











ये है दुनिया का सबसे डरावना और वीरान आइलैंड, कभी इस बीमारी से पीड़ितों को बिना इलाज के रखा जाता था यहां

कोढ़ रोग को हमारे समाज में हमेशा से ही हीन भावना से देखा जाता है। इस बीमारी को भगवान का शाप या दंड माना जाता रहा है। समाज में लोग कोल्ड रोगियों से हमेशा दूरी बना कर रहे हैं। सदियों से इस बीमारी से पीड़ित लोगों को समाज से अलग रखा गया है। भारत ही नहीं दुनिया के विदेशों में कुछ रोगियों के लिए कई आश्रम चलते हैं। लेकिन यूरोप के ग्रीस और यूनान जैसे देशों ने अपने यहां के कुछ रोगियों को आम लोगों से दूर रखने के लिए एक आइलैंड ही अलग कर दिया था।

इस आइलैंड का नाम स्पिनालॉन्गा आइलैंड है। ये यूनान के सबसे बड़े क्रीट द्वीप के पास स्थित है। ये भूमध्य सागर में मिराबेलो की खाड़ी के मुहाने पर मौजूद है। लेकिन आज इस आइलैंड पर कोई नहीं रहता और यह वीरान पड़ा है। यहां पर बेहद कम लोग ही जाते हैं। इस जगह की सबसे पहले वेनिस के राजा ने यहां पर सैनिक अड्डा बनाया था। इसके बाद तुर्की के ऑटोमान साम्राज्य ने इस पर कब्जा कर लिया। हालांकि, साल 1904 में क्रीट के लोगों ने तुर्कों को यहां से खदेड़ दिया। इसके बाद यह आइलैंड को कोढ़ के मरीजों का अड्डा बना दिया गया। साल 1975 में दुनिया को इस कोढ़ आश्रम के बारे में पता चला। इसके बाद यूनानी सरकार की बहुत आलोचना हुई।

जिसके बाद यहां के सभी लोगों को इलाज के लिए ले जाया गया और इस कोढ़ रोगी आश्रम को बंद कर दिया गया। इसके बाद से स्पिनालॉन्गा आइलैंड वीरान पड़ा है। आपको यह जानकर हैरानी होगी कि इस आइलैंड पर कोढ़ के मरीजों के इलाज का भी कोई इंतजाम नहीं था। इस द्वीप पर एक ही डॉक्टर आता था, वो भी तब जब किसी मरीज को कोई और बीमारी हो जाती थी। डॉक्टर को बनाने से पहले ही कोढ़ रोग का इलाज खोज लिया गया था लेकिन यहां रहने वाले मरीजों का इलाज नहीं होता था।

चार धाम यात्रा के लिए आईआरसीटीसी ने पेश किया शानदार टूर पैकेज, यात्रियों को मिलेंगी ये सुविधाएं

गर्मियों की छुट्टी में लो कहीं ना कहीं घूमने का प्लान बनाते हैं। ऐसे में कई लोगों को परिवार के साथ चार धाम की यात्रा करने की इच्छा होती है। ऐसे लोगों के लिए भारतीय रेलवे चारों धामों की यात्रा के लिए एक खास ऑफर लेकर आई है। बता दें कि यात्रियों के लिए पावन धाम की यात्रा के ऐसे पैकेज भारतीय रेलवे की तरफ से समय-समय पर उपलब्ध करवाए जाते हैं। आई जानते हैं आईआरसीटीसी के चार धाम टूर पैकेज के बारे में -

**इतने दिनों का होमा टूर पैकेज**  
भारतीय रेलवे की ओर से यात्रियों को चार धाम की यात्रा के लिए एक स्पेशल टूर पैकेज दिया जा रहा है। आपको बता दें कि यह टूर पैकेज आजादी का अमृत महोत्सव और देखो अपना देश के तहत पेश किया गया है। इस पैकेज का नाम Char Dham Yatra E& Nagpur है। आईआरसीटीसी की ओर से जारी किया गया यह खास टूर पैकेज कुल 11 दिनों और 12 रातों का है। इच्छुक यात्री आईआरसीटीसी की वेबसाइट [irctctourism.com](http://irctctourism.com) पर जाकर ऑनलाइन बुकिंग कर सकते हैं।

