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FIR Filed In Pellet Gun Case After Rahul Gandhi's Sit-In At Police Station



New Delhi: It's official. The Delhi Police has registered an FIR in the case of a 19-year-old student protester who suffered pellet-gun injuries during the July 20 march on Parliament as Rahul Gandhi, accompanied by the victim, Sahil Lochab, staged a sit-in outside a Delhi police station, refusing to budge until an FIR is filed in the case. "I will sit on dharna outside police station for 30 days or even six months if you don't register an FIR," Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha who sat on a day-long dharna,

had warned the cops. The police have collected the medical report and other related documents and the FIR has been filed against unknown persons based on the complaint given by the victim, police said. "This is the first step towards justice. An FIR has been registered. Look at how long it took. It has been a month since the pellets were fired. There are pellets lodged in his (Sahil Lochab's) body, three in his eye. It is clear that injustice has been done to a young person," the Congress leader said. Gandhi noted that they arrived at 11:30 in the morn-

Clashes Erupt As Jharkhand Protesters Attempt To Burn Hemant Soren's Effigy



Ranchi: Student leaders under the banner of the 'JPSC-JSSC Reforms Manch' have accused the Jharkhand government of "deceiving" and "betraying" job aspirants. "They gathered in large number at the prominent Albert Chowk to burn effigies of CM Soren and Rahul Gandhi. When the police tried to control them, a scuffle broke out... JMM workers were also present at the spot," an official said. Similar scuffles were also reported from Hazaribag and Giridih, where JMM workers clashed with students trying to burn effigies of Soren.

"Pakistan's Frustration" India On Reaction To Sergio Gor's J&K Comment

Srinagar: The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday brushed aside Pakistan's summoning of a top US diplomat over Ambassador Sergio Gor's comment that Jammu and Kashmir is an "important part of India". Randhir Jaiswal, the official spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, addressed a bi-weekly press briefing in Delhi and said both Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are integral and indivisible parts of India. "They were, they are, and they will remain so," he emphasised. In response to a question on Pakistan's diplomatic protest over Gor's remarks, Jaiswal said he didn't need to comment further on Islamabad's "frustration". "I see no reason to comment on Pakistan's frustration. This is what I have to say," he said. Sergio Gor, who is visiting Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, said the union territory -- over which New Delhi and Islamabad fought several wars -- is an "important part of India". After meeting Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, he remarked: "This is an important part of India, and so I'm here visiting for the first time. It's an incredibly beautiful place, and so



I'm thrilled to be here, thrilled to see this place. We had a very good meeting, and we have some follow-ups that we'll take back to Washington, back to Delhi".

Huge Cash Seized at MP Avinash Reddy's Residence: ED



HYDERABAD, Aug. 21: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has announced that it seized unaccounted cash of Rs.24 lakh from the residence of Kadapa MP Y.S. Avinash Reddy. The ED issued an official statement on Friday in connection with the murder case of former minister Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy. It said that the keys

been hatched a month before the killing. It stated that Deveiredy Sivasankar Reddy had offered Rs.40 crore for the murder. The ED said that Yerraguntla Gangireddy had lured Dastagiri by promising him Rs.5 crore as his share out of the Rs.40 crore. It said the ECIR was registered based on the FIR and charge sheets filed by the CBI. The ED stated that a case was registered under IPC Section 120B and Section 302, as well as under the PMLA. It clarified that key documents and digital devices related to the crime were seized during the searches. The ED said searches were conducted at a total of seven locations in Hyderabad and Kadapa.

Varalakshmi Vratam: Huge Rush of Devotees at Durga Temple

From Our Staff Reporter VIJAYAWADA, Aug. 21:

On the occasion of Varalakshmi Vratam on the Sravana Friday, a large number of devotees thronged the Vijayawada Kanaka Durga Temple atop Indrakeeladri. Goddess Durga is giving darshan to devotees in the form of Goddess Varalakshmi. With devotees arriving in large numbers for the darshan, temple authorities cancelled the Antaralaya Darshan in view of the heavy rush. Indrakeeladri reverberated with chants of "Jai Durga, Jai Jai Durga." On the occasion of Varalakshmi Vratam, several temples across the state, along with the Durga temple, were packed with devotees. Devotees began arriving at the temples early in the morning and performed special prayers. Collective Varalakshmi Vratams were also conducted at several temples. Eluru district: Sravana Friday rituals were per-



formed at the Kunkullamma Temple in Dwaraka Tirumala. Goddess Kunkullamma appeared before devotees in Shakambari Devi Alankaram. A special Chandi Homam was also performed at the temple. Devotees had darshan of the goddess and received sacred offerings. West Godavari: Goddess Mavullamma at Bhimavaram was decorated with four lakh bangles. On the occasion of Sravana Friday and Varalakshmi Vratam, temple priests and officials gave the goddess a special deco-

ration using the bangles offered by devotees. Nellore: Sravana Friday celebrations were held grandly across the district. Temples were crowded with women devotees. Special pujas, special worship and collective Varalakshmi Vratams were conducted at temples. Tirupati: A collective Varalakshmi Vratam was organised at the Tatayyagunta Gangamma Temple, with a large number of devotees participating. The goddess was specially adorned with bangles and a diamond crown.

Meanwhile, Varalakshmi Vratam was conducted grandly at the Asthana Mandapam of the Tiruchanur Padmavathi Ammavari Temple, with a large number of devotees attending. Visakhapatnam: Special pujas were performed at various goddess temples on the occasion of the second Friday of the Sravana month. Collective Varalakshmi Vratams were also conducted. A large number of devotees visited the Sri Kanaka Mahalakshmi and Sri Kanyaka Parameswari temples.

Better Services for Devotees at Indrakeeladri Before Dasara: Minister Anam



From Our Staff Reporter VIJAYAWADA, Aug. 21: Endowments Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy said that better facilities and services would be made available to devotees at Indrakeeladri before the upcoming Dasara festi-

a time for meals. He also said new technology was being used in the mechanised kitchen. He said Annadanam is being provided to around 3 crore devotees annually at temples across Andhra Pradesh. He recalled that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu had directed officials to establish a second ghat road to Indrakeeladri. A report related to the proposal was being prepared and tenders would be invited soon, he said. The Kanchi Peetham had requested the installation of a 25-foot statue of Adi Shankaracharya along the ghat road, and the government had responded positively to the proposal, he added. Minister Anam said the number of devotees visiting temples across

the state had increased. Dasara Preparations Begin: MP Kesineni Chinni Vijayawada MP Kesineni Chinni said the new Annadanam buildings had been inaugurated with funds of 750 crore. He said the number of devotees visiting the temple on Indrakeeladri to seek the blessings of the goddess was increasing every day. More development works would be taken up on Indrakeeladri in the coming days, he said. MP Kesineni Chinni said Sharannavaratri celebrations would begin in a few days and arrangements for the festival had already commenced. Durga Temple EO Sheena Naik and officials from various departments participated in the programme.

Shiva Temple Foundation-Laying Ceremony Held in Tulluru; Minister Narayana Offers Special Prayers

From Our Staff Reporter AMARAVATI, Aug. 21:

Minister Narayana attended the foundation-laying (reconstruction) ceremony of a Shiva temple in Tulluru, located in Andhra Pradesh's capital Amaravati. With government support, villagers are reconstructing the centuries-old temple. The minister performed special prayers for the construction of Sri Ganga Parvathi Sametha Sri Ramalingeswara Swamy and Sri Bala Koteswara Swamy temples. Speaking on the occasion, Narayana said the Tulluru Shiva temple holds great histori-

cal and spiritual significance. He appreciated the farmers of Tulluru for their significant cooperation in the capital's land pooling process. He said he had also participated in the land pooling as one among the families of the capital's farmers. The minister said Amaravati had regained its status as the capital due to the sacrifices made by farmers. He recalled that farmers had begun the "Nyayasthanam to Devasthanam" padayatra from this very temple and achieved success. He said farmers and women had faced numerous difficulties



under the previous government. Narayana said development works on the returnable plots of farmers in Amaravati were progressing rapidly. He said buildings under each project would be completed and handed over

to the government every month. He added that land pooling in the capital would be undertaken project-wise. He said the government was currently focusing on the Sports City, railway track and Inner Ring Road.

EDITORIAL

‘Cockroaches’ Move to Improve Government Schools

Thousands of schools in rural areas across the country are struggling with inadequate basic infrastructure, insufficient teachers and several other shortcomings. Yet, those in power are paying little attention. If their children were made to study in rural schools even for a few days, they would understand the hardships faced by students. Therefore, the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) has called upon people to launch a movement to force those in power to act and improve schools in rural areas. To bring the poor condition of rural schools to the government’s attention and trigger action, the founders of the Cockroach Janata Party launched a campaign called “School Theek Karo”. On the one hand, Rs.8,452 crore is reportedly lying in the Prime Minister’s Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund, while on the other, schoolchildren are crying out for basic facilities in their schools. In such circumstances, the party asks why PM CARES funds cannot be used for school development. It costs at least ?8 crore to construct a fully equipped school building. With ?8,452 crore in the PM CARES Fund, more than 1,000 schools could be built, the party founder points out. The PM CARES Fund was created to assist people during emergencies. However, the lack of transparency in the management and utilisation of these funds has raised several questions among the public. Large amounts continue to remain unspent. In such a situation, it would be worthwhile to use these funds for urgent development works such as improving schools. For such action to happen, apolitical organisations like the Cockroach Janata Party will have to mobilise public pressure and force the government to respond. According to the UDISE+ 2024–25 report, India has a total of 14,71,473 schools across all areas, while parliamentary data shows that there are 12,34,788 schools in rural areas. Of these, more than 1,04,000 schools are being run with just a single teacher. Remarkably, 89% of these schools are located in rural areas. Since a single teacher has to teach several classes simultaneously, the quality of education is affected. Rural schools in states such as Bihar and Jharkhand are overcrowded. In Jharkhand, the student-teacher ratio has reportedly reached as high as 47:1. Many rural areas depend heavily on contract teachers or teachers without adequate professional training.

Around 1.19 lakh schools do not have electricity. This not only prevents digital learning but also deprives students of a proper learning environment. According to a recent NITI Aayog review, around 8,592 schools do not have toilets for girls. More than 61,000 schools have toilets that are in an unusable condition. The absence of safe and private menstrual hygiene facilities is forcing some girls to drop out of school as early as Class 8. Around 59,829 schools lack handwashing facilities, increasing the risk of disease transmission. About 1.19 lakh schools continue to function without electricity connections. Only 44.9% of rural schools have internet facilities. Computer labs are also frequently found locked. Power shortages, lack of internet connectivity and shortage of staff with computer skills appear to be the major reasons. More than 51% of schools do not have science laboratories. As a result, students receive little practical exposure and are forced to depend largely on theoretical and rote learning.

More than 60% of schools lack facilities such as ramps and separate toilets for children with special needs, making it difficult for students with disabilities. In the absence of benches and desks, students are sometimes forced to sit on wet floors. Many primary schools suffer from leaking roofs, cracked walls, delays in construction works and several other problems. During the rainy season, some buildings have to be abandoned altogether. Shortages of resources, funds and professionally qualified teachers continue in many areas. Problems such as delayed payment of salaries are discouraging teachers, and frequent absenteeism from classrooms is being reported. Officials continue to focus primarily on student enrolment rather than ensuring basic infrastructure. Increasing enrolment alone cannot be the measure of progress in the education system. Quality education can be provided only when every school has electricity, toilets, clean drinking water, laboratories, libraries and accessible facilities for students with disabilities. The Central Government is allocating only around 4.3% of GDP to education. Experts recommend raising education spending to 6% of GDP. Compared with the target set under the National Education Policy (NEP), the allocation can be considered significantly inadequate.

