026 for East Zone after the tormenting batter switched to a bowling role with perfection, taking two wickets in a three-over spell against North East Zone.

The teenage sensation discussed his switch of hats during the match and shared how he felt when bowling and taking two wickets in the second innings of the game, which his team won by an innings and 210 runs on Tuesday.

"If you ask any batter, they always enjoy bowling. A batter always enjoys bowling and a bowler always enjoys batting equally," Sooryavanshi said in a video posted by BCCI Domestic.

Sooryavanshi, who was appointed vice-captain of the zonal side and deputy to Ishan Kishan, opened up about the skipper's decision to bowl him and described himself as a "wicket-taker".

"Opponent team's wickets weren't falling, so I was asked to bowl two or three overs. Ishan Bhaiya felt like he was taking a risk, but he didn't knew that I am a wicket-taker," he added.

In the second innings, the Bihar star bowled just three overs but made a significant impact by taking two wickets in a single over. The 15-year-old, who bowls occasional left-arm spin, got Kishan Lyngdoh caught in deep covers with a ball that tempted the batter to go aerial. Three balls later, he claimed another wicket when he nicked behind Southpaw ImliwatiLemtur, allowing Kishan to secure a sharp catch behind.

Sooryavanshi spoke on what he had in his mind while bowling the spell. "I had only one thing in my mind: that even if I take five wickets, I'm only going to get to bowl three overs only. So (the plan) was to bowl as well as I can and target one spot only and finish my spell well."

The Rajasthan Royals batter, who now has four First Class wickets, did not set the stage alight with the bat in his usual style, as he was dismissed for just eight in the only innings his team batted. However, he enjoyed making an impact with the ball.

"It was a lot of fun because batting didn't go so well in the match. So, contributing with the ball was great. And of course, when a batter takes a wicket, there's no greater enjoyment than that, so it was a lot of fun!" he concluded.

Sooryavanshi's side has reached the semifinals of the red-ball tournament and will face South Zone in the second semifinal at the BCCI Centre of Excellence Ground 2 in Bengaluru. The match will begin at 9:30 AM on Sunday. The final will begin on September 6.3(agencies)

Neeraj Chopra to miss Asiad, ruled out of remainder of season due to ligament tear

New Delhi, Star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra has been ruled out of the remainder of the 2026 season after suffering a ligament tear in his ankle during training, forcing the two-time Olympic medallist to miss next month's Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan.

The setback will also keep Chopra out of the Diamond League Finals in Brussels on September 5 and the inaugural World Athletics Ultimate Championships in Budapest from September 11 to 13, bringing an abrupt end to a season in which he had only recently begun to regain momentum following a delayed return from injury.Chopra announced the news in a post on his X account on Saturday, saying the decision to sit out the remainder of the season was taken after consultations with his doctor and team."After a period of hard work, I finally felt I was gaining the momentum I had been looking for with a Season's Best throw in Lausanne. Unfortunately, shortly after, I sustained a ligament tear in my ankle during training. After discussions with my doctor and team, we've decided that I will sit out the rest of this season," Chopra stated in a post on his 'X' account on Saturday.

The 2026 season had already been a challenging one for Chopra, whose return to competition was delayed until June because of a lower back injury that had troubled him since September last year.Despite not being fully fit, the Indian star managed to produce encouraging performances after his return. He won silver at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games with a throw of 85.83m before registering his season's best effort of 88.05m at the Lausanne Diamond League.

The performance in Lausanne had offered signs that Chopra was rediscovering his rhythm, making the latest injury setback particularly frustrating for the reigning Olympic medallist."It's disappointing, especially because I felt close to finding my rhythm. But as they say, setbacks are a part of the journey. My focus now is on recovering well and coming back even stronger. Thank you all for the love and support," he added.Chopra had also earned his place in the Diamond League finale after collecting 12 points during the season. A fourth-place finish in Doha and second place in Lausanne on August 21 helped him secure sixth position in the final standings after the conclusion of the 14th and final leg of the series in Zurich on Thursday.

He was also on course to compete at the inaugural World Athletics Ultimate Championships before turning his attention to the Asian Games in Japan later next month.

Instead, Chopra will now face another spell on the sidelines as he focuses on recovering from the ankle injury and preparing for his return to competition.

DPL 2026: 'Glad performance came when team needed it most,' says Jonty Sidhu

New Delhi, Central Delhi Kings captain Jonty Sidhu said he was glad his match-winning performance arrived when his team needed it the most, as he smashed an unbeaten 106 off 46 balls to lead his side into the final of the 2026 Delhi Premier League (DPL).