**इस दिन से शुरू होगी यात्रा और इन जगहों के होंगे दर्शन**  
रेलवे द्वारा यह चार धाम यात्रा 14 मई 2022 को नागपुर से शुरू होगी। यहां से यात्रियों को हवाई यात्रा के जरिए दिल्ली लाया जाएगा। दिल्ली से हरिद्वार के लिए ट्रेन रवाना होगी। इस टूर पैकेज के तहत यात्रियों को बद्रीनाथ, केदारनाथ, यमुनोत्री, गंगोत्री, गुप्तकाशी, बरकोट, जानकी चट्टी, सोनप्रयाग, उत्तरकाशी, आदि धार्मिक स्थलों के दर्शन कराए जाएंगे।

**यात्रियों को मिलेंगी ये सुविधाएं**  
यात्रा के दौरान यात्रियों को रेलवे की ओर बस और गाड़ी की सुविधा मिलेगी। इसके अलावा प्रतिदिन नाश्ता और डिनर भी मिलेगा और ठहरने के लिए होटल की व्यवस्था भी करवाई जाएगी।

**यात्रियों को देना होगा इतना शुल्क**  
अकेले यात्रा करने वाले यात्रियों को 77,600 रूपए देने होंगे। दो लोगों को इस रूप पैकेज के लिए 61,400 चुकाने होंगे। वहीं तीन लोगों को इस पैकेज के लिए 58,900 जमा करने होंगे। बता दें कि बच्चों का अलग से शुल्क पड़ेगा।



1972 में असम से अलग होकर भारत के इक्कीसवें राज्य के रूप में नवसे पर उभरा, अद्भुत नैसर्गिक सुषमा का आलय-मेघालय यानि बादलों का घर। आकाश में बादलों के झुंड, धरती पर चंचल झरने, शांत झीलें और उनमें अपना प्रतिबिम्ब निहारती हरियाली, इन सबके बीच आपकी उपस्थिति आपको अवसर देगी कि आप अपने भाग्य पर गर्व कर सकें। यह राज्य गारो, खासी तथा जयन्तिया जैसी प्राचीन पहाड़ी जनजातियों का मूल निवास स्थान है। इन्हीं लोगों को भारत का प्राचीनतम निवासी माना जाता है। ब्रिटिश राज के दौरान स्कॉटलैंड ऑफ ईस्ट कहा जाने वाला शहर शिलांग मेघालय की राजधानी है। खासी पहाड़ियों में, समुद्रतल से लगभग 1500 मी. की ऊंचाई पर बसे इस शहर का नाम एक जनजातीय देवता शुलांग के नाम पर पड़ा है। प्यार से मिनी लंदन पुकारे जाने वाले शहर के चप्पे-चप्पे पर अंग्रेजी प्रभाव के निशान खोजे जा सकते हैं।

शिलांग जैसे छोटे शहर में दर्शनीय स्थानों की सूची छोटी नहीं है। शहर के बीचों-बीच स्थित है वार्डलेक। 1893-94 में बनी यह झील पर्यटकों का ही नहीं स्थानीय लोगों का भी प्रिय स्थान है। खूबसूरत बगीचों की हरियाली और झील के बीच में बना लकड़ी का पुल इसकी विशेषता है। इस लकड़ी के पुल पर से आप झील की मछलियों को देख सकते हैं और चाहें तो उन्हें आटे की गोलियां भी खिलाएं। निःसंदेह बच्चों को यह काम बहुत अच्छा लगेगा। झील के पानी में उतरना चाहें तो नौकाविहार कर सकते हैं। खाने-पीने का अच्छा प्रबंध होना इस स्थान को सुविधाजनक भी बना देता है। यदि आपकी दिलचस्पी पेड़-पौधों में है तो झील के पास स्थित बाटैनिकल गार्डन अवश्य जाएं। वनस्पति विज्ञान के छात्रों के लिए यह स्थान बहुत उपयोग साबित होगा। इसके पास ही स्थित डेलिमार् वांगखा का तितलियों का संग्रह भी देखें। दुनिया भर का तितलियों से संबंधित जिज्ञासा यहां शांत की जा सकती है।