Mecca Pact: India's Gulf Advantage Runs Deeper Than Any New Military Agreement

The much-publicised Mecca Joint Defence Agreement between Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan has understandably attracted attention in diplomatic and strategic circles. It is being presented by some as a significant new security alignment in the Middle East and even compared with a regional version of NATO. For India, however, there is little reason to overreact or alter the fundamentals of its foreign policy because of this arrangement. The agreement says that an armed attack against one will be regarded as an attack against all. But merely importing a principle associated with NATO does not, by itself, make this agreement strategically meaningful. The three countries do not share a common border, have different strategic calculations and more importantly, the agreement does not clearly define its purpose, its applicability or the circumstances in which the three countries would actually act together. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan already had a bilateral defence understanding, while Turkey has its own regional ambitions.

Larger Strategic Purpose
The more important question is why this alliance has been created now and whose larger strategic interests it serves. Pakistan appears to have pursued the agreement not merely for its own immediate survival but as part of a longer-term strategy to regain relevance in the Muslim world and secure economic and diplomatic support. For Pakistan's military establishment, it also provides an opportunity to project a narrative that the country's army has acquired a stronger regional role. The fact that US President Donald Trump has appreciated the arrangement is significant. It indicates that Washington sees value in bringing Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey into a



framework that serves wider American strategic interests. In the longer term, such an arrangement could provide the US with another instrument through which Pakistan can become useful in future regional contingencies. So, the deeper strategic purpose may be less about creating an independent military alliance and more about creating a framework that can serve others' interests in the Middle East, particularly in relation to Iran. By bringing three predominantly Muslim countries together and presenting the arrangement in the language of collective defence, the pact could contribute to the continuing fragmentation and consolidation of the Muslim world into competing camps. This is especially significant because Iran remains the major regional power that any future Middle East security architecture will have to balance. The pact should therefore not be seen simply as a

Saudi-Turkey-Pakistan initiative. Its longer-term implications need to be viewed in the context of the interests of the US and other Western countries and their future engagement with the region.

Pakistan's Ambition And Its Limitations

Pakistan cannot afford to carry such a strategic burden for long. Its own economic condition remains fragile, while its army has to deal with enormous internal security challenges. A substantial proportion of Pakistan's population is Shia, while the country itself has historically struggled with sectarian and ethnic divisions. Presenting this arrangement as a consolidation of Sunni Muslim power carries its own risks. Pakistan may gain financial assistance and diplomatic space from Saudi Arabia and Turkey, but neither country can realistically become a substitute for Pakistan's own economic reforms. The agreement favours

Pakistan's military establishment more than its long-term economic interests. General Asim Munir can use it to project an image of a stronger Pakistani army and a stronger regional relationship, but strengthening the military at the expense of the civilian economy is unlikely to serve Pakistan in the longer run. Nor can the agreement make Israel a common enemy. The US remains friendly with Saudi Arabia and maintains a strategic relationship with Israel. Saudi Arabia itself has its own interests and is unlikely to enter an open-ended confrontation with Israel or Iran simply because Pakistan wants a larger role. Turkey, too, has its own calculations.

The Missing UAE Question

There is another important omission: the UAE. Any Gulf security arrangement that does not include the UAE cannot be regarded as a comprehensive regional arrangement. The UAE has rapidly

emerged as one of the most important economic, trading and strategic powers in the Gulf. It has created an exceptionally business-friendly ecosystem, attracting entrepreneurs, investors and global businesses. Its port and logistics network, particularly the development of Fujairah, is strategically important because Fujairah provides access to the Gulf of Oman without depending on the Strait of Hormuz. This gives the UAE an increasingly important role in future Gulf trade, logistics and energy security. The exclusion of the UAE raises questions about how far the Mecca arrangement can actually become a wider Gulf security architecture. Meanwhile, India should not fall into the trap of assuming that Muslim countries will automatically stand closer to Pakistan because of religion. India's experience in the Gulf tells a different story.

On Congress' Problem With Vande Mataram

Congress's latest CWC resolution to restrict Vande Mataram to its first two stanzas is not merely a dispute about a song. It raises a larger question: can a political compromise adopted by the Congress in the intensely communal circumstances of 1937 now be placed above the constitutional and statutory framework of the Republic of India? The answer has to be no. And Congress should perhaps revisit what one of its own tallest leaders, C. Rajagopalachari, wrote in 1939, before repeating the very mistake he had warned against. In January 1939, Rajaji wrote to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel about the concessions being made over Vande Mataram: “These concessions will not save the situation... If we set them forth as concessions they will only become points for further agitations and will make no gain for peace. On the other hand, the concessions may give rise to a weakening of Hindu psychology and produce depression all around.” The passage is reproduced in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya's *Vande Mataram: The Biography of a Song* (2013) and in the *Selected Works of C. Rajagopalachari*. Rajaji was not writing with hindsight. He was watching the communal politics of the time unfold. His warning was simple: concessions made under communal pressure would not necessarily produce peace; they could become the starting point for further demands.

The chronology matters.

In 1937, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League made Vande Mataram a political issue. Congress leaders were themselves divided over how to respond. Jawaharlal Nehru, writing to Subhas Chandra Bose that October, acknowledged that the Anandamath background of the song “may provoke Muslims”. There were also genuine

concerns among some Congress leaders about the religious imagery in the later verses, and Tagore and Gandhi had reservations about their use in mixed political gatherings. Congress consequently decided in 1937 that only the first two stanzas would be sung at its national gatherings. But that was a political accommodation in a particular historical circumstance. It was not a constitutional amendment. It was not an Act of Parliament. And it certainly was not a permanent veto over how independent India would honour its National Song. Indeed, Rajaji's 1939 warning demonstrates that even within Congress there was a serious understanding of the danger of allowing such concessions to become precedents. The broader history is equally instructive. The Muslim League's objections did not end with Vande Mataram. The song became part of a larger catalogue of allegations against Congress governments - over the Congress flag, language, education and other matters. Congress disputed these charges, and Rajendra Prasad even challenged Jinnah to have them independently examined by a judicial committee headed by Sir Maurice Gwyer, Chief Justice of the Federal Court. The lesson is not that every Muslim objection should have been ignored. The lesson is that communal veto cannot become the organising principle of national life.

Independent India subsequently made its own decision.

On 24 January 1950, Dr Rajendra Prasad, presiding over the Constituent Assembly, declared that Jana Gana Mana would be the National Anthem and that Vande Mataram, “which has played a historic part in the struggle for Indian freedom, shall be honoured equally with Jana Gana Mana and shall have equal status

with it.” The Assembly responded with applause. That is the constitutional-era settlement Congress should respect. And now there is an even more important development that Congress cannot simply wish away. In 2026, Parliament amended the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, to extend statutory protection to the National Song, Vande Mataram, on par with the National Anthem. The amended law makes intentionally preventing its singing or causing disturbance to an assembly engaged in its singing punishable under the Act. Parliament passed the amendment in July 2026. The Government has also prescribed an official protocol for the rendition of the National Song, including its full six-stanza version at specified official occasions. The full Vande Mataram was consequently sung at the Red Fort on Independence Day this year.

So the Congress cannot now decide that its party functions will adhere to a different rendition of the National Song when Parliament has legislated differently. A CWC resolution cannot be placed above the constitutional pronouncement of 1950 and the 2026 amendment to the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act. Congress is, of course, free to debate history. It is free to have political opinions. But it cannot elevate a 1937 party resolution above the subsequent constitutional and statutory framework of the Republic. And Congress's present argument becomes even more curious when one applies its alleged principle consistently. If the objection is genuinely to religious or Hindu civilisational imagery in public songs, why is Vande Mataram singled out?

Karnataka's state anthem, *Jana Bharata Jananiya Tanujate*, invokes Raghava and Madhusudhana, the Vedas,

Kapila, Patanjali and Gautama, besides Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhvacharya, and invokes Karnataka Maate - Mother Karnataka. Tamil Nadu's Tamil Thai Vazhthu is an invocation to Tamil Thai - Mother Tamil, and is officially designated as the state song. Andhra Pradesh's Maa Telugu Talliki literally means “To Our Mother Telugu”, personifying Telugu as a mother and celebrating the region's civilisational and historical inheritance.

Will Congress now demand that Karnataka's anthem be shortened because it contains Hindu civilisational references?

Will it demand that Tamil Nadu remove the invocation to Mother Tamil?

Will it ask Andhra Pradesh to rewrite Maa Telugu Talliki?

Or does this supposedly non-negotiable “secular” veto apply only to Vande Mataram?

India has never understood its public culture through such a narrow lens. Tamil Thai, Telugu Talli, Karnataka Maate and Vande Mataram all belong to a civilisational vocabulary in which the motherland and mother tongue are personified and revered. If Congress has a principled objection, let it apply that principle uniformly. But if it remains silent when comparable imagery appears in state anthems and discovers its “principle” only when confronting Vande Mataram, Indians are entitled to ask whether this is really about secularism or about expedient Muslim appeasement and vote-bank politics. There is another historical fact Congress cannot erase.

Vande Mataram acquired a life far larger than the literary context in which Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay wrote it. It became one of the great battle cries of India's freedom struggle. Madam Bhikaji Cama carried “Vande Mataram” on the flag she displayed at

Stuttgart in 1907. Madan Lal Dhingra reportedly uttered “Bande Mataram” before his execution in 1909. The cry became inseparable from the anti-colonial struggle.

One can acknowledge the religious and literary context of the later verses without pretending that this is the whole history of Vande Mataram.

The question before Congress today is therefore much larger than which two stanzas it chooses to sing.

It is whether it will continue to treat a 1937 political accommodation as a permanent article of faith, even after the Constituent Assembly of independent India accorded Vande Mataram equal status with Jana Gana Mana, and Parliament in 2026 extended statutory protection to the National Song.

Rajaji understood the danger in 1939. He warned that concessions could become “points for further agitations”.

Congress should not repeat the politics he cautioned against.

A CWC resolution is not the Constitution of India.

A 1937 party compromise cannot override the 1950 constitutional settlement. And a political party cannot place its own historical resolution above legislation enacted by Parliament in 2026. If Congress believes that religious imagery must be removed from public songs, let it apply that standard everywhere. If it does not, then it should have the honesty to admit that its problem is not really with religious imagery.

Its problem is with Vande Mataram.

And that is why Indians are entitled to ask whether the issue is principle or the old politics of appeasement dressed up as secularism.

Vande Mataram is not a Congress song.

It is not a BJP song. It belongs to India.