After that sensational batting performance, Sidhu also picked 3-25 to help his team get a 72-run victory over Purani Dilli 6 in Qualifier 2 at the Arun Jaitley Stadium and take them into Sunday's summit clash against South Delhi Superstarz. Against the mammoth 218/5 posted by Central Delhi Kings, Purani Dilli 6 wilted under pressure, slumping to 91/6 before being bundled out for 146.

Alongside Sidhu's three wickets, Money Grewal (2-27) and Tejas Baroka (2-19) delivered disciplined spells to complete the dominant win. "I am very happy. I contributed significantly for my team with both batting and bowling. At this stage, the team needed this kind of performance the most, so I'm glad it came at the right time," Sidhu said ahead of the title clash.

Sidhu and Aditya Bhandari (24 not out off 12 balls) also did some crucial hitting in the death overs to rescue the innings. "Bhandari and I discussed that if we just stayed out there, we would find that one big over to shift momentum. That's exactly what happened, I hit four sixes in an over, Bhandari hit two, and suddenly we were pushing close to 200," Sidhu revealed.

Elaborating on how he countered the opposition's bowling strategy, Sidhu explained, "They were trying to execute wide yorkers against me, so I anticipated where the deliveries would land. I backed myself to counter their strategy, and by God's grace, I got clean hits."Known primarily as a solid red-ball batter in the Ranji Trophy circuit, Sidhu also opened up on the dedication required to transform into an explosive T20 hitter. "We practice red-ball cricket in academies from childhood, but adapting to T20 took me a year or two. I've worked extremely hard over the last 6-7 months to develop this aspect of my game because modern cricket demands it," he added.

He also shared the story behind his special celebration upon reaching his maiden T20 century. "We had planned in the hotel that if we were in a winning position, I'd do a special celebration. Manni and I originally planned it, but since Bhandari was out there with me when I completed the hundred, I did it with him. I don't usually celebrate much, but for my first hundred in such a big match, it was necessary!"(agencies)

'We will be unstoppable': Shooter Ashi Chouksey targets Asian Games gold

Bhopal, Indian rifle shooter Ashi Chouksey, who entered competitive shooting unexpectedly in 2018, is preparing for her second Asian Games. At 24, she previously won one bronze and two silver medals, and now she aims to achieve gold at Aichi-Nagoya 2026.

Chouksey secured a silver medal in the Women's 10m air rifle team event, a silver in the Women's 50m rifle 3P team event, and a bronze in the Women's 50m rifle 3P event at the 2022 Asian Games, which took place in 2023. She feels that competing here has enhanced her clarity and confidence for the upcoming event in Japan.

Reflecting on the difference between her first and second Asian Games campaigns, Chouksey said, "Asian Games is one of the biggest multi-sport tournaments after the Olympics, and I have competed there before. I have performed on that stage, so I know what it takes. After winning three medals, I now have good experience of competing at this level. So, this time, I am going to Japan with a clear view and goal for what I want to achieve at this competition."

The journey to the Asian Games included a rigorous training period, during which the Indian shooting team participated in intensive camps in Bhopal. The initial camp featured numerous match and final simulations, along with extended shooting sessions aimed at assessing the athletes' endurance and consistency."We were putting a lot of hard work and a lot of effort into the preparation. The strategy for this camp was to conduct matches and finals. We played around three-four matches and three-four finals, which is a lot in a 10-day camp. Playing a match is very intense, even if it is just a 60-shot match. We also had a 120-shot match, which is not in any programme but we did it to check the endurance and stability for a long period of time." Chouksey explained.

The shooting team has also collaborated with sports psychologists and utilized biofeedback technology to gain insights into their breathing patterns and responses during shooting.

"So the psychologists use technology to monitor our breathing and other physical processes when we are shooting. We have tried it multiple times and it is really helpful…It has helped us understand ourselves better. They also suggested some exercises before sleeping and after waking up. I have been doing it and it is actually helping with my shooting as well."

"Little things matter a lot. We know what to do, we know how to shoot, but there are small things which are neglected. If we do them right, towards perfection, then I think we will be unstoppable," she added.

Having already faced the pressure of an Asian Games, Chouksey feels this experience can help her stay calmer during the competition. Nonetheless, her main goal is still to accomplish what she didn't achieve last time."I was excited and also very dedicated to convert it to gold. And I really want that very, very much," she said.

Chouksey is excited to face a formidable Chinese shooting team at the Asian Games. India's past performances against China in the previous edition have heightened the anticipation for this competition."I am really excited to compete with the China shooting team because they are a very strong team and in the 2023 Asian Games, we had a gold (Sift Kaur Samra) and a bronze (Ashi Chouksey) in the Women's 50m 3P category while they got a silver at their home. So they might still be holding it against us (laughs) and can be looking for revenge. They are a very strong team but I am really excited to compete with them," she said.Chouksey's journey from discovering shooting almost by chance at a school camp to becoming a top international shooter has been marked by rapid growth. She first encountered the sport during an NCC camp, where she tried a rifle for the first time. Her impressive initial experience inspired her to pursue shooting professionally, ultimately leading to her selection at a state shooting academy.