किताबों में रूचि हो और ज्ञान में वृद्धि चाहें तो विशेष रूप से प्राचीन जीवन शैली से जुड़ी जानकारियों चाहें तो स्टेट सैन्ट्रल लाइब्रेरी जाना उचित होगा। साथ ही आपको अपनी ओर खींचेंगे डान् बारको तथा आंल सैन्ट चर्च। डान् बारको चर्च की विशाल इमारत और अनूठा प्रार्थना कक्ष ही इसकी खासियत है। 1889 में बना भारत का तीसरा सबसे पुराना गोल्फ कोर्स भी शिलांग में ही है। चीड़ और देवदार के ऊंचे वृक्षों से घिरे इस स्थान की मखमली धास का मजा लेने के लिए आपका गोल्फ में रूचि रखना जरूरी नहीं। अवसर सूर्यास्त के सुन्दर दृश्यों को नजरो में भरने के लिए भी पर्यटक यहां आते हैं। खासी जनजाति के मातृ-सतात्मक समाज की छाप देखें यहां के बड़ा बाजार में। इस बाजार को पूर्वोत्तर भारत का सबसे बड़ा बाजार माना

मेघालय राज्य की खूबसूरती देखेंगे तो बस देखते ही रह जायेंगे

जाता है। यहां खरीददारी करें हस्तशिल्प की और बांस के बने सामान की। यहां के जीवन को और करीब से जानना हो तो पास ही स्थित पुलिस बाजार भी जाना चाहिए।

शिलांग से लगभग 2 किलोमीटर दूर है एलिफेन्टा फॉल (झरना)। हाथी के आकार के इस प्राकृतिक झरने की सौन्दर्य वृद्धि की है लकड़ी के छोटे-छोटे पुलों ने। इस झरने के नाम के कारण के बारे में लोगों में मतभेद नहीं है। कुछ लोगों के अनुसार इस जगह के नाम का कारण, कभी यहां हाथियों का पानी पीने आना था जबकि दूसरों के अनुसार, इसका हाथी जैसा आकार। कुछ लोग इसके नामकरण की कथा सुनाते हैं कि किसी अंग्रेज अधिकारी का हाथी रास्ता भटक कर यहां पहुंच गया और यहीं उसकी मृत्यु हो गई तो यह नाम पड़ा। इसी खींच-तान के बीच एक अन्य कथा यह भी है कि यहां हाथी पानी पीने आते थे। किसी कारण वश यहां एक हाथी की मृत्यु के पश्चात हाथियों ने यहां आना बंद कर दिया। स्थानीय लोग इस मृत हाथी को देखने यहां पहुंचे, यहीं घटना इस स्थान के नामकरण का कारण है। इसी से यह स्थान लोकप्रिय भी हुआ।

शिलांग और उसके आसपास के क्षेत्र में कई और झरने भी हैं जैसे मारग्रेट फॉल, बिशप फॉल, स्वीट फॉल आदि।

समुद्र की सतह से लगभग 1960 मी. ऊंचाई पर, शिलांग से करीब 10 किमी. दूर है शिलांग पीक। ऐसा विश्वास है कि जनजातीय देवता शुलांग यहीं निवास करते हैं। यहां के खुले वातावरण और ऊंचाई को ध्यान में रखकर कुछ गर्म कपड़े ले जाना गलत नहीं होगा।

