



**Tijjani Reijnders says joining Manchester City was a "pretty easy choice"**

**Military airstrike on gem mining town kills at least 21 in Myanmar**

**Rajkumar Rao celebrates one year of 'Stree 2', makers drop 'Thama' update**



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### WEATHER

Sunrise	5:51 AM
Sunset	7:00 PM
Moonrise	10:47 PM
Moonset	1:02 PM
Today's Prediction	
Maximum	33°C
Minimum	28°C
Tomorrow's Prediction	
Maximum	33°C
Minimum	27°C

## 'Maybe I won't have to do it': Trump's big hint on secondary tariffs on India

**US has imposed tariffs totalling 50 per cent on India, including 25 per cent for purchases of Russian oil that will come into effect from August 27**

Washington: US President Donald Trump has indicated that the US may not impose secondary tariffs on countries continuing to procure Russia crude oil. There were apprehensions that additional secondary tariffs would have hit India in case the US decided to enforce them. "Well, he (Russian President Vladimir Putin) lost an oil client, so to speak, which is India, which was doing about 40 per cent of the oil. China, as you know, is doing a lot... And if I did what's called a secondary sanction, or a secondary tariff, it would be very devastating from their standpoint. If I have to do it, I'll do it. Maybe I won't have to do it," Trump said on Friday. The US President made the remarks in an interview with Fox News aboard Air Force One en route to Alaska for a high-stakes summit meeting with Putin. The meeting concluded without any agreement on ending the Russia-Ukraine war.



US President Donald Trump

On Wednesday, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent had said if "things don't go well" between Trump and Putin at the summit meeting, then secondary sanctions on India for purchasing Russian oil could go up. In an interview with Bloomberg, Bessent said, "I think everyone has been frustrated with

President Putin. We expected that he would come to the table in a more fulsome way. It looks like he may be ready to negotiate." "And we put secondary tariffs on the Indians for buying Russian oil. And I could see, if things don't go well, then sanctions or secondary tariffs could go up," he added. On whether sanctions can go up or loosen, Bessent had said, "Sanctions can go up, they can be loosened. They can have a definitive life. They can go on indefinitely." Trump imposed tariffs totalling 50 per cent on India, including 25 per cent for Delhi's purchases of Russian oil that will come into effect from August 27. Responding to the tariffs, the Ministry of External Affairs has said that the targeting of India is unjustified and unreasonable. "Like any major economy, India will take all necessary measures to safeguard its national interests and economic security," it said. Agency

## Mumbai celebrates Dahi Handi amid rains; 1 dead, 75 hurt



Mumbai: Dahi Handi was celebrated with fervour across the Mumbai metropolitan region on Saturday amid heavy rains as troupes of 'govindas' competed with each other to break curd-filled pots hung high above the ground, and political parties tried to use the festival to woo the youth ahead of civic elections. In a suburb near the ground from the first floor while tying Dahi Handi. As many as 32 govindas were hospitalised in Mumbai by evening due to injuries suffered during the formation of pyramids while others were discharged after treatment, civic officials said, adding that two including a nine-year-old boy were critical. Agency

## Death toll rises to seven in Delhi Dargah collapse, police register case

New Delhi: The death toll in the collapse of a structure at a dargah near the Humayun's Tomb in the Nizamuddin area here rose to seven on Saturday, with another man succumbing to his injuries during treatment, police said. They added that a case has been registered against unidentified people.



The incident took place at the Dargah Sharif Pate Shah around 3:30 pm on Friday. The dargah shares its boundary wall with the 16th-century garden-tomb commissioned by Mughal emperor Humayun's first wife, Bega Begum, in 1558. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) Hemant Tiwari said the deceased included four men and three women. Sources said five of the seven deceased have been identified as Swaroop Chand (79), a resident of Malkaganj, Moineddin (37), Anita Saini (58), a resident of Bhogal, Meena Arora (56) and her daughter, Monu Arora (25) -- both residents of Vasant Kunj Enclave. While five victims died during treatment at the AIIMS Trauma Centre, one each succumbed in the LNJP and Safdarjung hospitals, the officer added. A man who was taken to an injured condition after the incident succumbed to his injuries on Saturday. The five injured people have been identified as Mohammad Shameem, Aryan, Gudiya, Rafat Parveen and Rani (65), a Delhi Fire Services official said. The DCP said a case under sections 290 (negligent conduct with respect to pulling down, repairing or constructing buildings), 125 (acts that endanger human life or personal safety) and 106 (causing death by negligence) has been registered against unidentified people. He added that two rooms of the dargah -- one occupied by an imam and a rest room -- were in a dilapidated state and heavy rain led to the roof and a wall to collapse at a time when 15 people had taken shelter there. "Twelve people, most of whom were visitors, were rescued from under the debris. Nine of them were admitted to the AIIMS Trauma Centre, where five died. One man was admitted to the LNJP Hospital, while a woman was admitted to the RML Hospital," the DCP said. Agency

## Chinese FM Wang Yi to visit India for border talks on Monday

Beijing: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will pay a two-day visit to India beginning Monday to hold border talks with national security advisor Ajit Doval, the ministry of external affairs announced on Saturday. Wang's visit comes days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned trip to China to attend the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi

The Chinese foreign minister is visiting India primarily to hold the next round of Special Representatives' dialogue on the boundary question. Wang and Doval are the designated special representatives of the boundary talks. "At the invitation of national security advisor Ajit Doval, Member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit India on August 18 and 19," the MEA said in a statement. "During his visit, he will hold the 24th round of the Special Representatives' talks on the India-China boundary question with India's SR, NSA Doval," it added. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will also hold bilateral talks with his Chinese counterpart. Doval travelled to China in December last year and held the SR talks with Wang, weeks after Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping decided to revive various dialogue mechanisms between the two sides at a meeting in the Russian city of Kazan. Modi is expected to travel to China later this month to attend the SCO summit. According to the plan, the prime minister will embark on a visit to Japan around August 29 and after concluding the trip, will travel to the northern Chinese city of Tianjin for the summit to be held on August 31 and September 1. Modi's visit to China is being planned amid efforts by the two neighbouring countries to repair their bilateral ties, which came under severe strain following the deadly clashes between Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan valley in June 2020. **CONT'D ON PAGE-2**

## Earnestly wish friends in Ukraine peace: Modi to Zelenskyy

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday wished the people of Ukraine a future marked by peace and progress as he thanked its president Volodymyr Zelenskyy for his Independence Day wishes. Wishing India on its Independence Day, Zelenskyy on Friday said he hoped New Delhi would contribute to efforts aimed at ending



the war with Russia. "Modi said on X, 'Thank you President Zelenskyy for your warm greetings. I deeply value the joint commitment to forging even closer ties between India and Ukraine. We earnestly wish our friends in

Ukraine a future marked by peace, progress and prosperity." Responding to his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu's Independence Day message, Modi said, "My India-Israel friendship continue to flourish... may both countries further strengthen and deepen this relationship bringing peace, development as well as security to our people." Agency

## Chef with 'links' to Pak terror groups detained in Andhra

Hyderabad: A 42-year-old chef, Sheikh Kothwal, was taken into custody by police in Andhra Pradesh's Sri Satyasai district on Saturday for allegedly having links with Pakistan-based terrorist groups. The arrest was made in Dharmavaram after police grew suspicious of Mohammad's behaviour. According to officials,



he is believed to have been in contact with banned terrorist organisations, including Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM). "He (Mohammed) only consumed content and got influenced but didn't execute any act or perhaps didn't get a

chance. Training could have radicalised him," said U Narsingappa, the in-charge sub-divisional police officer of Dharmavaram. Police clarified that Mohammad is an Indian citizen and a native of Dharmavaram in Andhra Pradesh. His family has been living in the area for generations, ruling out any foreign connection or origin. Agency



# Delhi CM Rekha Gupta thanks PM Modi for construction of Urban Extension Road II

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva and local MP Yogender Chandolia, Gupta inspected the venue for the inauguration of the UER-II at Rohini Sector 37, from where the road will be inaugurated by the prime minister on Sunday.

**New Delhi**  
Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday for the construction of the Urban Extension Road (UER) II, saying it will contribute to the "Viksit Delhi" vision.

Accompanied by Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva and local MP Yogender Chandolia, Gupta inspected the venue for the inauguration of the UER-II at Rohini Sector 37, from where the road will be inaugurated by the prime minister on Sunday.

Delhi. It will improve the traffic flow, cut travel time drastically and uplift the quality of life for lakhs of people living in Delhi and NCR," she said.

The corridor will start at National Highway-44 (Alipur), traverse through Mundka, Bakkarwala, Najafgarh and Dwarka, and terminate at National Highway-48, near Mahipalpur.

Highlighting its utility, Gupta said one of the most significant advantages of the road is the reduction in travel time from the Singhu border to the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport. It will now take just 40 minutes to cover the distance, compared to almost two hours earlier.



"The pressure on Inner and Outer Ring Roads will be substantially reduced, while major junctions such as Mularba Chowk, Madhuban Chowk, Peeragarhi Chowk, Dhaura Kuan and NH-9 will no longer face

heavy congestion. This will be a huge relief for lakhs of daily commuters," she noted.

The UER-II will also act as a critical link connecting major highways, including NH-44 (Alipur), NH-9 (Bahadurgarh) and NH-48 (Mahipalpur). This improved connectivity will also

expand industrial and logistics opportunities, the chief minister was quoted as saying in a statement issued by the Delhi government.

The project will connect the industrial hubs of Sonapat and Bahadurgarh through dedicated link roads, giving a direct boost to industry and facilitating

contributing to lower emissions. The UER-II will directly aid in reducing air-pollution levels and improving the overall environment of the capital," she underlined.

The route will also integrate with the Delhi-Jaipur national highway, the KMP Expressway, the Gurugram-Rewari highway and the Gurugram-Sohna highway. Notably, the Gurugram-Sohna stretch is directly linked to the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, the statement said.

With this network, the UER-II will emerge as a backbone of high-speed connectivity, linking Delhi not just with the NCR but with the entire country, Gupta said.