Food Quality Row: Anganwadi Worker Resumes Duty After Suspension Triggers Political Storm



Mumbai: An anganwadi worker who was sacked after she posted a video claiming uncookable foodgrains had caused stomach pain in children was reinstated on Friday following backlash from Opposition leaders, even as a ruling party MLA acknowledged that such quality issues existed statewide. The Pune Zilla Parishad on Friday reinstated Reshma Pardhi, a tribal anganwadi worker from Ambegaon tehsil, after coming under fire from the Opposition parties. In a video posted on social media in July, Pardhi claimed that yellow peas supplied for children's mid-day meal had failed to cook even after extensive pressure cooking. She alleged that children suffered stomach aches after eating the food and subsequently

refused to consume it. Pardhi noted that other coarsely ground grains supplied to the anganwadi were equally difficult to cook. She questioned the feasibility of storing and managing a four-month supply under such conditions. "I request the government not to play with our children," Pardhi said in her appeal, requesting Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Tukaram Mundhe to intervene and inspect the food supply. Following this, the Pune Zilla Parishad sought an explanation from Pardhi, alleging that her video had tarnished the image of the state government. In her written explanation submitted on July 31, Pardhi said she had raised the issue with good intentions and only wanted children to re-

ceive nutritious food. The explanation, however, did not satisfy the authorities and she was sacked on August 17, triggering sharp criticism from opposition parties. The development also prompted ruling NCP MLA and former state minister Dilip Walse Patil to acknowledge that complaints about foodgrain quality were not confined to Ambegaon and that similar concerns had emerged from other parts of Maharashtra. Walse Patil, who represents the Ambegaon assembly constituency, said the procurement of such foodgrains was handled at the commissioner or state level and assured that he would raise the matter with the concerned secretary and minister. "If the anganwadi worker had lodged an official complaint

with her superiors and did not receive a response, the officials responsible should be held accountable," he said.

NCP (SP) Lok Sabha member Amol Kolhe, whose Shirur constituency includes Ambegaon, attacked the administration over its decision to terminate Pardhi. "Such action is extremely unfortunate. This is a classic case of letting the thief go free while punishing the innocent," Kolhe said, arguing that the worker should instead have been commended for exposing the problem. Kolhe also pointed to a recent incident in Junnar taluka, where turmeric and chilli powder used in children's meals were allegedly found adulterated, and demanded a state-level inquiry into the quality of food supplied to anganwadis and schools. NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar also criticised the government, saying the authorities had targeted the worker instead of the suppliers. Amid the backlash, the Pune Zilla Parishad on Friday issued an order reinstating Pardhi and cancelling the earlier termination order. The order said Pardhi had been terminated as a disciplinary measure but subsequently filed an appeal before the government and submitted an apology for her mistakes.

CJP School Inspection Drive Turns Violent In Jaipur Village

Jaipur: The school inspection drive by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) turned violent in Rampura Kanwarapura village near Jaipur on Friday when a team led by party spokesperson Ashutosh Ranka was allegedly confronted and attacked by villagers. The CJP workers had reached the village to inspect the condition of the government school as part of the party's ongoing campaign against alleged poor infrastructure and mismanagement in government schools. The team faced strong opposition from local residents and was allegedly beaten and chased out of the village. Their vehicles were also reportedly pelted with stones. Ranka alleged that villagers damaged mobile phones and vehicles belonging to the CJP workers and assaulted a woman party worker accompanying the team. Five CJP workers, including Ranka, were reportedly injured and taken to SMS Hospital for treatment. The party had planned to inspect Bhattawala Government School on Vatika Road, but the visit was cancelled following the confrontation. Ranka issued a 48-hour ultimatum for the arrest of those responsible and accused BJP workers of being behind the attack. He alleged that the incident was aimed at preventing the CJP from highlighting the condition of government schools.

"Today the entire country witnessed the BJP's hooliganism live. This happened at the behest of Education Minister Madan Dilawar. We are giving a 48-hour ultimatum. The attackers should be arrested and the order to restrict school inspections should be with-



drawn, or else we will protest across Rajasthan and demand Dilawar's resignation," Ranka said. CJP worker Shivangi Sharma alleged that party workers were assaulted and called "terrorists" and "Naxalites" during the confrontation. Before this incident, some of CJP workers had reached the village around 8 a.m., where they were allegedly jostled and forced to leave. Villagers later staged a sit-in outside the government school, raised anti-CJP slogans, and blocked the main village road with tractor-trolleys.

The villagers opposed the entry of the CJP team, saying the government had already sanctioned around Rs 12.50 lakh for repair work at the school. Villager Rajesh Kumar Sharma alleged that the school issue was being used to gain political mileage while maintaining that locals were themselves concerned about the condition of the school. "The government has sanctioned a budget of approximately Rs 12 lakh, but construction of the school has not yet begun. If the government does not initiate construction soon, the villagers will build the school themselves, as their elders had donated the land for the school, but we will

not allow any outsiders to come here," Sharma said. On the issue of the alleged absence of police force during the incident, the Shivdaspora police station SHO Rajesh Gautam said the CJP workers were peacefully turned away by villagers when they first arrived in the morning, and there was no law-and-order situation at that time. However, when the workers returned later, the villagers became angry and confronted them. Police reached the spot, but the CJP workers had already left the village, the SHO said. Education Minister Madan Dilawar hit back at the CJP over the incident and accused the party of creating disturbances. "Everyone saw the way the Cockroach Janata Party workers created a disturbance at Jantar Mantar. They created an obscene atmosphere. They want to create a similar atmosphere in Rajasthan. Who will tolerate the disruption in children's education? That's why the protests happened. The cockroaches hid their faces and ran away. They are using Madan Dilawar to vent their embarrassment," Dilawar said. Congress state president Govind Singh Dotasara condemned the incident and backed the CJP work-

ers, alleging that those involved were BJP workers rather than ordinary villagers. "They were BJP workers, not villagers. BJP workers will oppose any work that is in the public interest. They will only follow orders from the top. If anyone is prevented from going to school or attacked, we condemn it. Congress will stand with everyone who is troubled by this government," Dotasara said. The confrontation comes amid the ongoing controversy over the Rajasthan government's decision to restrict the entry of outsiders, including media personnel, into government schools. The government primary school in Rampura is reportedly in poor condition. The original school building has deteriorated to the extent that children are no longer studying there. Iron angles have been installed on the roof as a safety measure, while classes have been shifted to a temporary facility around 50 metres away. Children are currently studying under a tin shed, while animal fodder has reportedly been piled up near the temporary facility. Bricks have also fallen from the walls of the old building, highlighting the poor condition of the school's infrastructure.

Assam CM Briefs Union Finance Minister On Flood Recovery, Relief Efforts

Guwahati: Assam Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma met with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi to discuss the state's ongoing recovery and relief operations following recent floods. During the discussion at Kartavya Bhawan, the Chief Minister provided a comprehensive update on the flood situation, focusing on current damage assessments across affected districts—particularly Sivasagar, Charaideo, and Jorhat. He detailed the state's strategic roadmap for rehabilitation, rebuilding infrastructure, and restoring livelihoods for displaced and affected families. Chief Minister Sarma expressed appreciation for the Union Finance Minister's receptiveness, noting that she listened to



Assam's concerns with deep attention and sensitivity. Following the briefing, the Union Finance Minister assured the state government of the central administration's backing.

She stated that the Government of India remains committed to standing alongside Assam to help impacted households rebuild their lives and homes. The state government contin-

ues to prioritise relief delivery, damage evaluation, and long-term livelihood restoration in the worst-hit regions as part of its ongoing flood response initiatives.

'Marathi Seekh Lo, Nahi Toh...':

Mumbai Auto Driver Seen Pushing Rickshaw Into Train, Allegedly Trying To Flee Amid Marathi Language Row

Mumbai: A bizarre video of men apparently trying to push an autorickshaw into a train has gone viral on social media, with the footage being shared amid Maharashtra's ongoing Marathi language row. The unusual scene has sparked a wave of reactions online after the state government launched its first major enforcement drive to check whether autorickshaw and taxi drivers can demonstrate practical knowledge of Marathi. The video was posted by Instagram user @pawanraja808080 and shows a group of men attempting to shove an autorickshaw into what appears to be a train's luggage section. The bizarre effort was described by Pawan as an attempt by drivers to flee Maharashtra following the RTO's action. "Bhaiyon, RTO ki karawhi ke baad, Marathi na seekhne waale dekho apni auto leke train me jabardasti ghusa ke bhaag rahe hai apne gaon," Pawan said.



ers, after the RTO's action, look at those who don't want to learn Marathi. They are forcing their auto into a train and running back to their villages." He further said, "Sabhi log Marathi seekh lo warna aapka bhi yahi haal hoga. Bhaagne ki koi zarurat nahi hai. Jab kamana khana yaha hai toh marathi seekh lo." ("Everyone, learn Marathi, otherwise this will be your fate too. There is no need to run away. If you earn your living here, then learn Marathi.") While the video

does not independently establish that the men were actually fleeing Maharashtra because of the language requirement, its timing has given the footage a new context online. The video emerged as RTO flying squads recently checked 1,430 autorickshaw and taxi drivers across Mumbai. Officials issued show-cause notices to 422 drivers who failed to demonstrate the required practical knowledge of Marathi. The inspections were conducted at major

transport hubs, including Bandra, Goregaon, Kurla, Dadar, Borivali, Wadala and Andheri. The notices do not mean immediate cancellation or suspension of badges. Drivers have been given one month to acquire practical Marathi skills and explain why further action should not be taken. Failure to comply could lead to suspension of their badges for up to three months, while continued non-compliance could eventually result in cancellation of the badge and permit.

Bengaluru Police Intercept Car Carrying Rs.9 Crore To Tamil Nadu Based On IT Tip-Off

Bengaluru: Based on a tip-off from the Income Tax department, Bengaluru police have intercepted a Kerala-registered car carrying Rs.9 crore unaccounted cash near Electronic City, which was heading towards Hosur. One of the two persons travelling in the car has been identified as Sachin, a jeweller from Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu, and the IT officials, after raiding his premises, have recovered additional Rs.1.3 crore unaccounted cash. Bengaluru, Karnataka: Income Tax officials seized Rs.9 crore in cash from a car travelling from Bengaluru to Hosur. The vehicle was intercepted by Electronic City Police at the request of the Deputy Director of Income Tax, Bengaluru. Two persons, including Sachin (42) from Sindhu.

The incident took place



on Aug 18 night at around 10.30 pm, when the Kerala-registered Hyundai Creta car passed through the Electronic City toll gate near Electronic City. The IT Unit 22 Deputy Director Jagadish tipped off the police about the huge amount of cash being transported in the Kerala-registered car.

The beat constables stopped the car and found Rs.9 crore cash, all in Rs.500 denominations, in the car. The car occupants tried to tell the police that the money belonged to them and were taking it to purchase land. By then, the IT officials arrived and started asking questions about the ac-

counts for the money. It was learnt that Sachin (42), one of the occupants of the car, owned Sindhu Jewellers at Tuticorin, and the identity of the other passenger is yet to be released. When Sachin's premises were raided, the IT officials recovered another Rs.1.3 crore unaccounted money.

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: Boy Jumps From Mountain, Parents Die While Trying To Save Him

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: Three members of a family died in a tragic incident at Khawayla Dongar in the Tisgaon area of Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar on Friday. An 18-year-old boy who had gone to the mountain with an apparent intention to end his life jumped from a height. His father fell while trying to save him, and his mother later jumped from the mountain after witnessing the deaths. The deceased have been identified as 18-year-old Kunal Muralidhar Chandwade, his father Muralidhar Chandwade and mother Sangeeta Chandwade. The family was reportedly from the Devlai-

Satara area. According to nearby residents, Kunal had been on the mountain since around 10 am and was seen moving around the area. When residents realised that he might attempt suicide, they tried to persuade him to return safely. Information about the incident soon spread in the nearby area, following which his parents and other residents reached the spot. Muralidhar and the residents repeatedly tried to convince Kunal not to take the extreme step. Witnesses said that Muralidhar stayed near his son and tried to rea-

son with him for around 20 minutes. However, Kunal



did not respond to their pleas. Muralidhar eventually moved closer to Kunal in an attempt to grab and save him. Kunal suddenly jumped from the mountain. While trying to catch his son, Muralidhar lost his balance and fell into the deep gorge along with him. Both father and son died in the fall.