उमियाम झील, गुवाहाटी से शिलांग के बीच का सबसे सुन्दर पड़ाव है। यह स्थान शिलांग से लगभग 17 किमी. दूर है। बड़ा पानी के नाम से प्रसिद्ध यह झील एक बांध के निर्माण के फलस्वरूप अस्तित्व में आई थी। इस झील के पास बने नेहरू उद्यान को भी देखें। यह झील पानी के खेलों के लिए प्रसिद्ध है।

1897 के भयानक भूकंप से धरती पर तराशे गए दर्रे के लिए विख्यात है माफलोग। यहां प्रकृति की सुन्दरता ने भूकंप की भयावहता को ढक दिया है। शिलांग से लगभग 64 किमी दूर है जरकेम। यहां गंधक के झरने हैं। ऐसा विश्वास है कि झरनों के पानी से अनेक

बीमारियों का निदान संभव है। मेघालय की अन्य दो पहाड़ियां हैं गारो और जयन्तिया। गारो पहाड़ियों को जाना जाता है वनस्पतिक और वन्य जीवन की विविधता के लिए। यहां राष्ट्रीय वन्य जीवन उद्यान तथा नाफक झील भी देखें। यहां सिजु गुफाओं में चूने पत्थर की बनी आकृतियों को देखा जा सकता है।

हिलौर लेती मिन्दू नदी से घिरी जयन्तिया पहाड़ी शिलांग से लगभग 64 किमी. दूर है। जोवाई, जयन्तिया जनजाति का मुख्यालय भी यहीं है। यहां सिन्दाल गांव में अनेक गुफाओं की सैर की जा सकती है की। जयन्तिया राजा तथा विदेशी आक्रमणकारियों के बीच युद्ध के दौरान कभी इनका प्रयोग छिपने के स्थान के रूप में होता था। लगभग 1300 मी की ऊंचाई पर, शिलांग से 56 किमी. दूर स्थित है चेरापूजी। एक लंबे समय, इस क्षेत्र को विश्व में सबसे अधिक वर्षा वाले क्षेत्र के रूप में जाना जाता रहा है। यहां रोमांच लें विश्व के चौथे सबसे ऊंचे झरने नहिकालीफाई को देखने का। इसी प्रकार मांसमाई और लम लाबाघ की रहस्यमयी गुफाओं की सैर भी यादगार साबित होगी।

वर्तमान में सर्वाधिक वर्षा तथा लगभग निरन्तर बने रहने वाले इन्द्रधनुषों की भूमि मांसेनरम, चेरापूजी के पास ही है। वर्षा ऋतु में लगभग अगम्य बन जाने वाला यह स्थान अपने चूने पत्थर के बने विशाल शिवलिंग के लिए खासा लोकप्रिय है। यहां भयावह ऊंचाई लिए बेहद खूबसूरत झरने भी आपको भाएंगे।

जून-जुलाई का समय मेघालय में उत्सवों का समय है। 4 दिनों तक चलने वाला किसानों का उत्सव है वेटडीनवलामु। इसमें पारम्परिक नृत्य संगीत के साथ-साथ बैलों की लड़ाई का मजा लें। स्थानीय देवता यू शिलांग और पूर्वजों के सम्मान में आयोजित होने वाले नौंग क्रम नृत्य उत्सव में शामिल होना नहीं भूलें।

अधिक वर्षा वाले दिनों को छोड़ हर मौसम में यहां आया जा सकता है। यहां का जाड़ा कुछ अधिक ठंडा और गर्मियां सुहावनी होती हैं। निश्चय ही यह छोटा-सा राज्य गर्मी से बड़ी राहत दिला सकता है।



ये हैं अजमेर में घूमने की खूबसूरत जगहें, इन्हें नहीं देखा तो अधूरी है आपकी यात्रा