Travelling to Chandigarh, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Jaipur and even Mumbai will become much faster and more convenient. It is truly a "transformative" project for the people of Delhi and beyond, the chief minister said.

## Woman 3 others held for killing daughter's husband

**Gurugram**  
Four people, including a woman, have been arrested in connection with the murder of a 25-year-old man, Gurugram police said on Saturday.

The victim, Sameer, was allegedly killed for marrying the woman's daughter, Sunaina Kumari (21), after eloping with her in December 2023, they said.

His body was found in the Aravalli hills near Sohna town in Gurugram district in July.

Police said they both hailed from Katghara Shankar village in Uttar Pradesh's Mau district and lived in Faridabad's Balalgarh area.

The accused have been identified as Mahesh Kumar (35) of Nuh district; Ramsulan alias Vicky (38) and Leela Devi (Kumari's mother) from Mau; and Alim Khan (29) from Rajasthan's Tijara district.

Police said one more accused, Sunaina's brother Sonu, remains absconding.

They said Sunaina's mother and brother held a grudge against Sameer for marrying Kumari. Sonu took help of his associates to commit the crime.

According to police, Mahesh and Alim abducted Sameer on July 4 when he was coming out of a factory in Sector 69, IMT Faridabad, and assaulted him.

They then took him to the Aravalli hills and murdered him after tying his hands and blindfolding him, police said.

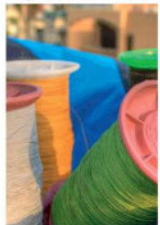
"We are trying to nab Sonu, who is still on large. We are questioning the accused after taking them on four days of police remand," said Sohna ACP Jitender Kumar.

Mahesh was arrested in Sohna on Wednesday, while the other three accused were arrested in Bhiwadi in Rajasthan on Tuesday.

According to an official, the crime was a blind murder case as there were no witnesses and very limited evidence.

The matter came to light on July 6 when a security guard of Ansal Farm House informed the police about seeing a dead body with its throat slit and hands tied behind with a knife lying on its side.

## Kite string slits bike rider's throat near Tughlakabad Metro



**New Delhi**  
A 30-year-old bike rider battles for his life after his throat was slit by a kite string Saturday while he was traversing a flyover near Tughlakabad Metro Station in southeast Delhi's Badarpur area, police said.

The incident was reported around 4.40 pm at Badarpur Police Station, they said.

The string appears to be an Indian string, but FSL (Forensic Science Laboratory) reports will confirm if it is that or Chinese Manjha, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) Hemant Tiwari said.

The victim was identified as Rajneesh, a native of Haridwar district in Uttar Pradesh, who is currently living in Akhileshpur village. He was lying in a pool of blood.

"There was significant bleeding from the neck region of the victim. He was immediately shifted to AIIMS Trauma Centre, where his condition is stated to be critical," an officer said.

Chinese manjha is prohibited under Delhi government notifications for posing a severe threat to human life, birds and the environment.

## LSE graduate 2 more held in Delhi for extortion attempt from Thailand

**New Delhi**  
Three men, including a London School of Economics graduate, were arrested for allegedly attempting to extort money from a Delhi man to repay debts through a cyber fraud plot hatched in Thailand, an officer said on Saturday.

Suniti, 42, Prince, 35, and Nitish, 21, allegedly threatened a city-based businessman by impersonating a gangster and demanding payment in cryptocurrency, he said.

Nitish holds a master's degree from the London School of Economics, while the others have business and local backgrounds, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Nidhin Valsan said.

Suniti, 42, Prince, 35, and Nitish, 21, allegedly threatened a city-based businessman by impersonating a gangster and demanding payment in cryptocurrency, he said.

Nitish holds a master's degree from the London School of Economics, while the others have business and local backgrounds, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Nidhin Valsan said.

conspired to extort money by using the name of a dreaded gangster.

As part of the plan, they travelled to Thailand, procured an international SIM card, and made calls from an online messaging platform from there, he said.

The complainant approached the Desh Bandhu Gupta Road Police Station earlier this week, alleging that he received an international WhatsApp call from an unknown number.

The caller, identifying himself as a gangster, allegedly threatened to kill the man's children if he did not transfer cryptocurrency, DCP said.

A case under Section 308(4) (extortion) of the BNS was registered, and police launched an investigation.

Investigation led to the discovery that the call and the QR code originated from Thailand, Valsan said.

Police took help from the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Ministry of Home Affairs, and traced earlier cryptocurrency transactions that helped them narrow down the suspects.

"Once the suspects landed in India from Thailand, they were apprehended," the officer said.

Suniti is a BCom graduate and jewellery trader from West Punjab Bagh, while Prince is a class 9 dropout from Roshanara Road. Nitish, police said, is from Noida and is an LSE post-graduate.

Police said Suniti knew the target personally and had plotted the crime with the others to repay debts.

## Noida Family held hostage in taxi as cabbie attempts to outrun cops accused held

**Noida**  
A cab driver has been arrested after he virtually held a family "hostage" during their ride as Noida Police chased the speeding car for deliberately jumping barricades, officials said on Saturday.

PCR sirens blaring in the background, a four-year-old frightened girl crying and her parents pleading the driver to stop the vehicle - showed a video of the nerve-racking incident recorded by the family.

Noida Phase 3 Police said the accused has been arrested and two Aadhaar cards were found from his possession - one in the name of 'Nasim' and another 'Sonu'.

On Thursday at around 1.30 pm, Sanjay Mohan booked a cab for Delhi's Connaught Place from his home in Greater Noida.



Mohan, his wife and their 4-year-old daughter sat in the cab and started their ride. However, at Parthala bridge in Noida, police signalled the driver to stop but he sped off, jumping the barricades, the police said.

Stunned by the driver's sudden move, the couple requested him to stop the car and drop them off. However, he ignored and began driving rashly for several kilometres

to escape the PCR van chasing him, they said.

The couple kept pleading and when the driver managed to outrun the police team, he stopped the vehicle for barely a few seconds at TP Nagar. As soon as the family got down, he fled, they said.

The entire incident was recorded by the family. It surfaced on social media on Friday, prompting officials to identify and nab the accused, the police said.

Central Noida DCP Shakti Mohan Awasthy said, "A viral video of rash driving of a cab driver went viral on August 14. Police registered a case against him at Phase 3 Police Station and later the driver identified as Nasim was arrested from Sahara court."

"The Wagon R has been seized and a challan of Rs 29,500 issued," he said.

According to Mohan, his wife suffered minor injuries in her hand. A case has been registered against the accused under BNS sections 137 (2) (kidnapping), 127 (2) (wrongful confinement), 281 (rash driving), 319 (cheating by personation, 318 (4) (cheating), 336 (2) (forgery), 338 (forgery of valuable security) and others at Phase 3 Police Station, they said.

## Two killed as dumper truck hits car on Tauru-Sohna road in Gurugram

**Gurugram**  
Two men were killed after a speeding dumper truck hit their Swift Dzire car on the Tauru-Sohna road in the wee hours of Saturday, police said.

The driver of the dumper fled from the spot with his vehicle, police said, adding that an FIR has been registered at the Sadar Tauru police station.

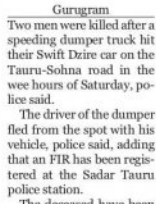
The deceased have been identified as Rahul (30) and his friend Ajay (27), both residents of Tauru.

The duo was returning to Tauru by car after visiting the Kalkaji Temple in Delhi when the accident took place around 3 am on Saturday. Both died on the spot, while the car was also badly damaged, police said.

A few locals claimed the dumper was moving recklessly at a very high speed.

While Ajay was a father of two daughters, Rahul's wife is expecting a child. Ajay used to work in a private jewellery shop in Bhiwadi, while Rahul had his own business, a relative of one of the deceased said.

"An FIR has been registered against the unknown dumper driver. We have handed over the bodies to the kin after postmortem. The accused will be arrested soon," Tauru SHO Jitender Yadav said.



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"An FIR has been registered against the unknown dumper driver. We have handed over the bodies to the kin after postmortem. The accused will be arrested soon," Tauru SHO Jitender Yadav said.

The celebration brought together women from diverse walks of life, including active members of Bharat Vikas Parishad, who participated with enthusiasm. The occasion featured patriotic songs, stirring speeches, and cultural performances that highlighted the spirit of freedom and collective responsibility.

Addressing the gathering, Smt. Usha Kiran ji spoke about the true meaning of independence, recalling the sacrifices made by the nation's forefathers. She emphasized that the responsibility of shaping the coun-

## Women in Vivek Vihar Celebrate 79th Independence Day, Call for National Unity

**TSN/New Delhi**  
The Mahila Pragatishesh Association (MPA), in collaboration with Bharat Vikas Parishad and Vivek Vihar Residents' Welfare Association, organized an all-women Independence Day celebration in Vivek Vihar, East Delhi. The event marked the 79th Independence Day of the country and resonated with the themes of national unity and women's empowerment.

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Addressing the gathering, Smt. Usha Kiran ji spoke about the true meaning of independence, recalling the sacrifices made by the nation's forefathers. She emphasized that the responsibility of shaping the coun-



try's future lies with every citizen and urged women to contribute actively to the nation's development.

Adding to the fervor of the celebration, Geeta Grover ji recited a patriotic poem dedicated to the martyrs who laid down their lives for the nation's freedom. Her powerful recitation evoked deep emotions among the audience and served as a reminder of the nation's journey towards independence.

The event concluded with a strong message of unity and progress, with participants reaffirming their commitment to building a stronger and more inclusive India.

## Police must become self-reliant embrace technology and win public trust: Delhi Police commissioner

**New Delhi**  
Delhi Police Commissioner S B K Singh has outlined three key focus areas - self-reliance, use of technology, and promotion of healthy competition for the force.

Drawing inspiration from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address at the Red Fort, the commissioner on Friday also stressed on the need to bridge the trust gap with the public.