Sangeeta was also present at the spot when the incident occurred. After seeing her husband and son fall to their deaths, she was reportedly left in shock. She then jumped from the mountain and died. Police and fire brigade personnel also reached the spot after receiving information about the incident. The deaths of all three family members left residents and others present at the scene shocked. The reason behind Kunal's decision to take the extreme step is not yet known. Police are investigating the circumstances that led to the incident.

Gangster, Out On Bail, Killed By Fellow Gangster. They Loved The Same Woman



Nagpur: A 27-year-old notorious criminal, who had been released on bail two weeks earlier, was stabbed to death by his friend and fellow gangster in Nagpur over a dispute involving a woman they both were allegedly in love with, police said.

The incident was reported from the Sundarban area of Narendra Nagar in the city.

Gaurav Pankaj Ragde was stabbed to death allegedly by Gaurav Rambhau Raut and his associate, Abhishek Wasnik.

The victim, an accused in the infamous 'Gamchu' murder case in Nagpur, faced charges for several serious offenses, including dacoity. Records at the Ajni Police Station indicate that approximately nine cases, including murder and attempted murder, had been registered against him.

The accused, Raut and Wasnik, are also implicated in separate murder cases.

Police sources say the

victim, who was out on bail, had been in a romantic relationship for the past two years with a woman named 'Rani' (name changed), originally from Mumbai.

However, while Ragde was in jail, Raut - originally from Kalam (Yavatmal) - came into contact with Rani, and the two developed a close relationship, sources said.

Rani, who wished to distance herself from the world of crime, started a cloud kitchen business in the Narendra Nagar area with Raut and the two had been living in a rented house nearby.

Gaurav Ragde was infuriated when he learned about these developments, sources said.

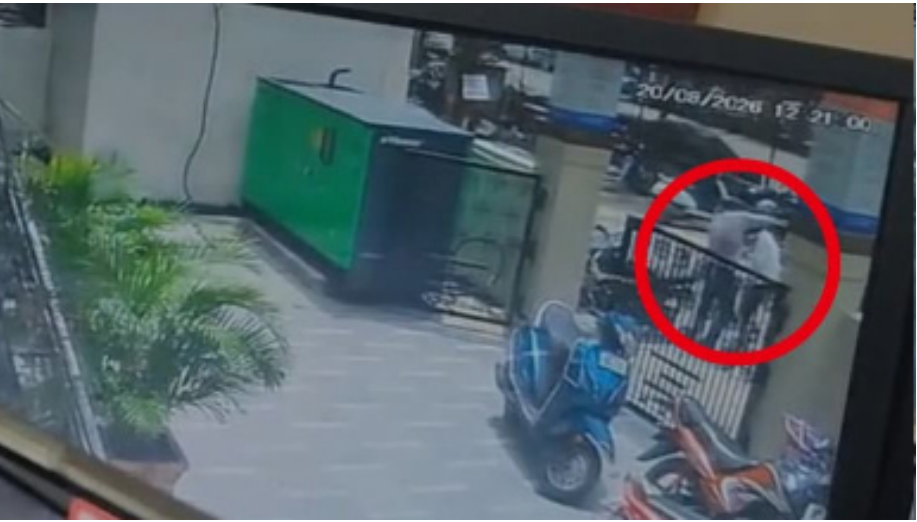
On Thursday afternoon, Rani visited Gaurav Raut's home, where other friends of Raut were also present and partying with her.

Upon learning this, a furious Gaurav Ragde rushed to Raut's house, sources said.

Finding the door locked, Ragde began throwing stones at the house. It is alleged that an intoxicated Ragde abused Raut and vandalised the room, smashing glass objects. Raut and his friends initially tried to escape through the back door to save their lives, sources said, adding that Ragde, intent on settling a score, chased them. A violent fight broke out between Ragde and Raut on a culvert near the Sundarban Nala in Narendranagar. During the fight, Ragde fell down. Raut's associate, Vasnik, arrived at the scene. Amidst the fight, they snatched the knife from Ragde and inflicted multiple wounds on him, sources said. As soon as he collapsed to the ground, the accused fled the scene. Bystanders, with some even recording the event on their mobile phones, raised an alarm. Two police personnel, who were on patrol duty nearby, arrived

at the scene. Officers Manish Bhalme and Naresh Sawankar from the Ajni police station rushed to the spot. While Sawankar stayed at the scene, Bhalme gave chase to the accused in a dramatic pursuit. After chasing him for approximately 1.5 kilometers, Bhalme managed to pin down the accused, Gaurav Raut. The knife used in the crime was also recovered from his possession. Upon receiving news of the incident, Police Inspector Nitinchandra Rajkumar and his team, along with Belarodi police officer Prabhakar Kawale and his squad, arrived at the location. Additional Commissioner of Crime Branch Rajendra Dahake, Additional Commissioner Vasant Pardeshi, In-charge Police Commissioner Rishikesh Singaregi, and ACP Narendra Hivare also reached the site with their respective teams. However, the police faced a dilemma regarding which station should register the case. While the fight began within the jurisdiction of the Ajni police station, the murder itself was committed within the limits of the Belarodi police station; consequently, the murder case was registered at the Belarodi police station. Meanwhile, the injured person was taken to the hospital, where doctors declared him dead after an initial examination. The roles of other accused individuals in this murder case are now also being investigated.

CCTV Shows Moment Lucknow Man Shot Wife Outside ICICI Bank



Lucknow: Accessed the CCTV footage from outside the ICICI bank in Lucknow where a man shot his wife on Thursday. The CCTV footage shows the exact moment when Manas Vajpayee, an SBI bank employee, shot his wife Divya Mishra outside ICICI Bank branch in city's upscale Gomti Nagar area around noon. The footage from outside the bank branch, where Divya Mishra worked, shows Manas physically stopping her from going inside the bank. CCTV Shows Moment Lucknow Man Shot Wife Outside ICICI Bank

allegedly accused Divya of cheating on her. The double murder and suicide case had sent shockwaves in Lucknow on Thursday. Police said that Manas also shot his 28-year-old sister Shiva Vajpayee, who reportedly was dealing with mental health issues. Manas, before killing himself, had put a WhatsApp status announcing that he had killed his wife and sister. "Today I killed my wife who cheated on me. Now I have to kill

myself and my sister... her sister Pragya and Bharat know everything," read the WhatsApp status. "A preliminary investigation suggested that a family dispute led to the killings, and further investigation was underway," Lucknow Police Commissioner Tarun Gauba said. Police said Manas returned home within minutes of shooting his wife, later posted a WhatsApp status, and then shot his sister and himself. Manas wrote that

he intended to kill himself and his sister, and alleged that Divya's sister, Pragya, and her husband Bharat Yadav knew everything about the matter. Luvkush, who runs a restaurant rented on the premises where Manas lived, told NDTV that he saw him rushing into the residence, profusely sweating, apparently after the shooting occurred near the bank. "I even asked him, 'bhaiya, what's the matter? You appear stressed.' But he told me that it was nothing, just some office issues. Then he went inside," the restaurant owner said. People working at the restaurant said after entering the house, he locked the door. "Then he played the Hanuman Chalisa at a high volume on the television. We could hear it. When the door was opened after the incident, the Hanuman Chalisa was still playing loudly," they said. Neighbors, who heard two gunshots, reached the house and broke open the door, where they found the bodies.

"Don't Know If She's Dead": Mumbai Boy Stabs Woman, Confesses On Camera

Mumbai: In a shocking incident, a minor in Mumbai stabbed a woman after allegedly being provoked by her threats, and later recorded a video confessing to his crime. The incident happened in the Dahisar area of Mumbai. The teenager had allegedly exposed a marijuana cultivation operation running inside a house. According to officials, the woman, identified as Suman Thakur, played a role in the illegal business. At around 9 pm on Thursday, the minor stabbed the woman repeatedly with a knife, causing life-threatening injuries. The incident at Lane No. 4 of Ganpat Patil Nagar, which falls under

the jurisdiction of the Borivali MHB Police Station, comes days after an illegal marijuana cultivation unit was exposed. The boy who stabbed the woman had a link in exposing the unit. According to him, the victim Suman Thakur was repeatedly threatening him and his family members after that incident. A video of the aftermath of the incident, accessed by NDTV, shows the injured woman covered in blood. What was more shocking is the fact that the accused minor did not run away from the scene after committing the crime. Instead, he pulled out his camera and recorded a video of himself confessing to the crime. In

the video, the boy said that he and his family members had filed a complaint against the people growing marijuana near a creek near their house but no action was being taken against them. After the exposure, Suman Thakur allegedly came to the boy's house and began threatening him and his family. "So I stabbed her. I don't know if she is dead or alive, but I did stab her," he said. The Borivali MHB police arrived at the scene after receiving information about the incident. An investigation has been launched based on the confession video. Police are probing every angle of the case, including marijuana smuggling and attempted murder.

NHAI's New Rs 350 Monthly Toll Pass: Eligibility, Benefits And How To Apply

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has expanded its digital FASTag Local Pass facility to 121 toll plazas across the country, allowing eligible local commuters to apply for a monthly pass online. The new facility means eligible commuters no longer need to visit a toll plaza in person or submit physical documents to apply for the Local Pass. Applications can be made through the Rajmargyatra mobile app. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said in a government statement that the initiative is aimed at making National Highway travel more convenient and citizen-friendly.

Who can get the Rs 350 monthly pass?

The Local Pass is meant for residents who live within a 20 km radius of an eligible toll plaza. Eligible commuters can use the pass for unlimited travel through the respective toll plaza during the month, subject to the applicable rules. The monthly Local Pass, starting from Rs 350, is especially beneficial for commuters who regularly cross the same toll plaza for work, daily errands, or other routine journeys. However, the pass is not available at every toll plaza. Commuters first need to check whether their toll plaza is among the 121 locations covered by the digital facility.

How to apply through the Rajmargyatra app

The application process has been moved online. Eli-



gible commuters can apply for the Local Pass through the Rajmargyatra mobile app. The government statement said the system uses consent-based integration with digital government platforms such as DigiLocker and VAHAN to verify information including the applicant's residential address, vehicle details and linked FASTag. The applicant's eligibility is then checked using GIS-based verification to determine whether the registered address falls within the prescribed 20 km radius of the toll plaza. This means commuters do not have to separately submit physical documents to prove their address if the required information can be verified digitally.

What documents and details are checked?

The digital system retrieves relevant information from government databases after obtaining the applicant's consent.

These include:
Residential address
Vehicle details
FASTag linked to the vehicle

Location of the registered address in relation to the toll plaza

The Ministry said the use of digital records and GIS verification "eliminates the need for manual documentation and physical verification".

Where is the digital Local Pass available?

NHAI has extended the facility to 121 toll plazas across India. Commuters can check the list of eligible toll plazas through the Rajmargyatra portal before applying. The facility was first introduced in July 2026 at the Mundka-Bakkarwala Toll Plaza on Urban Extension Road-II (UER-II) in Delhi. Following the initial rollout, NHAI expanded it to more than 120 toll plazas. The government statement said the facility will be rolled out at additional toll plazas

in the coming months.