राजस्थान में अरावली पर्वतमाला से घिरा हुआ अजमेर शहर एक बहुत लोकप्रिय पर्यटक स्थल है। यह शहर सूफी संत मोइज्जिद चिश्ती की दरगाह के लिए दुनियाभर में प्रसिद्ध है। अजमेर शहर को पहले 'अजयमेर' के नाम से जाना जाता था। यह शहर अपनी विशिष्ट वास्तुकला और संस्कृति के लिए दुनियाभर में प्रसिद्ध है। अजमेर में कई प्रसिद्ध पर्यटन स्थल हैं जो देश-विदेश में बहुत प्रसिद्ध हैं। इस शहर में आपको पारंपरिक राजस्थानी रंग-ढंग देखने को मिलते हैं। आज के इस लेख में हम आपको अजमेर शहर के प्रसिद्ध पर्यटन स्थलों के बारे में बताने जा रहे हैं -

#### अजमेर शरीफ

अजमेर में ख्वाजा मुईनुद्दीन चिश्ती की दरगाह यहाँ के सबसे प्रमुख धार्मिक स्थलों में से एक है। इस दरगाह में हर धर्म-जाति के लोग मत्था टेकने के लिए आते हैं। कहा जाता है कि मुगल बादशाह अकबर आगरा से 437 किमी। पैदल चलकर ख्वाजा मुईनुद्दीन चिश्ती की दरगाह पर बेटा होने की दुआ माँगने आए थे। आज के समय में देश-विदेश से लोग दरगाह पर आकर मन्त्र मांगते हैं और मन्त्र पुआर होने के बाद चादर चढ़ाते हैं।

#### आना सागर झील

अजमेर में आप आना सागर झील देख सकते हैं। यह एक बेहद खूबसूरत कृत्रिम झील है जो यहाँ आने वाले पर्यटकों के बीच काफी लोकप्रिय है। इस झील का निर्माण पृथ्वीराज चौहान के पिता आणाजी चौहान ने करवाया था। आणाजी से नाम पर ही इस झील का नाम आना सागर पड़ा। इस झील के आसपास की जगह भी बेहद खूबसूरत है। यहाँ का दौलत बाग देखने में बहुत खूबसूरत है, जिसका निर्माण जहांगीर ने करवाया था। इस झील में आप नौका विहार का आनंद ले सकते हैं।

#### पुष्कर सरोवर

अजमेर स्थित पुष्कर झील देशभर

में बहुत मशहूर है। यह सरोवर हिन्दू धर्म के लोगों के लिए आस्था का एक बड़ा केंद्र है। भारत के पांच पवित्र सरोवरों में पुष्कर झील भी शामिल है। कुछ विशेष अवसरों पर यहां श्रद्धालु पवित्र स्नान के लिए आते हैं। अजमेर आए पर्यटक पुष्कर सरोवर घूमने जरूर आते हैं। यहां आप ऊंट सवारी का आनंद ले सकते हैं।

#### अढ़ाई दिन का झोपड़ा

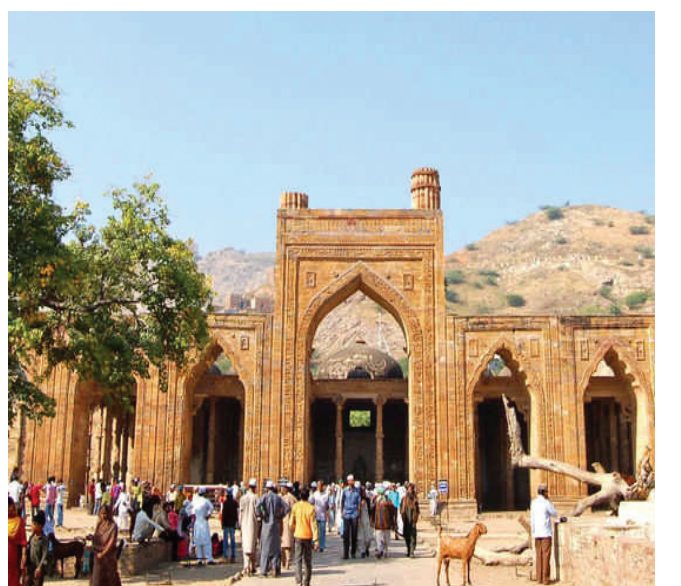
अजमेर में स्थित अढ़ाई दिन का झोपड़ा एक ऐतिहासिक मस्जिद है। इस मस्जिद का निर्माण 1192 में मोहम्मद गोरी के निर्देश पर कुतुब-उद-दीन ऐबक द्वारा करवाया गया था। इस मस्जिद में ढाई दिन का उत्सव चलता है जिसकी वजह से इस मस्जिद को यह नाम दिया गया है। इस मस्जिद के निर्माण में खूबसूरत वास्तुकला का इस्तेमाल देखने को मिलता है। दूर-दूर से लोग इस मस्जिद में मत्था टेकने आते हैं।