Chouksey begins her next Asian Games campaign, armed with experience, rigorous training, and a clear goal: to upgrade her past medal to gold.(agencies)

Varun Dhawan shares shirtless workout video from Bali, says 'It's 35 degrees out here'

Actor Varun Dhawan is currently in Bali, where he has been making the most of his time by staying committed to his fitness routine. On Friday, he shared a shirtless video from his workout session, giving a glimpse of how he is keeping himself active despite the soaring temperatures. Sharing the video on Instagram, Varun captioned it, "Train sweat Hydrate It's 35 degrees out here." In the video, 'Student of the Year' actor spoke about working out in Bali's hot weather and the importance of staying hydrated. He said, "What's up guys, so right now I'm in Bali and I'm working out. But it's very, very hot here and when you work out you lose a lot of your electrolytes, the essential electrolytes that you need, you know, to keep yourself going."

Varun went on to talk about his personal approach to maintaining hydration during workouts in the heat. He also highlighted the importance of replenishing essential electrolytes while exercising in such weather. Needless to say, the actor's latest post not only offered a glimpse into his Bali routine but also showcased his dedication to fitness and maintaining an active lifestyle while travelling. Varun Dhawan is known for being active on social media as he regularly shares a sneak peek into his life through photos and videos. From his workout sessions to travel moments, the actor often keeps his followers updated with snippets from his personal and professional life. A few days ago, the 'Dishoom' actor revealed he had bought a farm. The actor took to Instagram to post a video of himself standing on the property while enjoying a cup of chai with biscuits. Sharing the clip, Varun captioned it, "I bought a farm#chaibiscut." "Okay, guys, I want to share some news with you. This is the biggest achievement of my life. Maine khet liyahai. Yeh khet. I have taken this, and don't ask me why, but to just stand here and have my chai and biscuit in this weather is unbelievable. Unbelievable," said Varun.

Sanjeeda Shaikh on 'Toxic': It allowed me to play an unimaginable role that feels very far from my reality

Actress Sanjeeda Shaikh has talked about her small appearance in the Yash-starrer Toxic and said that the "unimaginable" character was far removed from her reality, making the experience all the more enjoyable. Sanjeeda took to Instagram, where she shared a string of images of herself in character from the film. She went on to thank the audience for the warm response and promised to continue taking on roles that surprise and shock them.

She wrote: "As an actor the most enjoyable part of the job is doing characters that challenge or shock you. TOXIC allowed me to play an unimaginable role that feels very far from my reality and probably why I thoroughly enjoyed it." The actress went on to write: "Going in with absolutely no expectations, I am pleasantly surprised by the heartwarming response to my short appearance in the film, a big big thank you to everyone for supporting me in my journey. I promise to keep taking up roles that will keep shocking everyone. #toxic."

Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups is a gangster film. It stars Yash in a dual role, alongside Kiara, Nayanthara, Huma Qureshi, Tara Sutaria and Rukmini Vasanth. Toxic is reportedly budgeted at Rs. 500?1,000 crore, making it one of the most expensive Indian films ever made. Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups explores the life of Raya, a violent gangster and playboy who rose to power in the underworld crime before his eventual downfall. Years later, he has to face his biological son Rumi / Ticket, who prepared his revenge on Raya, after the latter abandoned him and his wife.

Sanjeeda made her television debut as Namrata Mathuria in Kyaa Hoga Nimmo Kaa followed by Ayesha Shergill in Kayamath. She is best known for playing dual roles in the crime drama Ek Hasina Thi and Love Ka Hai Intezaar. Sanjeeda has since taken parts in films including the thriller drama Taish, Fighter and the series Heeramandi.

Bhavna Pani on Akshay Kumar's pranks on 'Bhooth Bangla' sets: 'He never spared Paresh Rawal or Rajpal Yadav'

Actress Bhavna Pani opened up about her experience of working with Akshay Kumar in the film "Bhooth Bangla." Talking about the actor's unique working style, she revealed how Akshay kept the atmosphere on set light with his games, cricket sessions, and occasional pranks. Speaking about Akshay's approach to work, Bhavna said that the actor has a "very different way of working" and enjoys incorporating games into his time on set.