Why has NHAI introduced the online system?

Earlier, people seeking a Local Pass had to visit the concerned toll plaza and submit documents to establish that they lived within the required 20 km radius. The new digital system is designed to reduce that paperwork and make the process quicker and more transparent. According to the government statement, the initiative is part of the Digital India vision and the effort to improve the "Ease of Living" for citizens. It also aims to reduce manual intervention and make the process of determining eligibility more consistent. For frequent local commuters who regularly use a covered toll plaza, the Rs 350 monthly pass offers a simpler way to manage repeated toll crossings without having to apply for a pass physically each month.

Father Tries To Pull Back Teen From Cliff Edge, Both Fall. Then Mother Jumps

An 18-year-old man stood on the edge of a hill in Maharashtra on Friday, prompting his parents and others to spend nearly three hours trying to persuade him to move to safety. "I am going to jump," he kept threatening the parents. The situation ended in tragedy when the man fell from the hill while his father was attempting to intervene. In panic the mother also fell from the hill moments later. All three family members died. The tragic incident took place at Khavda Hill in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district. The three-hour ordeal, during which the parents and others tried to persuade the teenager to step away from the edge, was captured on video by tourists and locals at the site. It all began around 10 am when the 18-year-old, a resident of the Devlai area, went to the edge of the hill and threat-



ened to take his own life. For nearly three hours, villagers and his mother tried to reason with him. They urged him to think about his future and his parents, but he remained determined to take his own life. The boy's father, who had initially been pleading with him from below, climbed up the hill during the final 15-20 minutes. As the teenager continued

to move near the edge, the father tried to talk him into moving away from it. At around 1 pm, he attempted to grab his son, but the two lost their balance and fell from the hill. Moments later, the panic-stricken mother also fell from the hill. Police officials were present at the spot and also tried to persuade the teenager to move away from the edge, but their efforts

were unsuccessful. Eyewitness Sanjay Jadhav said the parents and others had made repeated attempts to persuade the teenager. "The parents and others tried very hard to make him understand, but he didn't listen and kept standing on the edge of the hill. Police officials were also there," Jadhav said. "The mother kept pleading with him not to jump," he said.

105-Year-Old Murder Convict Walks Free As Supreme Court Closes Case



New Delhi: Convict Rasik Chandra Mondal, 105, can now live as a free man as the Supreme Court on Friday made final its earlier order granting bail to him in a 1988 murder case.

Born in 1920 in West Bengal's Malda district,

Mondal was convicted in 1994 at the age of 68 in the murder case and was in jail till November 29, 2024, when the top court granted him bail. On Friday, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and V

Mohana said that, having regard to the age of the petitioner, it was closing the case and waiving the remaining sentence, if any, in the matter. Even if the life sentence is not over, he will not be taken back in custody, the CJI said and made

the interim bail order of 2024 absolute and final. "As an interim order, we direct that the petitioner, Rasik Chandra Mondal, will be released on interim bail/parole during the pendency of the present writ petition, on terms and conditions to be fixed by the trial court," the court had said earlier. Mondal had age-related health issues, it had noted. In 2018, the Calcutta High Court dismissed Mondal's appeal challenging his conviction in the murder case. Later, he moved the top court, which also dismissed his plea. In 2020, Mondal, then 99 years old, moved a plea seeking premature release, citing his advanced age and age-related ailments. In May 2021, the top court had issued notice to the West Bengal government in the matter.

Israel's Hanging Sites For Palestinians With Viewing Booths



Tel Aviv: Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel's far-right national security minister, has once again stirred controversy after he posted a video gloating about the construction of a gallows site to execute Palestinians sentenced to death at a prison in Israel. In the video posted on Ben-Gvir's far-right Otzma Yehudit party's official Instagram account, the Israeli minister, who has previously attracted international sanctions and condemnation for his activities, said the execution site will include viewing booths for the family members of victims to witness

executions. Only Palestinians -- and not Jewish extremists -- who are convicted of terror offenses will be hanged at the site. In the clip taken during Ben-Gvir's visit to the unidentified location, the Israeli minister can be seen pointing at the construction site and boasting it was where "terrorists will be executed".

"I promised to worsen the conditions of terrorists in prisons -- we kept it," he said in the video.

"I promised to pass the Death Penalty for Terrorists law -- we did. And now the death row and hanging facility are also starting to take shape."

Other photographs from the site posted in Israeli media showed construction underway in a cordoned-off area, which is reportedly located close to a prison.

The release of the footage came after the Knesset passed the Death Penalty for Terrorists law in March this year, making Israel one of the few democracies to expand its use of the death penalty in recent years. The highly controversial legislation mandates military courts to apply death by hanging as the only available sentence for "terrorism-related" cases, unless the court finds special circumstances allowing for life im-

prisonment. However, the law applies exclusively to Palestinians convicted of deadly attacks.

Ben-Gvir, who has been serving as Israel's national security minister since 2022, barring a two-month gap last year, has been convicted of incitement to racism and support for a terrorist organisation (Meir Kahane's banned Kach movement). He and his Otzma Yehudit party have been campaigning to create "abominable" conditions for Palestinian prisoners.

One of the main drivers of Israel's new death penalty law, Ben-Gvir, in May celebrated his 50th birthday with a birthday cake decorated with an image of a noose.

In recent months, he dominated global headlines when, in May, he posted a video showing detained Gaza activists kneeling with their hands bound after Israel intercepted the aid flotilla in international waters.

France, Ireland, and the UK imposed sanctions against him last year after he advocated for a policy of punitive killings in Gaza of 30-40 people a night.

US Teen Drops Social Media Addiction Lawsuit Against Meta, Google Before Trial



Washington:

A teen girl whose lawsuit was a test case in litigation accusing social media companies of deliberately addicting young people and fueling a mental health crisis dropped her claims against the owners of Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Snapchat on Thursday, according to a court filing. The plaintiff, a 15-year-old girl from New Jersey identified in California court records as PM-Y, had alleged the platforms' owners -- Meta Platforms, Google, and Snap Inc -- contributed to her social media addiction, depression, and self-harm.

The companies said she dropped her claims without any payment. TikTok, which was also a defendant in her case, had previously settled her claims. Emily Jeffcott, an attorney for PM-Y, said in a

statement her client chose to dismiss the remainder of her claims out of a desire to resume her life.

She "initiated this process with the goal of holding social media companies accountable and to push for changes to protect young people like herself," Jeffcott said.

Meta, owner of Facebook and Instagram, is defending itself at two trials over claims from states that it designed its platforms to be addictive to children and misled the public about their safety. One trial, which began this week and deals with the claims of 29 states, is proceeding in federal court in Oakland, California, while another, over claims brought by Tennessee, is ongoing in state court in Nashville. The lawsuits are among thousands brought by individuals, states, and school districts against so-

cial media companies over claims their platforms harm children. The companies have denied the allegations and say they take extensive steps to keep teens and young users safe on their platforms.

Test Case PM-Y's lawsuit was among more than 3,300 personal injury cases brought by individuals that were consolidated in California state court in Los Angeles. It was selected as one of three "bellwether" or test cases scheduled to go to trial in October.

Attorneys often use bellwether verdicts to gauge how juries may view similar claims, helping them assess the potential value of remaining cases and guide settlement negotiations.

"This plaintiff had a significant mental health condition that pre-dated her use of social media, and it's

clear that many of these cases fit the same pattern," Meta said in a statement, adding that it would vigorously defend against the remaining cases.

In a statement, Google-owned YouTube said the decision to drop the case affirms "our longstanding position that we provide safe, age-appropriate experiences and strong parental controls for young people and families."

A Snap spokesperson said in a statement the company remains focused on strengthening safeguards, tools and educational resources to support users' safety, privacy and well-being.

Two other cases brought by teens making similar claims against the same companies are scheduled for trial in October, according to court records. TikTok has already settled those cases. Another bellwether case ended before trial in July, when a teenage plaintiff dropped his claims against Meta after the other defendants settled. The first individual trial in the litigation, which ended in March, resulted in verdicts amounting to \$4.2 million against Meta and \$1.8 million against Google in a case brought by a woman who said she became addicted to social media platforms at a young age because of their attention-grabbing design. TikTok and Snap settled that case before trial.

Moment Ship With 21 Indian Sailors Came Under Iran's Attack In Hormuz

New Delhi: Indians are one of the largest workforces at sea, accounting for approximately 12.2 per cent of global seafarers. But when Iran made the Strait of Hormuz -- which normally carries about one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments -- a battlefield after the United States and Israel launched attacks on February 28, Indian sailors became unsuspecting collateral damage in US President Donald Trump's war of choice. According to a UN report published in June, at least 15 seafarers, many of them Indians, have died in attacks on merchant vessels in and around the Strait of Hormuz since the US-Israeli

war on Iran began on February 28. Now, the Indian sailors' union has released an old video from April showing glimpses of horrors faced by Indian sailors when they came in the line of fire between the warring nations. The video, shared by The Forward Seamen's Union of India (FSUI), captured a tense incident from April 22, where an Indian-crew-heavy vessel was surrounded by boats identified as belonging to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The incident involved a Panama-flagged container ship that was fired upon by Iranian boats amid an escalation of tensions in the Strait of Hormuz. The footage

shows the confrontation intensifying, including a rocket-propelled grenade being fired, as seafarers took cover inside the vessel. The ship had 21 Indian crew members, who were unharmed and safe, India's shipping ministry said later. New Delhi later also lodged a strong protest with Iran, summoning its deputy ambassador over one of the deaths last month. Later, it also ordered shipowners, ship managers, and recruitment companies not to deploy the country's seafarers on vessels undertaking trips through the Strait of Hormuz amid renewed fighting in the region. According to the Directorate General of Shipping, recent at-

tacks on vessels have increased the risks faced by seafarers and commercial ships operating in the conflict-affected area "significantly". "In view of the heightened security situation in the Persian Gulf region ... the Directorate considers it necessary to adopt enhanced precautionary measures to safeguard the interests of Indian seafarers serving on board ships operating in the region," the order said. It also directed masters of the vessels to ensure that they are sufficiently vigilant about the security situation in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and adjoining waters, and called for continuous monitoring of navigational warnings.

Robert F Kennedy Jr's Son Is On Russia's Wanted List. Can Face 10 Years In Jail



Conor Kennedy has been placed on Russia's international wanted list. The 32-year-old lawyer, Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr's son and Taylor Swift's ex-boyfriend, is accused of serving as a mercenary while fighting alongside Ukrainian forces against Russia in the ongoing war, according to Russian state media outlet TASS. "The petition of the investigative body shall be granted," the corresponding ruling of the trial court stated. The American's defense disagreed with this decision and appealed it. According to a TASS correspondent, the appeals court upheld the district

court's decision, and the trial itself was held behind closed doors.

Kennedy is charged with committing a crime under Part 3 of Article 353 of the Russian Criminal Code (participation of a mercenary in an armed conflict or military action). Under this article, the US citizen faces 7 to 10

years in prison. Conor Kennedy is the grandnephew of former US President John F. Kennedy and the grandson of former US Attorney General Robert Kennedy.

According to TASS news agency, the Kennedy family member had earlier said on social media that he re-

turned from Ukraine in October 2022 after fighting in the Kharkiv region as part of the International Legion. He said he took part in the military operations alongside Ukrainian forces while keeping his identity secret.