"Despite working hard, somewhere we have not been able to win the trust of the people in the way we should have. Every police-



At the ceremonial function held at PHQ lawns on Jai Singh Road, Singh congratulated officers, personnel and their families, while lauding the force for ensuring incident-free security arrangements during Independence Day celebrations.

In his address, the police chief underlined three focus areas - "self-reliance" (self-reliance), and promotion of healthy competition -- which he said should be pursued in "mission mode" across all units of the force.

of trauma centres based on urgent public need in the high-density and underserved regions of Delhi, it said.

"It is further submitted that while the original direction of this court referred to the construction of a trauma centre at a suitable location in Dwarka, at the time there existed no GNCTD hospital in Dwarka where such a trauma centre could be established.

"However, the Indira Gandhi Hospital, located in Sector 9, Dwarka, has since been constructed and became functional on May 10, 2021.

"The hospital has a total bed capacity of 1,241, including 330 ICU beds, and is fully operational, benefiting the residents of Dwarka and surrounding areas," the affidavit said.

The Delhi government submitted that it has gone beyond the original directions by establishing trauma centres at three different locations to maximise public benefit.

AVUT office-bearer Neelem Krishnamoorthy, who lost her two children in the 1997 tragedy in which 59 people were killed, had ear-

## Delhi Hospitals benefit from Rs 60 Crore Uphaar fund

**New Delhi**  
The Delhi government has informed the Supreme Court that the Rs 60 crore paid by the Ansa brothers for constructing a trauma centre in memory of the 1997 Uphaar fire tragedy victims has been utilised at three government hospitals.

According to an affidavit filed in the apex court, the three hospitals are Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, Mangolpuri, Satyawadi Raja Harish Chander Hospital, Narela, and Siraspur Hospital.

These hospitals were selected for the establishment

of trauma centres based on urgent public need in the high-density and underserved regions of Delhi, it said.

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AVUT office-bearer Neelem Krishnamoorthy, who lost her two children in the 1997 tragedy in which 59 people were killed, had ear-

lier said, "It is outrageous to hear the Delhi government claim in the Supreme Court that the Rs 60 crore has already been utilised despite the court's categorical direction that these funds were to be used solely for building a trauma centre in memory of the Uphaar victims at a suitable site in Dwarka."

On May 7, the top court issued a notice to the Delhi government, seeking its response on an application filed by the Association of Victims of Uphaar Tragedy (AVUT).

AVUT's plea said, "While

about 10 years have elapsed since the stipulated fine amount was deposited (by the Ansa brothers) with the office of the chief secretary, government of NCT of Delhi, on November 9, 2015, the trauma centre envisaged in this court's directions remain a nonstarter, with no discernible steps having been taken towards its construction."

On September 22, 2015, the top court directed that the trauma centre was required to be completed within two years in memory of the fire victims in the Dwarka area.

# Bloodshed and Water Cannot Run Together



By Dr. Anil Singh

By Dr. Anil Singh, Editor, STAR Views & Editorial Advisor Top Story; Formerly Executive Editor, Aaj Tak, ABP News & STAR News; Author of the book "Military and Media" (2007), a significant work on warfare released by then Defence Minister Mr. Pranab Mukherjee.

**F**rom the ramparts of the Red Fort today, the Prime Minister transformed a simple phrase into a doctrine: "Bloodshed and water cannot run together." It was not a poetic line for the occasion but a strategic signal to the nation and the world. The message was unambiguous—terrorism, cross-border violence, and proxy war will now invite consequences that go beyond diplomatic protests. India will not allow the lifelines of cooperation to continue while the arteries of peace are severed by terror.

The speech made it clear that national security is no longer a reactive exercise: it is an active covenant between the state and its people. The Prime Minister placed defence at the core of governance, connecting the security of borders to the dignity of citizens. He reminded the country that the Pahalgam attack was met not with hesitation but with decisive action—Operation Sindoor—proving that those who sponsor terror will pay a price they cannot predict. This is India's "new normal": act swiftly, strike precisely, and choose the timing.

But the real pivot in his address was the announcement of Mission Sudarshan Chakra—a nationwide, indigenous defence shield named after the celestial weapon of Lord Krishna. In the Mahabharata, Krishna used the Sudarshan Chakra sparingly, only when Dharma itself was under mortal threat. The Prime Minister's choice of this symbol was deliberate, binding India's modern defence doctrine to an ancient ethic: strength with restraint. This shield, he said, will not only neutralise attacks but also strike back when provoked—an architecture of both defence and deterrence.

If built as promised, Mission Sudarshan Chakra will protect cities, critical infrastructure, and public spaces across the country within the next decade. Its strength will lie in layers—radar networks, missile interceptors, drone defences, and cyber-secure command systems—integrated into a single, seamless shield. Every node will be made in India. Every circuit, every chip, every line of code will belong to the Republic, ensuring that no foreign hand can control the nation's safety. This is Atmanirbhav Bharat in its purest strategic form.

The speech also addressed the darker front: infiltration and demographic manipulation. The Prime Minister warned that illegal infiltration is not just a law-and-order issue but a long-term security threat. Borders, registries, and enforcement must be water-



tight if deterrence is to be credible. Just as a missile can cripple a city, unchecked infiltration can weaken the state from within.

The line "blood and water cannot run together" also spoke directly to the reality of regional geopolitics. Water is both a symbol and a tool of cooperation.

But no nation can be expected to sustain such cooperation while enduring the bloodletting of terrorism. This is not vengeance—it is a statement of moral and strategic logic: peace and aggression cannot coexist.

By invoking Lord Krishna, the Prime Minister reached beyond policy into the civilisational psyche.

The Sudarshan Chakra is not a weapon of constant use; it is one of last resort. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says:

"Yada yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati Bhārata, abhyutthanam adharmasya tadatmanam srijamyaham."

Whenever Dharma declines and Adharma rises, I manifest to set it right.

This is the moral compass of the doctrine. Force is justified not for domination, but for restoring order and protecting the innocent. That is why the Sudarshan Chakra is the perfect metaphor—used rarely, used righteously, used to end disorder, not perpetuate it.

The path forward must be disciplined and clear. First, the Sudarshan Chakra mission must define what it will protect, in what order, and with what timelines. Second, it must rely entirely on sovereign supply chains—no imported seeker heads, no foreign encryption, no borrowed satellite feeds. Third, it must fuse military, police, and civilian sensors into a single defence grid, hardened against cyber-attack. Fourth, it must codify clear rules of engagement to avoid hesitation in crisis. And finally, it must be anchored in public trust—through transparency, drills, and visible progress year after year.

Externally, deterrence must be communicated with clarity. Terror attacks on civilians will invite consequences that adversaries can neither predict nor control. Nuclear threats will not paralyse India's decision-making. Water diplomacy will remain conditional on the cessation of terror. Internally, the fight against infiltration must be humane but uncompromising, rooted in law but unyielding in execution.

The Prime Minister's words today were a pledge—that India will not be a passive target, but will defend its people with the patience of Dharma and the precision of modern force. Bloodshed and water cannot run together. But deterrence and development can, and must, flow side by side. If the vision of Mission Sudarshan Chakra is realised in steel, code, and discipline, India will step into its century as a nation protected by its own shield, guided by its own conscience, and armed with a Chakra that rarely needs to fly.

# We, the people of India, do solemnly, aver ...

**3**0 years ago, seated in an ambassador car, traversing over 600 km, I had set out to cover the massive drought of Kalahandi (Orissa) - the rocky, waterless wasteland, predominantly populated by numerous Adivasi tribes. The sweltering June heat, piercing sun rays of the ever-burning sun, open car windows with wet towels hanging over a spring like iron cord, stretching from the driver's window to the rear, coupled with a perpetual urge to drink gallons of water - was a distinct beginning of my reportage of mass hunger, deprivation and pathetic plight of human life. In the ensuing 13-hour journey, there was no packaged water ('Bisleri' being the only option), no food to eat - sans the grey watery potato curry with half-boiled rice and no tea/cigarette stalls to satiate the loathsome drive. I could not find a single borewell or a handpump, in the entire journey after leaving Bhubaneswar, which pumped water - the only water source for hundreds of Adivasi villagers were the dried streams, where pots had to precisely place so as to accumulate two - three liters of brackish-brown-greyish liquid, called water, 26 years ago, while covering the first televised Indo-Pak war, upon reaching Kargil in the dead of the night, the only option was a plate of badly overcooked Maggie, again made in brackish grey water, where the yellow texture of a regular Maggie appeared to a chard - greyish - brown concoction. Despite a deluge of national and international media personnel, the lone Kargil Hotel, provided for one bucket of water per day for all your daily needs, washing - bathing/wiping the body with wet towel - flushing. Old Monk rum was a plenty - happily donated by Armed forces, canned, cigarettes & bidi was readily available, mutton was a rarity and roti - a luxury.

While the nation celebrates its 79th Independence Day, why am I reminded of the days of depravity? Because come what may, more than 90% of India, shall never witness the calamity of drought, infectious disease wiping out hundreds of hapless innocents, the obscurity of food, the constant hammering of sub-human / non-human existence and the fate of a man 'dead' - the day a child is 'born'. I am reminded of a nation, struggling to stand on its feet - a nation, where depravity, scarcity, widespread poverty, death because of hunger, perversion of human life - was, but, given. A child born in India after 2005, say a 20-year-old young Indian, can never relate to the India - I, tried to portray, above. No doubt, we have progressed. We have developed into a nation of enterprising young Indians who lay the foundations of a developed nation every day, while they toil to ascertain their individual future and, in the process, define the destiny of mighty Indian state. Ushered from the ramparts of Red Fort, the 79th Independence Day marks the clarion call of a developed, just, equitable and progressive, India. A definitive march towards the stated objective of a 'developed' India over the next 21 years. Proclaimed as the Amrit Kaal, 9 years ago, when India celebrated its 70th Independence Day, the year 2047 is peg to reinforce India as the pinnacle of cumulative progress and establishment of Indian identity as the largest and most functional democracy in the world.