When asked whether Akshay had ever played a prank on her, Bhavna said that everyone had to be careful around the actor because he did not spare anyone when it came to his pranks. "You have to be very careful with him, not just with me but with everyone. He never spared Paresh sir or Rajpal ji either. There was one funny thing. We used to play Ludo on his iPad. We would all lose, but he would always win." She also evealed that most of her scenes and shots were with Akshay, adding that he was often seen playing cricket while shooting.

Bhavna stated, "Akshay sir has a very different way of working. He has a lot of fun and believes in games. All my scenes and shots were with him. Hardly did I have a shot without him. He was constantly playing cricket on the sets. He carried the entire set on his shoulders and maintained a very light atmosphere. At the same time, he was extremely disciplined. He never really left the set and was very focused, but he also knew how to have fun."

"Bhooth Bangla," directed by Priyadarshan, was produced by Akshay Kumar, Ekta Kapoor, and Shobha Kapoor under Balaji Motion Pictures and Cape of Good Films. The film starred Akshay Kumar, Paresh Rawal, Jisshu Sengupta, Mithila Palkar, Rajpal Yadav, Tabu, Wamiqa Gabbi, and Asrani. It was released on 17 April 2026.

Abhay Verma: Introvert at first but when I get comfortable, no extrovert can match my energy

Actor Abhay Verma, who essays the role of Wing Commander Rajpal Singh Dhaliwal in the streaming series 'Operation Safed Sagar', is an ambivert. The actor spoke with IANS following the release of the show, and shared that at first he is quite shy in his social interactions but once he crosses the threshold of comfort, there's no extrovert that can match his energy.

He told IANS, "I would describe myself first as an introvert. But if I'm comfortable, I don't think there's any extrovert who can match up to my energy. I think I've always been a shy person at first. But when I feel like opening up then I'm myself, you will see my goofy side. I also quite careful of my interactions because I don't know if someone else will call my fun as overstepping. So I just keep my ground till I feel comfortable with them". Given your guards are up in the initial stages of interaction, is your introverted nature often mistaken for being cold? He said, "I don't think so because I generally come from an honest perspective. Even if it's my extroverted sense or my introvertedness, I feel when a person comes from honesty it travels to hearts more than cleverness does to minds. So whatever space I'm in, If I'm introverted or extroverted, it comes from honesty and a sense of integrity".

"So I don't think it goes in the wrong way. It has always gone in the right way, and hopefully I'll try to maintain it", he added. Meanwhile, 'Operation Safed Sagar' is based on the eponymous combined arms operation by the Indian Air Force, supporting elements of the Indian Army during the 1999 Kargil war that was aimed at flushing out regular and irregular troops of the Pakistani Army from vacated Indian Positions in the Kargil sector along the Line of Control. It was the first large-scale use of airpower in the Jammu and Kashmir region since the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971.

Armaan Malik returns to his 'OG romantic roots' with 'Kaho Toh' from Prem Keetanu

Renowned singer and composer Armaan Malik has returned to his 'romantic roots' with his latest track 'Kaho Toh' from the upcoming entertainer, 'Prem Keetanu'.

Calling 'Kaho Toh' an out-and-out Bollywood romantic number, Armaan shared, "It always gives me a lot of joy to sing songs like this because they transport you back to a time when these larger-than-life romantic songs were such an integral part of Bollywood films. I'm really happy I got the chance to return to my OG romantic roots with this one."

Featuring Veer Pahariya and Aafiya Sayed, 'Kaho Toh' enjoyed the soulful lyrics penned by Sachin Urmtosh. The music for the romantic number has been composed by Annkur R Pathakk, while Altamash Faridi has crooned the qawwali segment of the song.

Shedding further light on his experience of working on 'Kaho Toh', Armaan added, "This is also my first collaboration with Annkur, and I really love what he's done with the song. The blend of that classic Bollywood romance with the Qawwali elements gives it a beautiful character of its own. I'm really excited for people to hear this one."

Before this, the makers of 'Prem Keetanu' unveiled the peppy track 'Undi Bundi' from the movie.

The musical album for the drama, comprising 7 songs, will enjoy voices by some well-known singers such as Sachet Tandon, Parampara Tandon, B Praak, Armaan Malik, Papon, Jubin Nautiyal, Madhur Sharma, Altamash Faridi, Shashi Suman and Brijesh Shandilya.

Made under the direction of Apoorv Singh Karki, the primary cast of the movie includes Veer Pahariya, Aafiya Sayed, Aparshakti Khurana, Rakesh Bedi and Nikhil Vijay, along with others.

Backed by Gaurav Verma under Avanika Films, 'Prem Keetanu' shares the tale of a group of youngsters navigating through friendship, first love, one-sided love, and heartbreaks.

Co-presented by Phars Films, along with Bhavana Studios, 'Prem Keetanu' is slated for a theatrical release on October 2 this year.

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