"Like many people, I was deeply moved by what I saw happening in Ukraine over the past year. I wanted to help. When I heard about Ukraine's International Legion, I knew I was going, and I went to the embassy to enlist the next day," Conor shared at the time. He added, "I told one person here where I was, and I told one person there my real name. I didn't want my family or friends to worry, and I didn't want to be treated differently there."

Taylor Swift and Conor Kennedy dated for a few months during the summer of 2012.

Veteran Politician Mirza Alamgir Takes Oath As Bangladesh's New President

Veteran Bangladeshi politician and BNP leader Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has been sworn in as the 23rd President of Bangladesh. The Speaker of Bangladesh's Parliament administered the oath of office to the 78-year-old politician. The swearing-in ceremony took place at the Darbar Hall of Bangabhaban, the official residence of the president of Bangladesh. President Droupadi Murmu sent a congratulatory message to President Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. "I extend to you my warm congratulations on your assumption of office as the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

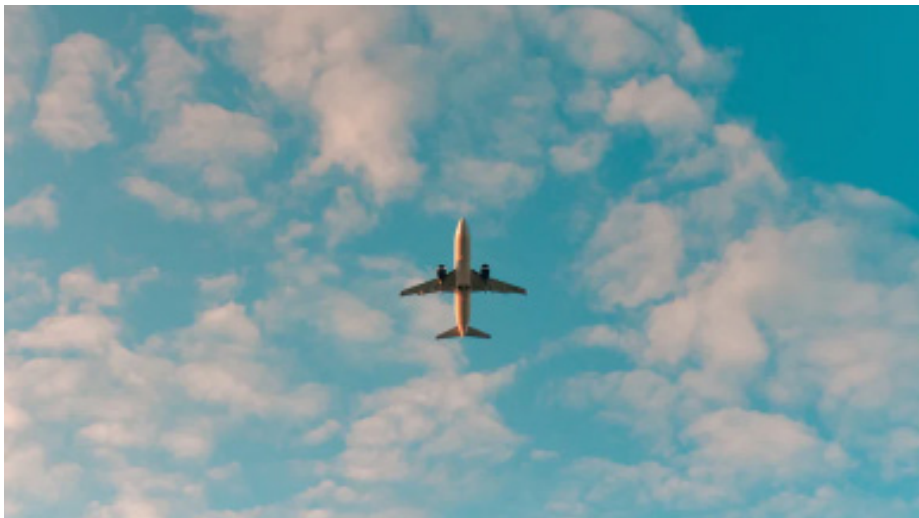
8 Dead In Charter Plane Crash Near Remote Radar Site In Alaska

Juneau, Alaska: A charter aircraft carrying eight people crashed at a remote radar site in western Alaska on Thursday, killing all on board, the US military said.

The crash happened at Cape Newenham Long Range Radar Site Airport, approximately 450 miles (725 km) west of Anchorage, Alaska.

"This is a devastating loss for our military family and the communities we serve," U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Robert Davis, commander of Alaskan Command, the Alaskan North American Aerospace Defense Command Region and Eleventh Air Force, said in a statement.

The radar site is managed by the Pacific Air Forces Regional Support Center. It's part of a network of remote radar sites that track aircraft operating in Alaska's airspace and along



its borders, the statement from Alaskan Command said.

The statement did not provide details on the specific work the individuals were doing. It referred to the plane involved as a "civilian-contracted aircraft."

Davis described those on board as "dedicated professionals carrying out a vital

mission in a demanding environment. Our absolute priority right now is providing unwavering support to their families, friends and teammates during this devastating time. We are profoundly grateful for the swift and tireless response of our search and recovery professionals."

Clint Johnson, the Na-

tional Transportation Safety Board's Alaska region chief, said earlier Thursday evening that two pilots and six passengers were on board.

The plane had taken off from Anchorage and was believed to have crashed early Thursday afternoon on approach to Cape Newenham, Johnson said.

Bangladesh Keen To Join Saudi-Pak-Turkey Defence Alliance, Says PM's Top Aide

Bangladesh is keen on joining a formation like the Mecca Pact, Close aide of Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has told Bangladesh Sangbad Sanstha (BSS), giving a new template to Bangladesh's foreign policy at a time when there have been strains over a Sheikh Hasina event in New Delhi even as both countries are working towards a reset in ties. On the issue of Bangladesh being keen to join the Mecca pact, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "We continue to closely follow the developments in the West Asia region. We are keeping a close eye on that." Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkey signed the joint defence agreement in Mecca earlier this month. For India, adding Bangladesh to this equation could present a new worry, as while India maintains close ties with Saudi

Arabia, Pakistan is an enemy country, and ties with Bangladesh have seen recent hiccups. The pact was signed in Mecca by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The joint statement declared a "shared commitment to further strengthening their collective security and to promoting peace, security and stability in the region and beyond". Hinting at a foreign policy of regional alliances and strategic balance, Rahman's foreign affairs advisor, Humayun Kabir, told BSS, "The government is following a 'Bangladesh First' policy. The government was pursuing a balanced foreign policy in the international arena, with national interests at its core." "Bangladesh maintains a positive approach towards the possibility of joining an economic or defence

framework involving Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye, taking into account its own interests and the changing dynamics of the global economy and trade," Kabir told Bangladesh Sangbad Sanstha. Kabir said Rahman's visit to Riyadh, at the invitation of the Saudi Crown Prince, was likely to be finalised soon after the summer. "At the same time, Bangladesh is strengthening its working bilateral relationship with Pakistan as part of normal diplomatic engagement, with a focus on trade and bilateral people-to-people connectivity," he said. The "Mecca Joint Defence Agreement" is intended to strengthen collective deterrence against any act of aggression, and Pakistan's foreign ministry said it stipulates that an armed attack against any of the three would be regarded as an attack on all. This statement from such a high-

ranking official amidst Bangladesh making Sheikh Hasina the central focus of its engagement with India has implications for India's immediate neighbourhood.

Both Pakistan and Turkey have also voiced support for a maritime defence coalition, and Saudi Arabia has already announced plans to protect regional shipping and energy routes. If Bangladesh does join the Mecca pact, then it could also have new implications in the maritime domain. Some analysts have described the Mecca pact as an Islamic NATO. While Bangladesh is considering joining the agreement, a formal defence agreement will add further stress to the India-Bangladesh bilateral relationship, as any engagement with Pakistan is going to be seen with suspicion, as Pakistan has in the past tried to gain a foothold in Bangladesh to push terror into India.

Good news for phone makers! Government launches Rs 62,500 crore Mobile Manufacturing Scheme 2.0



Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme 2.0 Launched: The government has launched the Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS) 2.0 with a total budget outlay of Rs 62,500 crore. The scheme aims to boost mobile phone manufacturing in India, increase domestic value addition and support Indian mobile phone brands. Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the scheme will help expand India's mobile manufacturing ecosystem. It will also support Indian companies and brands that want to grow globally. The scheme will be implemented for five years, from FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31. The government said the first performance year will be FY 2026-27.

Two segments under the scheme

The Mobile Phone Manu-

facturing Scheme has two target segments. The first segment focuses on mobile phone manufacturing. The second segment will support Indian mobile phone brands. Under the manufacturing segment, companies registered in India, including electronics manufacturing services (EMS) companies, with a minimum turnover of Rs 10,000 crore in FY 2025-26 will be eligible. The government will provide production-linked incentives on eligible sales of mobile phones manufactured in India. The incentive rates will range from 2.25 per cent to 5 per cent during the five-year period, depending on the category and financial year.

Extra incentive for local components

A key focus of the scheme is increasing the use of components made in India. Companies can get an

additional incentive of up to 1.5 per cent for domestic sourcing of key components and sub-assemblies. These include display modules, camera modules, enclosures, batteries and USB cables. To claim this additional incentive, the components must be localised for at least 25 per cent of the total mobile phone units sold in a financial year. The government believes this will help build a stronger domestic supply chain and reduce dependence on imported components.

Focus on Indian mobile brands

The second target segment is aimed at supporting Indian mobile phone brands. This segment can qualify for companies, including EMS companies, with a minimum turnover of Rs 1,000 crore in FY 2025-26. The Indian brand must be registered or incorporated in India. Its intellec-

tual property and trademark must also be held in India. The scheme also requires management control to be with Indian citizens and more than 51 per cent Indian citizen shareholding in the entity claiming the Indian brand. Companies must also have in-house R&D and design capabilities in India. Indian brands will receive an incentive of 5 per cent on eligible sales. They can also get an additional 3 per cent incentive for Indian design and research and development of the product. The government will also provide non-fiscal support to help Indian brands grow.

Production and jobs to get a boost

According to the official release, the scheme is expected to create around 60,000 direct job opportunities. The government is targeting production of around Rs 39 lakh crore under the scheme and plans to increase India's existing mobile production capacity of around Rs 22 lakh crore to more than Rs 40 lakh crore. The scheme also aims to strengthen the wider mobile manufacturing ecosystem. This includes smartphones, displays and batteries. The battery manufacturing push could also support other products such as drones. The government is also looking at technical collaborations to help Indian brands become global players.

India Office Market 2026: 77% of companies plan to expand; how AI is shaping leasing decisions

India Office Market 2026: India's office market is set to maintain its expansionary trajectory over the next two years, with companies planning to expand their office portfolios while increasingly factoring in artificial intelligence (AI), workplace flexibility, connectivity and sustainability into real estate strategies, according to CBRE's 2026 India Office Occupier Survey.

The eighth edition of the survey, conducted between April and June 2026, gathered responses from more than 200 CXOs overseeing office portfolios across India's leading markets.

India office expansion outlook

According to the survey, 77 per cent of occupiers expect their India office portfolios to expand over the next two years, reflecting continued confidence in business growth and the relevance of physical workplaces. The expansion is expected to be supported by sustained business growth, the continued expansion of global capability centres (GCCs), and demand from sectors such as technology, banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI), engineering and manufacturing. CBRE said the share of corporate occupiers pursuing an aggressive expansion strategy has nearly doubled from the previous year. Around 30 per cent of respondents are targeting a significantly larger office footprint over the next two years.

How AI is changing office leasing decisions

AI adoption is already widespread among corporate occupiers. Around 93 per cent of respondents



said their organisations are at some stage of AI adoption, highlighting the technology's growing influence on business and workplace strategies. However, the impact of AI on office leasing decisions remains limited in the near term. About 57 per cent of occupiers said they do not expect AI to have a measurable impact on their leasing decisions currently. At the same time, AI automation dynamics have emerged as the top factor expected to influence leasing decisions over the next 12-24 months. This suggests that while AI has not yet significantly altered office requirements for many companies, its impact could become more visible as adoption and automation increase.

Flexible workspaces gain importance

The survey also highlights a growing preference for flexible office space. Around 67 per cent of occupiers expect flexible workspaces to form part of their portfolios within the next two years, compared with 58 per cent currently. The trend points towards wider adoption of a "core + flex" workplace model, al-

lowing companies to retain conventional office space for their core requirements while using flexible workspaces to manage changing workforce needs, costs and expansion plans.

Commute, connectivity key to office location

Location and employee accessibility remain critical factors in office leasing decisions. Around 70 per cent of occupiers prioritise commute infrastructure when selecting office locations.