Lofty may be, but not unrealistic. With a growth rate of over 6% per annum as per international estimates, in the world combined with all pervasive regression and stilted growth, India is the emerging beacon of progress & development of over 1.5 billion people. A country with the largest number of young work-



By Ajay Kumar

Journalist & Commentator



force, India does have all the aces up its sleeves, at least for the next four decades.

**Yet, the cracks in the mirror are beginning to surface.**

The neat story of remarkable Indian growth and world dominance (notion of Vishwa Guru) is dismantling, particularly out of our own undoing. The pride, that we are a thriving democracy of 1.5 billion with over 1 billion active voters, is beginning to fade into bureaucratic obscurity. The gulf between the rich and average Indian, is so wide, that it seems unbridgeable, at the very least. Social ostracization, mass criminality, authoritarian display of political-economic-social-behavioral supremacy coupled with the notion of 'might is right', is deeply eroding the notion of just & equitable India. 'Gandhi's India' is rapidly being usurped by 'Trump's America'. The British legacy of iron-clad bureaucracy has tightened its vice-like grip over democratic India. Facilitated by a dependent, politically plus morally denuded political class, the defunct Babu Class has stymied the representatives of Indian electorate into mere stooges. Extra-constitutional structures like the Planning commission/ Niti Ayog, all-encompassing & overtly

dominant Prime Minister's office / Chief Minister's office, have replaced the politician driven parliamentary form of governance. From a quasi-federal form of governance of the 80s, we are markedly closer to a unitary form of governance. Populism has replaced affirmative action. Subsidy driven government largesse has created a new class of beneficiary, akin to the erstwhile notion of mai-baap culture during princely dominion. Accused criminals, accumulatively form more than a third of all elected members of the parliament or the assemblies. More than 4.5 crore court cases cry for judicial intervention as these matters await trail in varied Indian courts. The Supreme Court becomes the ultimate decision-making authority, deciding matters of faith to granting bail to pick-pockets, languishing in jails. Where a High Court judge accused of demonstrative financial corruption continues to enjoy the perks of a HC judge while another HC judge accused of moral indiscretion is not even touched upon due to political opportunism. For the first time in Indian history, the Vice-President of the country resigns citing ill-health, even while he was actively conducting the session of the Rajya Sabha - and no one questions the bizarre occurrence. The Election Commission of India changes the rule of the game, hides behind veil of se-

crecy and denies transparent information sharing on documented data. All this, while the ruling party and the opposition parties accuse the Election Commission of fudging the voters list in several parliamentary constituencies. And in the interim, the EC merrily posting EC fact check updates on social media platforms.

Is, post truth - narrative driven democracy, bombarded by an anarchist form of guerrilla inspired opportunist politics, dredging the foundation of Indian polity? Has India been realistically "Trumped" over the past few years? The answer lies within the prism through which, politics and society of the 21st century India, is looked through. Frankly, India is a growth story with severely dented political activism (read opportunism).

For the first time after 1971, the entire nation is being woken to the spectre of mass illegal Bangladeshi migration, specially by Muslims. The politics of West Bengal, spilled over the entire country in terms of sudden police action against Bangla speaking Muslims, has given rise to 'Bengali Ashmita' and language war at the behest of Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee. The rampage wrecked upon common men by over 4.5 crore Kwararis walking on national highways between Haridwar - Delhi, towns of Uttar Pradesh & Haryana, under state protection, is active fodder to the minds advocating 'Hindu Rashtra'. The municipal authorities ban on consumption of meat/meat products on 15th Aug (Independence Day) in Maharashtra is, but a draconian attempt at ram-rolling an authoritarian mindset. The social boycott of non-vegetarianism during Navratras in north India, is forced bigotry on Oriya - Bengali - Assamese populace, who relish the festivities with mouth smacking non-veg delicacies during Durga puja. Horror killing of a daughter who cleared medical exams in progressive Gujarat is another such example of adopted patriarchy from northern states of Haryana or Uttar Pradesh. The never-ending subsidy by governments, providing food/cereals/cooking gas/women centric cash payment/cash to farmers/cash to unemployed - are but, political strokes, gone completely, astray. The decision to enforce caste survey, entrenching the generations old caste hierarchy leading to the debunking of merit in the face of caste-based reservation (60% reservation already enforced, with a demand for 80-90% reservation) is an anti-thesis of Ambedkarite activism. The raging debate over manipulated voters list, casting aspersions on Election Commission's neutrality, leading to calls of boycotting Bihar elections by political parties is not an aberration, either. These are the flaws of competitive opportunistic political mis-adventurism.

Unless, 'we the people of India' aver and decide to adopt the narrative of 'sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic - securing - justice, liberty, equality and fraternity' to its people, we as a nation shall not be able to develop and metamorph into a developed nation of tomorrow. Do I believe in this dream of developed and equitable India - yes, I do. From in between the India of my ambassador ride to Kalahandi or reportage on foot from the depth of Mushkoh valley of Kashmir in 1999, to becoming the world's biggest consumer market which no international player can ignore, my India exhibits a promise, a promise of a golden tomorrow.

# CM Yogi announces Rs 30,000 crore master plan for Braj region on Janmashtami

■ Double-engine government committed to purity and uninterrupted flow of the Yamuna: CM Yogi

Lucknow  
On Lord Shri Krishna's 5252nd birth anniversary, Chief Minister M Yogi Adityanath visited Mathura on Saturday, where he inaugurated 118 projects worth ₹6.46 crore and unveiled a ₹30,000 crore master plan for the holistic development of the Braj region.

Addressing the gathering, CM Yogi said that Mathura reflects 5,000 years of ancient history and devotion. On Shri Krishna Janmashtami, devotees from across India and the world have converged here, he noted, adding that Lord Krishna resides in every particle of Mathura's sacred soil — a devotion unparalleled anywhere else. "How countless times do you visit this holy land," he said.

CM Yogi said he has had the privilege of joining celebrations like Rangotsav and Janmashtami in Mathura for several years. Inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, he emphasized India's role as a confluence of spirituality and modern development. He added that the world is eager to study India's spiritual her-



itage, which, in times of global crises, offers the path to lasting peace and harmony.

The Chief Minister announced a new master plan of Rs 30,000 crore for the holistic development of the Braj region. He said this plan will connect pilgrimage sites like Mathura, Vrindavan, Barsana, and Gokul with the memories of Dwarapal Yogi. He said, "Our government is committed to respecting the sentiments of revered saints and enriching the Braj region. We are making possible the works which

were once considered impossible."

Citing the example of Kashi Vishwanath Dham and the grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya, he said that ten years ago, even imagining them seemed impossible, but today they have become a reality. In Kashi, where earlier not even 50 devotees could visit together, now 50,000 devotees can have darshan at once. In Ayodhya, the grand Ram Temple is reviving the memories of Treta Yuga. Similarly, a grand corridor has also been com-

pleted at Vindhayavasi Dham.

The Chief Minister, citing the purity and consistent flow of the Ganga, said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Ganga has today become worthy for bathing and rituals. He said, "In the 2025 Prayagraj Mahakumbh, 67 crore devotees took the holy dip. Similarly, the double-engine government is working with full honesty for the uninterrupted flow and purity of Yamuna."

He also mentioned the ropeway facility in Barsana, calling it a great relief for the elderly. He said, "This is the benefit of development, that we are continuously working for the convenience and safety of devotees".

Remembering the purpose of Lord Shri Krishna's incarnation, the Chief Minister said he took birth to safeguard the virtuous and to destroy evil. He turned the battlefield into a land of Dharma. Yogi said, "The inspiration of Shri Krishna's selfless actions gives us strength. As long as this inspiration remains among us, no one can harm us."

The Chief Minister noted that India has completed 78 years of independence and highlighted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of new resolutions for the centenary in 2047. Referring to the recent 24-hour discussion in the UP Assembly, he said society and government must work together to make Uttar Pradesh prosperous and developed by 2047.

CM Yogi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of 118 development projects worth Rs 646 crore for Mathura-Vrindavan. These included the inauguration

of 80 projects worth about Rs 273 crore, and the foundation laying of 38 projects worth Rs 373 crores.

These projects include beautification of Parikrama paths, entrance gates, restoration of lands facilities for devotees, connectivity, water conservation, and environmental protection. He described the bhajans, kirtans, and Shri Krishna lilas organized in the Panchjanya Auditorium as part of the devotional atmosphere.

The Chief Minister praised the efforts of public representatives and saints, whose cooperation made the approval of development proposals for the Braj region possible. He said that government and society together are committed to preserving and enriching India's spiritual and cultural heritage.

On this occasion, the Chief Minister lovingly lifted children dressed as Krishna in his arms, fed them kheer with his own hands, and performed their annaprasnam. He also applied tilak on their foreheads, gifted them pearl garlands, and toys as gifts. The Chief Minister's love brought smiles and happiness all around.

## Farmers in Bulandshahr Turning to Exotic Fruits, Boosting Incomes



Avnish Tyagi, Bulandshahr

Farmers in Bulandshahr district of Uttar Pradesh are reshaping agriculture by moving away from traditional crops and adopting innovative techniques inspired by international practices. Known for its production of milk, wheat, sugarcane, and mangoes, the district is now seeing a surge in the cultivation of exotic and multi-colored fruits.

One of the most significant changes has been the large-scale production of dragon fruit. Alongside this, farmers have begun growing strawberries, multi-colored watermelon, muskmelon, and kaki fruit, with methods influenced by countries such as Brazil and Taiwan. In the Syana fruit belt, already famous for mango production, villages including Isnapur, Kisoula, Sheikhpur, Gadwa, and Barhana are emerging as hubs for these new crops.

Farmers say dragon fruit is proving particularly profitable. Unlike other crops, it requires less investment and offers higher returns. Another advantage is that traders from Delhi and NCR markets now travel directly to farms to purchase the fruit, eliminating middlemen and ensuring farmers earn better margins. Pushpendra Singh, Khan Chand Lodi, and Sharda Devi from Isnapur, along with Prince Tyagi from Kisoula, confirmed that direct selling to traders has strengthened their profits.