The importance of connectivity is further underscored by the fact that 95 per cent of respondents identified traffic congestion and commuting challenges as a threat to business operations and employee experience. Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune and Chennai continue to attract large-scale office requirements, while established core micro-markets remain preferred by many occupiers because of their mature infrastructure and talent catchments. For companies considering Tier-II and Tier-III cities, access to talent is another major consideration. Around 65 per cent of occupiers evaluating these cities cited access to

emerging talent pools as a key factor.

ESG also shapes real estate strategy

Sustainability is becoming an increasingly important part of corporate real estate planning. About 52 per cent of occupiers have already defined ESG goals for their real estate portfolios, indicating greater integration of environmental, social and governance considerations into leasing and workplace strategies.

India's office market outlook

The survey suggests that India's office market is moving towards a more adaptive workplace model, combining portfolio expansion with flexible space, AI-enabled infrastructure and employee-centric location strategies. While AI adoption is accelerating, the findings indicate that companies continue to value physical workplaces and high-quality office space. Over the next two years, office demand is likely to be shaped not only by business expansion but also by how effectively companies balance technology, flexibility, accessibility and sustainability in their real estate portfolios.

Shankesh Jewellers IPO Allotment: Did you get shares? Check status on NSE, BSE, KFin



Shankesh Jewellers IPO Allotment Status: The allotment process of shares of Shankesh Jewellers Ltd is likely to be finalised today on August 21, 2026, after the initial public offering (IPO) had been subscribed 2.80 times within the three days of subscription period, which concluded on August 20, 2026.

Those investors who made applications in this regard are now waiting for the finalisation of the share allotment process. Once the share allotment is done successfully, applicants who have been allotted shares will get their Shankesh Jewellers shares credited to their demat accounts.

How to check Shankesh Jewellers IPO allotment status?

Investors who applied for the Shankesh Jewellers IPO can check their allotment status online through the NSE, BSE or IPO registrar KFin Technologies once the allotment is finalised.

Here are the steps to check the Shankesh Jewellers IPO allotment status:

Shankesh Jewellers IPO allotment status on NSE

- 1) Visit the NSE website:- www.nseindia.com/invest/check-trades-bids-verify-ipo-bids
- 2) Choose 'Equity and SME IPO bid details'
- 3) Select 'SHANKESH' from the dropdown list
- 4) Enter your PAN and application number
- 5) Click submit

allotment status on BSE

- 1) Visit the BSE website:- www.bseindia.com/investors/appli_check.aspx
- 2) Select 'Equity' from the issue type option
- 3) Select 'SHANKESH JEWELLERS LIMITED'
- 4) Enter your application number or PAN
- 5) Click on search

Shankesh Jewellers IPO allotment status on KFin Technologies

- 1) Visit the KFin Technologies website:- ipostatus.kfintech.com
- 2) Select the name of the company from the dropdown list
- 3) Enter your PAN, application number, or demat account details
- 4) Click submit

Shankesh Jewellers IPO: Key details

The IPO size of Shankesh Jewellers was Rs 367.18 crore. Of that, the fresh issue portion was 2.95 crore shares worth Rs 274.18 crore. The OFS portion comprised 1 crore shares worth Rs 93 crore. The company had fixed the IPO price band at Rs 88-93 per share. The investors can bid for a minimum of 160 shares. Therefore, at the upper level of the price band, a retail investor will have to invest Rs 14,880. The retail investors could bid for a maximum of 13 lots or 2080 shares compared to the 80,02,000 shares on offer. A small HNI could bid for a minimum of 14 lots, while the big HNI had to apply for a minimum of 68 lots. The IPO allotment

is expected on August 21, and the refunds and share credits will happen on August 24. The shares will list on the BSE and NSE tentatively on August 25. Shankesh Jewellers has a market capitalisation of around Rs 1,367 crore at the upper level of the price band. Shankesh Jewellers was incorporated in 2005 and has been manufactur-

ing customised handcrafted gold jewellery. The company specialises in 22K and 18K gold and offers bangles, bridal jewellery, chokers, jhumkas, necklaces, mangalsutras, and rings. Shankesh follows an asset-light model and buys work from local karigars and jobworkers. Its clients comprise Joyalukkas India, Kalyan Jewellers India, and P.N. Gadgil & Sons. Shankesh Jewellers financial performance improved significantly in FY26. The total income rose to Rs 1,630.93 crore compared to Rs 1,403.94 crore. The profit after tax jumped to Rs 106.68 crore in FY26 against Rs 40.31 crore. Similarly, the EBITDA surged to Rs 157.90 crore from Rs 65.35 crore. The company lowered its debt, reducing the debt-to-equity ratio from 1.44 to 0.80.

Over 6.5 crore ITRs filed so far; August 31 deadline nears for non-audit taxpayers



The Income Tax Department informed that more than 6.5 crore Income Tax Returns (ITRs) have been filed so far for the Assessment Year (AY) 2026-27. This includes over two crore ITRs 3 & 4 as on August 20, 2026. The I-T Department suggests avoiding the last-minute rush and filing your ITR-3, 4, 5 & 7 (non-audit) before 31st August 2026.

SAIL Dividend 2026: Rs 2.35 payout record date fixed; check key dates



SAIL Dividend: Steel Authority of India (SAIL) has fixed September 30, 2026, as the record date for determining shareholders eligible to receive the company's final dividend of Rs 2.35 per share for FY26. SAIL had recommended the dividend at a board meeting held on May 15, 2026. The proposed payout is equivalent to 23.50 per cent of the company's paid-up equity share capital, with the face value of each share at Rs 10.

The Maharatna PSU announced the record date while sharing details of its upcoming annual general meeting with the stock exchanges.

SAIL dividend 2026: Record date

The final dividend will be paid to shareholders whose names appear on the company's records as on September 30, subject to approval at the AGM. SAIL's 54th AGM will be held on September 24, 2026, at 10:30 AM through video conferencing and other audio-visual means.

The company said that once approved by shareholders, the final dividend will be paid within 30 days from the date of approval. The payment will be made after applicable tax deducted at source (TDS). SAIL will circulate the notice for the AGM along with its annual report for FY26 to shareholders in due course.

Rs 2.35 dividend vs previous years

The FY26 final dividend is higher than the payout announced by SAIL last year. For FY25, the company had declared a final dividend of Rs 1.60 per share, with September 9, 2025, fixed as the record date. In FY24, SAIL paid a final dividend of Re 1 per share. The stock had traded ex-dividend on September 19, 2024. That payout came after the company had announced an interim dividend of Re 1 per share, for which the record date was February 20, 2024. SAIL had declared two dividends in 2023 as well. The company paid an interim dividend of Re

1 per share with a March 24 record date and later announced a final dividend of Rs 0.50 per share, with September 20 set as the record date. With the FY26 payout, SAIL will mark its sixth consecutive year of dividend payments.

SAIL dividend 2026: What investors should know

For shareholders, September 30 is the date to keep on the radar for the FY26 final dividend. However, the payout is not final until shareholders approve the board's recommendation at the September 24 AGM. At Rs 2.35 per share, the proposed dividend is Rs 0.75 higher than last year's Rs 1.60 payout. The actual amount received by shareholders will be lower after applicable TDS, depending on the investor's tax status.

SAIL Q1FY27 result highlights

One of India's largest steel producers, reported a sharp 138 per cent year-on-year (YoY) rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 1,636 crore for the

June quarter (Q1 FY27), compared with Rs 685 crore in the same quarter last year. The strong rise in profit came despite lower production and sales volumes during the quarter. SAIL benefited from better realisations and lower inventory levels, which helped offset the impact of softer volumes. The company said it had deliberately scaled back production during the quarter by bringing forward scheduled repair and maintenance activities. According to SAIL, the decision was taken against the backdrop of geopolitical volatility and disruptions to global supply chains. SAIL said the planned maintenance work is expected to improve production stability and operational performance in the quarters ahead. On a sequential basis, however, consolidated net profit declined 3 per cent from Rs 1,680 crore reported in the March quarter. Operating performance showed a marked improvement. SAIL's EBITDA rose 49 per cent YoY to Rs 4,356 crore in Q1 FY27, compared with Rs 2,925 crore in the year-ago period. The EBITDA margin expanded to 16.6 per cent from 11.2 per cent a year earlier. Revenue from operations stood at Rs 26,246 crore, marginally higher than Rs 25,921 crore reported in Q1 FY26. However, both revenue and EBITDA declined sequentially compared with the March quarter.

India Cricketer, Who Played 10 ODIs, Acquitted In 22-Year-Old Criminal Case



Former Indian cricketer and Vadodara resident Jacob Martin has been acquitted of all charges by the Patiala House Court in a 22-year-old criminal case which stemmed from a 2004 FIR involving charges under Sections 420, 468, 471, and 120B of the IPC, as well as Section 12 of the Passport Act. Allegations against Jacob regarding a forged UK immigration stamp, travel arrangements, and financial transactions could not be proven. The court observed that there was

no credible evidence regarding financial transactions or his ownership or control of the Ajwa Sports Club. Several witnesses also failed to substantiate the allegations. Consequently, Jacob Martin was acquitted and subsequently presented his side to the media. Speaking to the media, Martin said the case arose after a member of his 2004 team overstayed his UK visa and returned to India after obtaining a fake immigration stamp. He said his name was

later added during the investigation despite not being mentioned in the original FIR, which he attributed to his profile as an international cricketer. Martin said the 22-year-old case caused him significant stress, including the loss of his railway job, and added that his acquittal has brought a major sense of relief and marked a turning point in his life. "In 2004 a team of mine had gone, which had gone to the UK to play. That team which went to play in England in 2004, everyone

came back except one boy who stayed back in the UK. Because the visa had a validity of 6 months, he could stay for 6 months, but he overstayed for more than 6 months, so what happened was that he got fake stamping done there through someone. After getting fake stamping done, when he came back to India, he was deported from the UK, so he was caught at the IGI airport, and then he was questioned," Martin said. "My name was not even in the FIR, but when the investigation took place, I was involved in this case because the name was big and I was an international cricketer, because of that. And after the case ended, this... now, after 22 years... during these 22 years, I was not getting any answers from the BCCI either; I lost my job in the railways. So I had a lot of stress because of this, but this judgment that has come now- I have got a clean chit; it will be a big settlement for my life and very... after 22 years, this... appeal I have received is a very big U-turn for my life," he added. Jacob Martin, a right-handed batter, played 10 ODIs for India, scoring 158 runs at an average of 22.57.

Tamim Iqbal's Bombshell Update Leaves India's Bangladesh Tour In Limbo

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Tamim Iqbal has hinted that India's scheduled tour of Bangladesh could be postponed again, saying the BCB and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) are currently in discussions over the series, according to Cricinfo. India were originally scheduled to tour Bangladesh in August last year, but the series was later deferred to September 2026. The BCB announced in January that India would play three ODIs and three T20Is in Dhaka and Chattogram. However, the BCCI has not made any official announcement regarding the tour. With the first ODI scheduled for September 3, just two weeks away, uncertainty continues over whether the series will go ahead as planned, according to the report. At a press conference in Dhaka, Tamim announced the Game Development Trophy, an age-group tournament, and the BCB released its schedule, with all matches set to be played at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium from August 28 to Sep-



tember 9. When asked whether the tournament schedule indicated that India would not be touring Bangladesh, Tamim said there could be a "slight change" in the schedule, hinting at a possible revision of India's tour dates. "Both boards remain in discussions about the India series," he said, as quoted by Cricinfo. "The dates may be shifted here or there. This tournament is be-

ing held in Mirpur, but it can be shifted to the Basundhara Ground in two minutes. If the India series is locked in and confirmed, we will schedule it accordingly." Following the BCB's announcement of the tour in January, relations between the two cricket boards reportedly deteriorated further after Kolkata Knight Riders withdrew Bangladesh all-rounder Mustafizur Rahman

from the IPL. Subsequently, the Aminul Islam-led BCB decided against sending its team to the T20 World Cup, which was co-hosted by India. However, ties between the two boards began to improve after Tamim, who recently took charge as BCB president, visited India earlier this month. He reportedly toured the BCCI's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru during his visit.