Kedarnath Tyagi, one of Bulandshahr's largest mango producers and a

Kedarnath Tyagi, one of Bulandshahr's largest mango producers and a progressive farmer, noted that dragon fruit cultivation is more rewarding compared to traditional crops. "It requires lower input but brings higher returns, which makes it a better choice for farmers," he said.

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District Horticulture Officer Dinesh Kumar highlighted that the Syana fruit belt is diversifying beyond mangoes, with farmers now engaged in cultivating dragon fruit, strawberries, litchi, papaya, and other fruits. He added that the government continues to roll out schemes to support those working in horticulture.

Padma Shri awardee Bharat Bhushan Tyagi, known for his contribution to organic farming, said adopting unique and innovative farming practices is key to ensuring financial prosperity for farmers. With confidence, experimentation, and growing demand in urban markets, Bulandshahr's farmers are steadily proving that innovation in agriculture can lead to both sustainability and prosperity.

## Himachal CM unfurls Tricolour at Sarkaghat, announces major relief and development projects

Rajan Panchhi  
Mandi

The 79th Independence Day was celebrated across Himachal Pradesh with enthusiasm and patriotic fervour, with functions held at the state, district and subdivision levels. The state-level event took place at Sarkaghat in Mandi district, where Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu unfurled the National Flag, inspected the parade, and took the salute from contingents of Police, Home Guards, NCC, ITBP, Uttarakhand Police, the 3rd Indian Reserve Battalion Pandoh, District Mandi Police, Traffic Police, Ex-Servicemen League and the Home Guard Band. The parade, commanded by Deputy Superintendent of Police Umeshwar Rana, was held amid heavy rains.

In his address, the Chief Minister expressed concern over the increasing impact of climate change on the state, noting that frequent natural disasters have caused extensive losses to life and property. Referring to the 2023 disaster that resulted in damages worth Rs. 10,000 crore, he said Himachal Pradesh had received only Rs. 1,500 crore from the Centre, that too after two years. He added that this year's calamities, particularly in Mandi district, had once again left behind a trail of devastation, while no financial assistance had been provided by the Centre so far. The state government, he said, had already disbursed Rs. 360.42 crore from its own resources to support affected families.

Announcing additional measures, Sukhu said the government would release Rs. 100 crore for disaster relief and launch a Rs. 3,000 crore project focused on disaster mitigation and livelihood protection. Paying tribute to the 222 people who lost their lives in this year's disasters, along with eight victims of the Maseran bus accident in Sarkaghat, he assured that the government stood firmly with every affected family. He highlighted that under the Special Relief Package, compensa-

tion for fully damaged houses had been raised from Rs. 1.3 lakh to Rs. 7 lakh, while partially damaged houses would now receive Rs. one lakh. Houses rendered uninhabitable would also be treated as fully damaged for compensation purposes.

The Chief Minister also outlined the government's efforts to expand employment opportunities. Over the past two and a half years, 23,191 youth had been given government jobs, including 5,452 teaching posts. Recruitment in the coming days will include 9,535 additional teaching positions, over 1,300 police personnel, 600 patwaris, 600 JBTs, 200 doctors, and 300 panchayat secretaries. In the private sector, he said, 51,425 youths had already secured employment.

Retaining the government's commitment to make Himachal Pradesh the country's first Green Energy State, Sukhu announced subsidies for solar projects, along with Rs. 61 crore for the scheme. He also declared that 2,000 permits for e-three-wheelers would be issued to unemployed youth.

Among the key development announcements was the decision to shift the Atal Medical and Research University from Nerchowk to Sarkaghat. The Chief Minister further announced the construction of a new bus stand at Sarkaghat, an increase in bed capacity at the Civil Hospital from 100 to 150, and land allocation for parking near Shiv Mandir Sarkaghat.

Sukhu also spoke about the state's push for border tourism and his request to the Centre to open the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra route through Shipki La. He congratulated Flight Lieutenant Ashwini Thakur of Jubbal, Shimla, on being awarded the Vir Chakra for his role in Operation Sindoor, noting that his bravery had brought pride to the state. Remembering the sacrifices of freedom fighters and soldiers, he recalled that the country's first Param Vir Chakra was awarded to Himachal's Major Somnath Sharma.

## Congress leader Jalaluddin denied bail in conversion, exploitation case

Akash Jain/  
Daudayal Singh

The District Court in Agra has rejected the bail plea of Jalaluddin, Congress vice-president, who is facing charges of sexual exploitation and pressuring a woman for religious conversion. District Judge Sanjay Kumar Malik dismissed his application on Friday.

The case was registered at Shahganj police station on the basis of a complaint filed by a woman. She alleged that in 2019, following a dispute with her brothers, she met Jalaluddin at the civil court, where he introduced himself as a lawyer and offered to help. According to her statement, he began visiting her and in September that year, took



her to the old Congress office near the collectorate on the pretext of arranging medicine and raped her. She claimed he threatened to defame her and subsequently exploited her multiple times.

The woman further alleged that Jalaluddin, who is already married, began pressuring her to convert religion and marry him. She

said her own husband is differently abled and that out of fear, she moved with him to Rajkot, Gujarat, in March. Despite this, she claimed Jalaluddin continued to threaten her and even filed a false case against her at Taiganj police station on the directions of a court.

In a related case, the bail pleas of three other men accused in a student molesta-

tion and illegal religious conversion case were also rejected. Chief Judicial Magistrate dismissed the applications of Abu Jaleeb and Mohammad Ali alias Piyush, both among 14 people arrested in connection with a conversion racket exposed in March.

On March 24, two sisters from the Sadar area went missing and were later rescued from Kolkata, where police found them in the custody of the gang. Investigations revealed they had been lured by a network involved in religious conversions. Earlier, bail petitions of Abdul Rahman and seven others had already been rejected. With the latest order, bail applications of three more accused have also been dismissed.

## Echo of Captain Shubham Gupta in the Tiranga Yatra

Akash Jain/  
Daudayal Singh

On the morning of Independence Day, the Tiranga Foundation, with support from Bharat Vikas Parishad Braj Prant, organized the seventh grand Tiranga Yatra in Agra. The procession began from Amar Hotel Tirahne on Fatehabad Road and was flagged off by Union Minister of State S. P. Singh Baghel. Cabinet Minister Yogendra Upadhyay, District Panchayat President Manju Bhadouria, MLA Purneshwar Khandehwal, Dr. G. S. Dharmesh, MLC Vijay Shivhare, footwear exporter Purnan Dawar, and BJP leader Pramod Gupta were among those who paid tribute to the martyrs.

Founder Bhola Pandit said the yatra featured the image of Bharat Mata and saw the participation of thousands of two-wheelers and four-wheelers carrying the national flag. Hundreds of citizens joined in along the way, raising patriotic slogans. The main attractions included a tableau dedicated to martyred Captain Shubham Gupta of Jwar and a 121-foot-long tricolor flag. Throughout the route, chants of "Captain Shubham Gupta Amar Rahe" filled the air.

According to patron Advocate Basant Gupta, the procession passed through Amar Hotel, Taj View Tirahne, Hotel Mughal, Captain Shubham Gupta Metro Station, Bassi Police Outpost, Sefie Point, Taura, Hotel JP, Kaladheria, KNCC, and culminated at the Shaheed Captain Shubham Gupta Memorial in Kuanakhedha on Fatehabad Road.

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## Director of RGIPT Prof. Harish Hirani urges students to contribute towards nation building on I-Day

TSN/Amethi

The Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Petroleum Technology (RGIPT), Amethi, marked the 78th Independence Day with patriotic fervor and enthusiasm. The celebrations began with the flag hoisting ceremony, followed by an address by Director Prof. Harish Hirani, who called upon students to play a greater role in nation building.

Prof. Hirani said that August 15, 1947, was a defining moment in India's history as it brought not only political freedom but also a renewed sense of self-respect and self-reliance. He paid tribute to freedom fighters including Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, noting their



sacrifices and vision for an independent India. In his speech, the Director emphasized the importance of youth in shaping the country's future, especially as India enters its "Amrit Kaal" with the goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047. He said the responsibility of national progress rests largely on the younger generation,

technology, clean energy, and community service, while underlining integrity, transparency, and service as essential values.

Stressing that nation building is not solely the responsibility of the government, he said every citizen has a role to play. He described students' knowledge and innovation as vital for the country's progress, comparing each student's effort to a brick in the foundation of India's future.

Concluding his address, Prof. Hirani acknowledged the contributions of the armed forces, scientists, teachers, farmers, laborers, and citizens across all walks of life. He urged students to pledge their commitment to uphold the pride of the tricolor in every endeavor.

## Zero tolerance for Law & Order violations, miscreants to face stern action: CM Saini

Komal Ramola  
Chandigarh

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini reiterated the state government's firm stance of zero tolerance towards any lapse in law and order, making it clear that anyone attempting to disrupt peace or create disorder will face stern action, regardless of their influence or position.

Speaking to reporters at a press conference in Chandigarh, the Chief Minister said the government's top priority is to ensure a safe and secure environment for the people. He emphasized that strict measures are being taken against drug traffickers and urged residents to immediately lodge com-

plaints on the government portal if they come across drug sales in their villages, localities, or wards. He assured that the identity of informers will be kept confidential.

On the issue of public health, Saini said the government is committed to strengthening state-run healthcare facilities so that

people do not have to depend on private hospitals. He announced that 10 new district hospitals will be inaugurated soon and that modern infrastructure is being developed in government hospitals across Haryana.

Responding to political allegations, the Chief Minister dismissed Congress's

claims of "vote theft" as baseless. He accused the opposition party of weakening Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Constitution, encouraging corruption, and disrupting proceedings in Parliament. He contrasted this with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's governance, saying the Prime Minister has shut all doors to corruption and

launched schemes to empower the poor and economically weaker sections. "Today, the poor are moving forward with confidence and actively contributing to the nation's development," Saini said, crediting the Centre's welfare initiatives for uplifting disadvantaged communities.