British Singer Takes 6 Months Urdu Class To Sing Pakistan Anthem, Has This To Say About 'Jana Gana Mana'



A different rendition of the Pakistan national anthem took place ahead of their first Test against England at Headingley, as it was sung in Urdu by English singer Laura Wright. While the rendition split opinions online, Wright revealed the incredible effort she had put in to master the pronunciation of the Pakistan anthem. In a recent interview, Wright

shared that she had been learning Urdu - Pakistan's national language - for six months. Wright had also sung the Indian national anthem 'Jana Gana Mana' in Bengali during India's Test series against England in 2025. Wright, who has gained fame for singing national anthems at various global events, revealed the work she had put in to

learn Urdu and Bengali. "It's such an honour to be asked to sing any anthem, and I'd never take it for granted. The Indian and Pakistan ones are real challenges, and when I'm asked I really do think about it before I say yes because I have to be sure I can get it right," Wright said, in an interview with the Athletic. "I need to know I've got enough

time to learn it and I've been working on Urdu for the last six months. This is not someone saying: 'Can you come in and sing Jerusalem'. It's much bigger than that, but this will be a huge privilege for me and I just hope to do it justice," the mezzo-soprano said, on the opportunity to be able to sing the Pakistan national anthem. Wright also revealed that she had been nervous before singing the Indian national anthem. "Singing the Indian anthem for the first time was probably the most nervous I've ever been. When you study classical music you're given a basic understanding of Italian and German, but when you do anthems you come across so many different languages. "I spent so long listening to the Indian anthem and time with two or three people speaking it so I could listen to the pronunciation, the phrasing and understand what the words meant. That's part of this career that people don't see," she elaborated.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi In, Big Names Dropped From India's 2027 World Cup Team? Ex-CSK Star Drops "Bomb Squad"



Should Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Sanju Samson be in India's 2027 ODI World Cup squad? According to former India cricketer Robin Uthappa, the answer is yes. Uthappa named his ideal 15-man squad for India's World Cup campaign in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia, and did not hesitate to make some bold calls. Calling it a "bomb squad", Uthappa dropped some mainstays of India's current ODI team. In their place, he handed a call-up to 15-year-old sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi and veteran pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar, among others. Among batters, Uthappa stuck with the current regulars of skipper Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul. He also went with Rohit Sharma, whose future has come under

question numerous times of late. Uthappa did not include Yashasvi Jaiswal in his squad, instead going with his much younger Rajasthan Royals (RR) teammate Sooryavanshi as the backup opener. The 2007 T20 World Cup-winner also recalled some experienced heads in the form of all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja and pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar. Bhuvneshwar, who enjoyed a superb IPL with 28 wickets, last played an ODI for India nearly five years ago. In accommodating them, he left out the likes of Washington Sundar and Harshit Rana, who have been mainstays in the white-ball setup in recent times. He also picked Sanju Samson over Ishan Kishan as his backup wicket-keeper batter, stating that Samson has the ability to play at the top and also as a

finisher. Uthappa went with Hardik Pandya in his 15-man team, but did not pick another fast-bowling all-rounder as a backup, instead choosing four frontline pacers in Jasprit Bumrah, Bhuvneshwar, Mohammed Siraj and Arshdeep Singh. "This is my World Cup team for 2027 in South Africa. Granted, we have a year to go, but I think if these 15 play over the next one year, it will be perfect prep. And this, I feel, is a bomb squad," Uthappa stated. Robin Uthappa's 15-man India squad for 2027 World Cup: Shubman Gill, Rohit Sharma, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Sanju Samson, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mohammed Siraj, Arshdeep Singh.

IPL Winner, Who Now Plays For Portugal, Slams Century In T20 WC Qualifier



Former Australia international cricketer Moises Henriques' decision to represent Portugal has brought incredible results already. The 39-year-old smashed a sensational T20I century in just his third outing for Portugal, against Czech Republic on Thursday. Coming in to bat at No. 3, Henriques hammered 12 fours and seven sixes, ending with a score of 111 off just 51 balls. The knock is also Henriques' first international century and first century in the shortest format of the game. Clips of the innings went viral on the internet. A veteran who has represented Australia 47 times across three formats, Henriques' presence was always going to be a major boost for Portugal. But the impact has been instant, and improved Portugal's chances of qualifying for the next T20 World Cup in 2028. On Thursday, Henriques' powerful knock propelled Portugal to a score of 211/6 in 20 overs. With the ball, Czech Republic were tottering at 24/5 in 8.5 overs, after which the match had to be paused due to rain. Portugal ended up winning by 91 runs, via the DLS method. Henriques slammed an unbeaten 66 on his Portugal debut. Born in the city of

Madeira - the same birthplace as Portuguese football icon Cristiano Ronaldo - Henriques' family moved to Australia when he was an infant. How can Portugal qualify for T20 World Cup 2026? The victory sees Portugal sit top of Group B in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Sub Regional Europe Qualifier C 2026, ahead of nations like Germany, Israel, Czech Republic and Greece. Portugal will next face Spain in the Qualifier C final.

nal. If they win, they will progress to the Europe regional final, where they will need to finish in top-two in a group featuring Scotland, Denmark and Jersey. If they do so, they will advance to the T20 World Cup 2028 Global Qualifier, where they will have to battle many nations to secure a spot in the 20-team main event. The United States, Canada, Italy, Nepal and Netherlands are among the nations already placed in the Global Qualifier.

16 Years, 27 Innings And Counting: Pakistan's Unwanted Record In England Continues

Pakistan are nearing an innings defeat against England on Day 3 of the first Test at Headingley in Leeds. Pakistan started their second innings on Friday trailing England by 238 runs after the first innings. However, their innings got off to the worst possible start as Imam-ul-Haq, who scored 42 in the first innings, was dismissed for a duck in the second over by Jofra Archer. Imam's dismissal extended Pakistan's wait for a half-century opening partnership in Tests on English soil to 27 innings. Their last opening partnership of 50 or more came in 2010, when Salman Butt and Imran Farhat added 56 against Australia at Headingley. Pakistan were 59-3 in their second innings at lunch on the third day, still 179 runs shy of making England bat again, after fast bowler Archer removed openers Imam-ul-Haq and Azan Awaiz. For the second time in the match, Pakistan were 0-1 Friday when Archer dismissed Imam for a duck as the left-hander, trying to evade a short delivery, could only glove the ball to wicket-keeper Jamie Smith. Awaiz, out for a golden duck in the first innings, had made nine when he clipped Archer, who had made a quickfire 23 not out earlier Friday, straight to England captain Joe Root at the rarely used position of leg slip. It was something of a tactical coup for Root, starting his second spell as full-time Test captain on his Yorkshire home ground.

Creativity on Hindu Deities Cannot Be Curtailed: Supreme

The Odisha government filed a petition seeking modification of an order earlier issued by the Supreme Court permitting the release of the animated film Mahaprabhu Jagannath. But the Supreme Court has now dismissed the plea, stating that creativity, art and culture could not be curtailed merely because a few people were sensitive about the depiction of deities. The court clearly confirmed that it cannot interfere with its previous order allowing the film's release after the Rath Yatra festivities. The bench of Justices also opined that the film, especially in the animated format, was a form of creativity meant to engage children.

"If such kind of sensitivity continues and people continue to file petitions, then we will have to pass orders in respect of Hindu gods and goddesses that there should be no creativity. Ramayana on television will stop. No art in any form of god and goddess. There is creativity in the country," Justice Nagarathna said during the hearing. The government claimed that the certificate granted to the film was revisable under the relevant law and



pointed out that the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration and the state government had sought a review. "We are not opposed to the release. Let the government independently consider the issue under its

revisional powers," the advocate for the government argued. Additionally, Justice Mahadevan suggested that if any concerns remained, the producers could consider making corrections. The court earlier

permitted the all-India release of the film on or after July 28. The film which was based on a web series was already available on YouTube and had received clearance from the Central Board of Film Certification.

Prabhas Working 17 Hour Shifts For Spirit!



Around 40% of Spirit has been completed, with the team aiming to wrap up the remaining shoot in the next two to three months. Producer Pranay Reddy Vanga revealed that Prabhas is putting in immense effort, working 16 to 17 hour shifts when required. He also revealed that Sandeep Reddy Vanga does not use body doubles in his films.

Despite Taking Years, Stars Still Opt for Sequels!

Despite the mixed results for sequels, the trend of making films in two parts is growing rapidly in Telugu cinema. Interestingly, even as star heroes are taking years to complete a project, many filmmakers are still opting for the sequel format to tell larger stories. Jr NTR's highly anticipated Dragon is being made as a two-part film. The Prashanth Neel film has been mounted on a grand scale, with the makers believing that a single film may not be enough to tell the entire story, which has an international scale. On the other hand, Allu Arjun's Raaka is also said to be following a similar route. While an official confirmation is awaited, reports suggest that the makers are considering a two-part release strategy for the Atlee film. Now, as per the latest update, Ram Charan and Sukumar's upcoming film,



RC17, is also being designed as a two-part saga, raising expectations among fans and business circles. What makes this trend even more interesting is the release strategy. Reports suggest that at least two of the above-mentioned films could follow the Dhurandhar model, where both parts are released within a gap of just four to five months. This approach helps maintain audience excitement and avoids making fans wait for years between installments. The question now is whether audiences will continue to embrace this trend or start preferring standalone films once again.

Pragya Jaiswal Owns The Chilly Rainy Vibe in Shorts

It's been a quiet year on the film front for Pragya Jaiswal, with Tyson Naidu, co-starring Bellamkonda Sai Sreenivas and Nabha Natesh, remaining her only upcoming project. But away from the screen, her style game continues to shine bright. In her latest pictures, Pragya is spotted lounging in a chic egg chair, dressed in a breezy blue-and-white striped co-ord set layered with a matching oversized shirt. She rounds off the look with white strappy heels, delicate earrings, and an anklet, keeping her hair in soft tousled waves.

With a radiant smile and effortless charm, Pragya proves that even without a packed release slate this year, she knows exactly how to keep her fans hooked with pure style.



Disha Patani Drips In Liquid Gold Glam

Disha Patani continues to prove why she's one of the most sizzling stars in the industry, and her latest pictures are no exception. Serving pure glamour, she stuns in a shimmering gold sequined dress with a plunging halter neckline, striking sultry poses in a lavish, dimly lit room. These captivating stills are from her song "Kyun" from Welcome to the Jungle, where Disha brings undeniable oomph and screen presence to the frame. On the box office front, Welcome to the Jungle has wrapped up its theatrical run with a lifetime worldwide collection of ₹193 crore, making it a commercial success and landing as an average-to-hit earner. With her sizzling looks and steady work, Disha continues to keep fans hooked.