# 'Black Day for Democracy':

Ujjwal Raman Singh Slams EC, UP Govt, and Flood Mismanagement



UJJWAL RAMAN SINGH

DR. ANIL SINGH

Interviewer: **Dr. Anil Singh**, Editor, **STAR Views**; Editorial Advisor, **Top Story**; Former Executive Editor — Aaj Tak, ABP News, STAR News; Author — The Prime Minister: Discourses in Indian Polity (2025), Military and Media (2007)

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** Yesterday, around 300 opposition MPs attempted to march to the Election Commission but were stopped midway. Do you see this as just political obstruction, or a direct assault on the spirit of democracy?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** It was nothing less than a black day for Indian democracy. The sight of elected MPs being physically stopped from reaching a constitutional body is unprecedented and deeply disturbing. We weren't marching for ourselves — we were carrying the voice of the people on the SIR issue. Blocking that voice is an act of authoritarian arrogance. Parliamentary democracy thrives on dialogue, not on silencing dissent.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** Parliamentary debates on the Election Commission have happened multiple times since 1961. Why do you think the government is now so reluctant, and what message does that send?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** It sends the message that the government is afraid of scrutiny. In the past, even in tense times, Congress governments never shied away from discussion. Now, the ruling party behaves as though listening to the opposition is a concession, not a democratic duty. That mindset erodes the very foundation of parliamentary traditions.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** The Election Commission is withholding

data and videos, and is instead demanding affidavits from MPs. Is this bureaucracy gone rogue, or political capture?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** The EC's first duty is to protect the franchise of every Indian citizen aged 18 and above. Rajiv Gandhi, with foresight, brought young people into the democratic process by lowering the voting age. Today, we are moving in reverse — towards disenfranchisement. And instead of proactively correcting voter lists, the EC is hiding behind paperwork. If they wanted, they could fix discrepancies suo motu. The data is theirs. The silence is political.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** After being blocked from the EC, what's your next move — courtroom battle or street battle?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** Both, if needed. This will not remain a Delhi issue; it will become a people's movement. We will take it to every district, every block, every village. The poor and marginalized — especially in states like Bihar and Uttar

Pradesh — fear their votes are cut without warning. We will stand with them until the ballot is as sacred as the Constitution.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** Rahul Gandhi's presentation on voter list discrepancies was hard-hitting. Do you believe this is a turning point in public trust?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** Absolutely. Millions of poor Indians have whispered for years, "We vote, but our vote disappears." Rahul Gandhi has given that whisper a microphone. This is a moment when hope and outrage are colliding — and that is politically powerful.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** In Allahabad, a shrine and mosque were attacked, flags hoisted, and the administration watched. What does this say about law and order in UP?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** The Supreme Court has repeatedly warned about UP's law and order, and this incident proves them right. It's not just lawlessness; it's politically enabled

lawlessness. The government thrives on polarization because it distracts from their failures on unemployment, healthcare, and education.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** Do you think this polarization is a deliberate substitute for real governance?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** Without doubt. Divisive politics is a smokescreen to hide administrative collapse. Go to UP's hospitals, its schools — you'll see decay. Go to its job markets — you'll see despair. But instead of fixing these, they focus on stoking communal fires.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** Prayagraj was hit hard by floods this monsoon. How prepared was the government?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** Preparation? It was all on paper. The drains that should have been cleaned months before the rains — untouched. Relief camps — inadequate. Food and drinking water — missing. Crops destroyed, homes damaged — and the government

still hasn't done a proper plot-to-plot survey. People were left to fend for themselves in one of the most fertile river belts of India.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** Is this just negligence, or systemic rot?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** It's both. Negligence because warnings from the meteorological department were ignored. Systemic rot because corruption and mismanagement are baked into the system. Money meant for relief was siphoned, and accountability is zero.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** With just days left in the Monsoon Session, what's the opposition's plan?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** We want debate — the government wants deadlines. We want scrutiny — they want speed. This rush to pass bills without discussion is not efficiency; it's democratic malpractice.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** Does this bill-passing without debate threaten Parliament's relevance?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** It hollows Parliament from within. Debate is not a delay; it's the essence of legislation. Remove debate, and Parliament becomes a rubber stamp.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** The EC protest showed rare opposition unity. Can it last?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** It will. We were united before the elections; we're more united now. As more voter list irregulari-

ties come to light, this unity will only grow — because this isn't just politics; it's about the survival of free elections in India.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** You've accused the government of winning through "vote theft." How far do these allegations go?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** Far enough to shake the moral foundation of this government. We have evidence of manipulation in dozens of seats. If they have nothing to hide, let them face an independent investigation.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** In rural India, people say their votes don't count. How do you restore that trust?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** The EC must ensure a transparent, verifiable process — from voter lists to counting. And political leaders must personally guarantee to their constituents that their vote is sacred and secure.

**Q Dr. Anil Singh:** Final word to your constituents and to India?

**Ujjwal Raman Singh:** Democracy is not just a system; it's a promise — that every citizen's voice matters. If we lose that, we lose the Republic itself. I will not let that promise be broken, and neither should any Indian.

**Dr. Anil Singh:** Thanks a lot, Singh Sahib, for giving this interview, and my thanks also to Mr. Mahesh Mishra ji for coordinating this conversation.

## SPORTS

Bethell hoping to emulate Stokes in first England captaincy assignment against Ireland

London

Jacob Bethell, who is set to become the youngest captain for an international match in England's history, is looking to channel Test skipper Ben Stokes' mentality of leading a side ahead of his first assignment in Dublin, Ireland, scheduled to begin on September 17. The 21-year-old will take over the captaincy duties from designated skipper Harry Brook for the three T20Is against Ireland. Bethell, who surpassed Monty Bowden's record of leading the Three Lions at the age of 23, has just 29 international appearances under his belt. — Agency

## Tijjani Reijnders says joining Manchester City was a "pretty easy choice"

London

Netherlands midfielder Tijjani Reijnders revealed the reason why he joined the Premier League club Manchester City ahead of the 2025-26 football season. Speaking on Jio-Hustar, why he chose Manchester City, the 26-year-old player said, "It's one of the biggest clubs in the world, so in the end, it was a pretty easy choice. Playing in the Premier League and competing for trophies every year is what attracts me the most." Manchester City will open their Premier League 2025-26 season on Sunday as they will take on Wolverhampton Wanderers (Wolves) at Molineux Stadium in Wolverhampton. Expressing his excitement ahead of his



Premier League debut, the footballer said, "I'm really looking forward to the Premier League. I'm excited to play in what I think is the highest level of competition in football. I can't wait." Earlier this June, Reijnders signed a five-year deal with the Manchester City side. He joined

the club after his stint with AC Milan, where he managed to score 15 goals in 54 games in the 2024/25 season. He was also named Serie A's best

midfielder in that season. Sharing his thoughts on the signing, the player said, "I am ecstatic to be signing for Manchester City. City are one of the biggest teams in the world, with the best coach, world-class players and outstanding facilities. Under Pep Guardiola, City have won so many titles, and I want to help keep that going with a lot more success in the coming years."

"It is also a dream come true to play in the Premier League. This league has seen many of the best Dutch players perform through the years, and it's an inspiration to follow in their footsteps. I am really looking forward to getting going, meeting the other players and showing the Manchester City fans what I can do," he added.

## Nathan Ellis explains challenge of containing CSK teammate Brevis

Cairns

Australia's crafty quick Nathan Ellis explained that the dominance that he has been able to maintain over the explosive Dewald Brevis in the three-match T20I series against South Africa hasn't been all sunshine and roses. During the series-deciding third T20I, Brevis, once again, tormented the Australian bowling unit, apart from Ellis. He decimated Aaron Hardie and Josh Hazlewood but filtered for the second time against Ellis. In two innings, Brevis has faced five deliveries from Ellis, churned out a mere three runs and lost his wicket twice. After the end of the first innings, Ellis revealed that spending time with the 22-year-old at Chennai Super Kings during the 18th season of the cash-rich league made him aware of his talent and the threat that he can pose.

"I've had a little bit of time with Brev in the IPL with Chennai. Know the talent that he has, and the rest of the side got to see that a couple of nights ago. We knew it was a big wicket to see the back of him; it was a big moment. Very hard to contain, I feel like he's coming leaping and bounding, he seems a lot more confident than the last time we met," Ellis



Nathan Ellis

said while speaking to Fox Sports. Just like the second T20I, 'Baby AB' went ballistic and broke his record of the fastest T20I fifty for the Proteas against Australia. He flouted a wide variety of shots from his repertoire. With a barrage of towering maximums, Brevis celebrated his half-century in just 22 deliveries, the fastest in the format for South Africa.

The 22-year-old bettered his 25-ball record that he scripted during the second T20I in Darwin earlier this week. Before his successive fiery displays, former Proteas star JP Duminy held the record for 16 years following his 31-ball exploits in Melbourne in 2009. With his scintillating efforts, Brevis also breached the milestone of the quickest fifty against Australia in Australia, bettering Ravi Bopara's 23-ball effort in Hobart in 2014. With Brevis on the crease, a score in the vicinity of 200 appeared possible,

## Belligerent Dewald Brevis breaks his record with stellar show against Australia

Cairns

Young batting sensation, Dewald Brevis, went ballistic and blazed his way to the fastest T20I fifty for South Africa against Australia during the series decider third T20I at Cazaly's Stadium on Saturday. Brevis directed a T20I spectacle yet again with his rollicking display against the Baggy Greens in Cairns. He

pulled out a wide variety of shots from his repertoire, proving once again why his sobriquet 'Baby AB' suits him perfectly. With a fusillade of towering maximums, Brevis celebrated his half-century in just 22 deliveries, the fastest in the format for South Africa. The 22-year-old bettered his 25-ball record that he scripted during the second T20I in Darwin earlier this week. Before his successive



fiery displays, former Proteas star JP Duminy

held the record for 16 years following his 31-ball exploits in Melbourne in 2009. With his scintillating efforts, Brevis also breached the milestone of the quickest fifty against Australia in Australia, bettering Ravi Bopara's 23-ball effort in Hobart in 2014. With Brevis on the crease, a score in the vicinity of 200 appeared possible,

but he perished against Nathan Ellis in the 12th over, which severely hindered South Africa's progress. Brevis didn't waste much time flaunting his boundary-hitting muscle. He cut the ball hard to find his first boundary and then dispatched Josh Hazlewood's short-length delivery for a maximum courtesy of a thick top edge.

### Foreign Secretary Misri to visit Nepal on Sunday

**Kathmandu:** India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri will arrive in Kathmandu on Sunday on a two-day official visit to Nepal to discuss connectivity, development cooperation and other matters of mutual interest, it was announced on Saturday.

The foreign secretary of India, who is visiting Nepal at the invitation of his Nepalese counterpart Amrit Bahadur Rai, is scheduled to call on high-level dignitaries in the Himalayan nation.

"During Misri's visit, the two foreign secretaries will hold discussions on various aspects of Nepal-India partnership, with focus on connectivity, development cooperation and other matters of mutual interest," Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

Misri will leave Kathmandu on August 18 after wrapping up his visit.

In New Delhi, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said India attaches high priority to its relations with Nepal under its Neighbourhood First policy.

"The foreign secretary's upcoming visit continues the tradition of regular high-level exchanges between the two countries and will be an opportunity to further advance our bilateral ties," the MEA said.

People familiar with the matter said the main focus of Misri's engagements in Kathmandu will be on preparing the ground for Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli's trip to New Delhi next month.

# Military airstrike on gem mining town kills at least 21 in Myanmar

**Bangkok:** An airstrike by Myanmar's military on the town of Mogok, the centre of the Southeast Asian country's lucrative gem-mining industry, has killed at least 21 people including a pregnant woman, an armed opposition group, local residents and Myanmar's online media said Saturday.

The incident was the latest in a series of frequent and deadly military airstrikes, often causing civilian casualties, that have intensified in a bid to reclaim territory from resistance groups amid the ongoing civil war that erupted after the army seized power in February 2021.

The attack occurred Thursday at 8:30 pm in Shwegu ward in Mogok township, about 115 kilometres northeast of Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, said Lway Yay Oo, a spokesperson for the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA).



Myanmar airstrike on gem mining town kills 21

The TNLA is one of the powerful ethnic militias fighting against the army near the Chinese border.

"About 21 civilians were killed. Seven others were injured. Homes and Buddhist monastery buildings were also damaged," Lway Yay Oo said.

Mogok, the ruby-mining centre in the upper Mandalay region, was seized in July 2024 by the TNLA, a member of an alliance of ethnic militias that seized a large swath of territory in northeastern Myanmar in an offensive that began in late 2023.

The group's statement released Friday night on its Telegram social media channel said 16 women were among the victims killed in the airstrike that appeared to target a Buddhist monastery in Mogok's Shwegu ward.

It said 15 houses were also damaged when a jet fighter dropped a bomb.

Two Mogok residents told The Associated Press on Saturday that the death toll had risen to nearly 30, though the exact casualties could not be independently confirmed.

**The attack occurred Thursday at 8:30 pm in Shwegu ward in Mogok township, about 115 kilometres northeast of Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, said Lway Yay Oo, a spokesperson for the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA).**

### Fire at Russian industrial plant kills 11 injures 130



**Moscow:** A fire at an industrial plant in Russia's Ryazan region on Friday killed 11 people and injured 130, Russian officials said Saturday.

The blaze broke out Friday at the Elastik plant in the Shilovskiy District, around 250 kilometres southeast of Moscow.

Emergency crews continued to search through debris until the weekend, and two additional bodies were recovered overnight, the Russian Emergencies Ministry said.

According to the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti, a gunpowder workshop at the facility caught fire and triggered the blast.

Of the injured, 29 remained hospitalised on Saturday — 13 in Ryazan and 16 transported to medical centres in Moscow, officials said.

Regional authorities said three people were rescued from under the rubble overnight as investigators launched a preliminary probe into the cause of the fire.

Local authorities declared a day of mourning in the Ryazan region on Monday.

"Flags will be lowered across the region. Cultural institutions, television and radio companies and organisations have been asked to cancel entertainment events," Ryazan Governor Pavel Malkov said in a statement on Telegram.

It was the second deadly explosion at the Elastik plant in less than four years. In October 2021, according to the Russian state news agency Interfax, 17 people were killed in a blast at a workshop operated by explosives manufacturer Razryad.

### BUSINESS

# China hands over third Hangor-class submarine to Pakistan

**Beijing:** China has handed over the third of the eight new "advanced" Hangor-class submarines to Pakistan as part of Beijing's efforts to upgrade Islamabad's naval strength to support its growing presence in the Indian Ocean, India's backyard.

The launching ceremony of the third Hangor-class submarine was held in Wuhan, Central China's Hubei province, on Thursday, the state-run Global Times reported on Saturday.

The second of the eight submarines China is building for Pakistan was handed over in March this year.

This is in addition to four modern naval frigates that China supplied to Pakistan in the last few years as part of its efforts to boost Pakistan's naval strength amid the Chinese navy's steady expansion in the Arabian Sea, where it is developing the Gwadar port in Balochistan, as well as in the Indian Ocean.



China is building for Pakistan as part of Beijing's efforts to upgrade Islamabad's naval strength to support its growing presence in the Indian Ocean, India's backyard.

Speaking at the launch of the third submarine, Pakistan's Deputy Chief of Naval Staff Project-2 Vice Admiral Abdul Samad said the Hangor-class submarine's cutting-edge weaponry and advanced sensors would be instrumental in sustaining regional power equilibrium and ensuring maritime stability, as well as in the Indian Ocean.

Some of Pakistan's key orders in the past five years include the country's first spy ship, the Rizwan; more than 600 VT-4 battle tanks, and 36 J-10CE 4.5-generation fighters, according to the SIPRI database.

China supplied the first delivery of multi-role J-10CE fighter jets to the Pakistan Air Force in 2022, adding to its JF-17 fighters jointly manufactured by both countries. Pakistan used these fighter jets in the recent conflict with India.

### GST Revamp: New Tax Rates & Impact

**New Delhi:** The central government has proposed just two tax rates of 5 per cent and 18 per cent in the revamped Goods and Services Tax (GST), slated to replace the current indirect tax regime by Diwali this year, highly placed sources said.

While the presently nil or zero per cent GST tax is charged on essential food items, 5 per cent is charged on daily use items, 12 per cent on standard goods, 18 per cent electronics and services and 28 per cent on luxury and sin goods, the revamped GST regime will have two slabs plus a special rate of 40 per cent for luxury and sin goods, they said.

When the revamped structure is approved by the GST Council, 99 per cent of items in the current 12 per cent slab will move to the 5 per cent bracket. Similarly, almost 90 per cent of goods and services that are currently charged at 28 per cent will shift to an 18 per cent tax rate.

The special rate of 40 per cent would be levied only on seven items, sources said, adding tobacco would also fall under this rate, but the total incidence of taxation would continue at the current 85 per cent.

The revamped GST is expected to give a big boost to consumption, offsetting the revenue loss that may occur from the rate revision, they said.

Under the present GST structure, which came into being after central and state levies were subsumed beginning July 1, 2017, the highest 65 per cent tax collections happen from the 18 per cent levy. The top tax bracket of 28 per cent on luxury and sin goods contributes 11 per cent of the revenue, while the 12 per cent slab accounts for just 5 per cent of the revenue.

The lowest 5 per cent levy on essential daily-use items contributes 7 per cent of the total GST kitty.

High labour-intensive and export-oriented sectors like diamonds and precious stones would continue to be taxed as per the existing rates.

# GST Reforms: Registration, Refund & Return Changes

**New Delhi:** The Centre has proposed "next generation" GST reforms in registration, refund and return processes as it looks to ease the compliance burden for GST-registered taxpayers.

As per the proposal shared with a panel of state ministers, the Centre is looking at bringing down the time taken to grant GST registration and also fast-track issuance of refunds for exporters and those with an inverted duty structure.

The proposal, which will be taken up in the next GST Council meeting, likely in September, entails that a substantial majority or about 80 per cent of refunds will be processed as soon as the application is filed.

Although there would be some time lag, refunds would be processed faster, a government source said.

The Centre has also proposed to the Council a time-bound registration process, especially for small businesses and startups. Registration to almost 95 per cent of the applicants would be granted based on "risk metrics", and it will work on the mechanism like a "green channel".

With regard to returns, the Council has proposed implementing pre-filled returns, thus reducing manual intervention and eliminating mismatches.

With regard to simplifying the registration process, the GST Council, comprising Centre and state finance ministers, in December 2024, had given its in-principle nod to segregate businesses into three categories — New/Small businesses, Deemed TruSted Businesses, and Emerging Businesses — for the purpose of GST registration.

It had also given its in-principle approval to a proposal to provide GST registration to small or new businesses within three days, if they wish to pass on only a limited input tax credit or no ITC.

As per the proposal, 'deemed trusted' businesses, which include public sector units, or businesses, which pay high GST in cash or pay a high income tax, may be considered "low risk and granted simplified registration without biometric-based Aadhaar authentication and physical verification. Such businesses will also be eligible to pass on unlimited ITC.

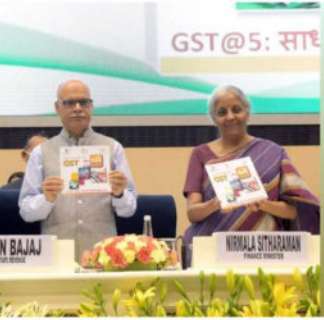
The category of 'Emerging Businesses' will be for those who wish to pass on ITC, exceeding a specified limit, but do not fall under the 'deemed trusted business' category. As per the proposal of the law committee, such businesses may face a more stringent registration process, including application fees, security deposits, and physical verification.

The Law Committee proposed a simplified registration for 'new/small businesses' that do not wish to pass on ITC or wish to pass on a limited ITC. For such businesses, registration may be granted within 3 working days without biometric-based Aadhaar authentication and physical verification.

The minister stressed that government initiatives should translate into tangible benefits for people rather than remain confined to files.

"The government work should be visible in the lives of the people, not in files," he said.

The dialogue session was also attended by Union Ministers of State for Agriculture Ram Nath Thakur and Bhagirath Chaudhary. Agriculture Secretary Divesh Chaturvedi, Director General of ICAR ML Jat, and other senior officials.



GST reforms: Key changes in registration, refund & returns

# FASTag Annual Pass: Rs 3000 for Private Vehicles

**New Delhi:** State-owned NHAI has implemented the FASTag annual pass across the country from Friday to encourage the use of technology to enhance 'ease of living' for the citizens, according to an official statement.

The statement said the annual pass has received an overwhelming response from the national highway users.

"Till 4:30 PM on the first day of the implementation, around 1.2 lakh users purchased and activated the annual pass and about 1.24 lakh transactions were recorded on toll plazas," it added.



eliminates the need to frequently recharge FASTag through a one-time fee payment of Rs 3,000 for one year's validity or 200 toll plaza crossings on National Highways and Expressways across the country.

The annual pass is applicable to all non-commercial vehicles with a valid FASTag and gets activated within two hours of the one-time fee payment through the Rajmargyatra App or NHAI website.

With a penetration rate of around 98 per cent and over 8 crore users, FASTag has revolutionised the Electronic Toll Collection system in the country, the statement said.

The introduction of the annual pass facility will not only enhance the FASTag user experience but also make journeys on the National Highways and Expressways more economical and seamless, it added.

### Rabi Crop Boost: Agri Scientists Visit Farms

**New Delhi:** Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday said agricultural scientists will visit farm fields between October 3 and 18 to ensure a good rabi (winter) crop this year while reiterating the government's commitment to protecting farmers' interests.

Speaking during an interaction with farmers, who were special guests for Independence Day celebrations here, Chouhan emphasised that safeguarding the interests of farmers, dairy farmers, and fishermen remains the government's top priority, according to an official statement.

The minister stressed that government initiatives should translate into tangible benefits for people rather than remain confined to files.

"The government work should be visible in the lives of the people, not in files," he said.

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# Anna Farris, Regina Hall to return for new 'Scary Movie'

Washington  
Actors Anna Farris and Regina Hall will return as Cindy and Brenda for the next instalment of the 'Scary Movie' franchise, reported Variety.

Actor Marlon Wayans confirmed the news in a post on his Instagram, sharing a photo of the duo from the first film.

"We can't wait to bring Brenda and Cindy back to life and be reunited with our great friends Keenen, Shawn and Marlon -- three men we'd literally die for (in Brenda's case, again)," Farris and Hall said in a statement about their return, according to Variety.

The Wayans Brothers' reboot will hit theatres on June 12, 2026. The brothers are reunited for the first time in 18 years to write an original script for the horror parody franchise's reboot, which they will co-write and produce



with Rick Alvarez. The executive producers are Jonathan Glickman, Alexandra Loewy, and Thomas Zadra.

'Scary Movie' was released in 2000 and became a box office hit, making over USD 278 million worldwide. It was known for poking fun at popular horror films like Scream, The Blair Witch Project, and I Know What You Did Last Summer. The

movie's cast included Shawn and Marlon Wayans, Anna Farris, Carmen Electra, Shannon Elizabeth, and Dave Sheridan, as per the outlet.

Keenen Ivory Wayans wrote and directed the first two films. Marlon Wayans and Shawn Wayans wrote and starred in the first two films. This will be the sixth film in the franchise. Miramax is the studio be-

hind the series, which Paramount Pictures is releasing worldwide. 'Scary Movie' is part of Paramount's first look deal with Miramax.

"It was so toxic," Marlon Wayans said earlier this year. "The way the Weinstains handled the business of 'Scary Movie,' I could write a 'Scary Movie' about it. We probably should have sued," reported Variety.



## 'General Hospital' actor Tristan Rogers passes away at 79

Washington  
Tristan Rogers, who was best known for playing the role of Robert Scorpio on the daytime soap opera 'General Hospital', has passed away, his manager confirmed to ABC 7. He was 79, reported E! News.

Meryl Soodak shared that Rogers' cause of death was a battle with lung cancer, despite having not been a smoker. "He loved being Scorpio and he created that role from nothing," Soodak shared with the outlet. "He was supposed to work a day and he ended up making it into something huge. He was just a genuinely loyal, kind human being and he loved his family."

The news comes less than a month after the Australian star revealed

his lung cancer diagnosis, which coincided with his final appearance on General Hospital, as per the outlet.

"While he remains hopeful and is working closely with his medical team on a treatment plan, this is a challenging time for Tristan and his family," a July statement from his rep read. "As they face both the emotional and physical burdens that come with this diagnosis, the family kindly asks for privacy and understanding."

They added that Rogers, who starred on General Hospital from 1980 to 1992, but made recurring appearances through 2025, was grateful to his fans, saying he "wants them to know how much he appreciates their loyalty and encouragement over the years."

## Vivek Agnihotri on why 'The Bengal Files' trailer launch was cancelled



Kolkata

Filmmaker Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri opened up on the cancellation of the trailer launch event of 'The Bengal Files' by a leading movie theatre chain and why he decided to unveil the trailer today, August 16.

He said, "Mai America se aaya aur seedhe Kolkata pahucha kyunki trailer launch tha and movie trailers are generally launched in theatres; however, when I reached the airport, I came to know that one of the largest multiplex chains said that they can't do it because there is a lot of political pressure and if they do it, there will be a political turmoil. So we spoke to another multiplex, they also said that 'sorry sir', there is a lot of political pressure, we can't do it. If we had known this from the start, why would we have taken on so many teams and actors and spent so much money to come here..."

The film explores the communal violence in undivided Bengal during the 1940s, including events like 1946 Direct Action Day and the Noakhali riots of 1946, a Hindu genocide.

He added, "Aur Direct Action Day... Hindu genocide, Murshidabad riots saki film ka trailer kahan launch hona chahiye, Kolkata mein hi hona chahiye...par mai bhari harne vaalon se nahi hu...to aisa pelhi baar ho raha hai mera ye andaaz hai ki film ka trailer theatre ki jagah hotel ke banquet hall mein.



## "It is very sad...": Sohail Khan on Kishtwar cloudburst tragedy

Mumbai  
Bollywood actor Sohail Khan expressed grief over the devastating cloudburst in Chashoti of Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district.

A massive cloudburst on Thursday triggered a flash flood in the Chashoti area of Kishtwar, Jammu and Kashmir, along the route of the Machal Mata Yatra, which led to multiple casualties. Rescue operations are in full swing in the area, and the victims of the tragedy are being treated in the District Hospital.

While speaking to the media, Sohail said, "Dekho ye to nature ki baat hai and it is very sad. Whenever we think about J&K, it feels really sad...I went there as a child, a long time ago. It's such a

beautiful place; we all call it paradise, yet something or the other always happens there. Ye khaish hai...dua hai sabse ki us jagah ki bhayai maange...(I urge people to pray for J&K...)"

Union Minister Jitendra Singh visited the cloudburst-affected areas in Chashoti of Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district, late on Friday evening.

Speaking to ANI, Singh said, "The government immediately took cognisance of it...PM Modi personally took cognisance of it and monitored it. After that, the equipment was brought here overnight by vehicles. CRPF came here overnight with equipment. Air Force, Indian Army, DG Police, Jammu-Kashmir Police, and today BRO's services have been utilised because they have

machines to clear debris from the roads..."

He added, "52 bodies have been recovered, of which four bodies have not been identified, while the rest have been identified. Seriously injured patients have been referred outside, with about 52 patients admitted to Jammu Medical College, and those who are more critical will be referred outside...Efforts are ongoing. There is no shortage from the government's side. Work is in progress."

According to sources, the Indian Air Force will participate in relief and rescue operations, with two Mi-17 helicopters and one Advanced Light Helicopter on standby at Jammu and Udhampur. Operations will commence once weather conditions improve.

## Pallavi Joshi alleges 'The Bengal Files' trailer launch not allowed in Kolkata

Kolkata  
After a ruckus erupted during the release of 'The Bengal Files' trailer in Kolkata today, actor Pallavi Joshi said, "such a thing did not happen even in Kashmir."

She said, "I absolutely did not like the way my film (trailer) was stopped. Is there freedom of expression in this state? As filmmakers and actors, we are not able to screen what we have made. What is the threat they are feeling? Such a thing did not happen even in Kashmir. Can we derive that the situation in Kashmir is better than in Bengal? See what is happening in Bengal today. And this is why films like 'The Bengal Files' are important. I want every person in India to watch this film to know the



truth about Bengal. It is the state's responsibility to give respect to artists..."

## Rajkummar Rao celebrates one year of 'Stree 2', makers drop 'Thama' update



Mumbai  
Shraddha Kapoor starrer 'Stree 2' completed one year of its theatrical opening on Friday. It was released on August 15 last year and the film was a big success.

Celebrating the one-year anniversary, Rajkummar Rao got nostalgic as he shared a heart-warming post on Instagram. "This day, last year, the lights dimmed, the screen lit up... and history was created. 1 year to the most loved Hindi film #Stree2," the actor wrote, further thanking his fans for their endless love and support.

Along with a special character touch to the post, he also teased his return in 'Stree 3'.

"Bahut jaldi milenge Stree 3 ke sath. Bickyyyyy Pleajjjjjj," Rajkummar quipped.

The actor also shared a video, which included some of his most memorable scenes from the film.

The second 'Stree' instalment brought back audi-

ences to the chaotic Chanderi, where people faced a new threat from the headless villain, "Sarkata." To defeat the monsters, Rajkummar Rao's Vicky reunites with Bitta (Aparshakti Khurana), Jana (Abhishek Banerjee), Rudra (Pankaj Tripathi), and, of course, the mysterious Shraddha Kapoor.

The film is currently streaming on Amazon Prime Video India.

As 'Stree 2' has successfully completed a year of its release, the makers have also dropped an update on 'Thama', the upcoming film from the Maddock Horror-Comedy Universe.