#### तारागढ़ किला

तारागढ़ किला, अजमेर के प्रसिद्ध पर्यटक स्थलों में से एक है। इस किले का निर्माण सन 1354 में किया गया था और यह राजस्थान के सबसे प्रसिद्ध प्राचीन संरचनाओं में से एक है। यह किला पर्यटकों के लिए राजस्थानी वास्तुकला का एक शानदार और उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण पेश करता है।

#### सोनी जी की नसियां

अजमेर में स्थित सोनी जी की नसियां एक प्रसिद्ध जैन मंदिर हैं। इसे लाल मंदिर के नाम से भी जाना जाता है। यह मंदिर जैन धर्म के पहले तीर्थंकर को समर्पित हैं। सोनी जी की नसियां मंदिर का मुख्य आकर्षण इसका मुख्य कक्ष है, जिसे स्वर्ण नगरी या सोने के शहर के नाम से भी जाना जाता है। इस मंदिर में जाएं धर्म से जुड़ी सोने की लकड़ी की कई आकृतियां बनी हुई हैं। यह मंदिर पर्यटकों के बीच बहुत लोकप्रिय है और दूर-दूर से लोग इस मंदिर को देखने आते हैं।





## There's more to the Preamble than a

AS I reflect on the recent controversy over the reported removal of the Preamble to the Constitution from select NCERT textbooks, I realise once again the significance of the politics of knowledge. Possibly, it is not easy for the ruling regime to free itself from the alliance of religious nationalism and market fundamentalism, or the politics centred on the cult of a narcissistic/potentially authoritarian personality. Not surprisingly, you and I need not be surprised if the establishment feels somewhat uncomfortable with the grand egalitarian/secular ideal the Preamble articulates.

However, as a teacher with a keen interest in pedagogic practices, I do not want to remain confined merely to what has been deleted from school textbooks. My question is whether the prevalent pattern of classroom transaction is capable of making the young learner understand and internalise the significance of the Preamble, even if it is included in these textbooks. As teachers and educationists, we should reflect on this pedagogic question more seriously rather than getting carried away by the rhetoric of the debate between the overnment and the Opposition. In this context, I feel tempted to refer to the experience of a workshop in which I got an opportunity (thanks to Vikash Sharma of the Shiksha Swaraj initiative) to interact with a group of Class-XI students in the hinterland of rural Bihar. Well, their NCERT text of political theory begins with the Preamble. I asked them to read and feel every word of the beautifully written Preamble: "We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic..." Well, they read it; and I was not sure whether they could make sense of it. In a culture of rote learning and exam-centric education, this grand vision of the kind of India we wish to make, I feared, has already been reduced to a mere 'fact' — soulless, and without any enchanting power, or just a two-mark question in the board examination. But then, I didn't give up; I sought to intervene; and I wanted them to think and reflect. I asked them a simple question: "Do you see democracy in your family, or in your village?" They remained silent for quite some time. It was not surprising. The teacher's monologue in the classroom in most of our schools, or the disappearance of lived experiences from our classrooms creates a culture of silence. Seldom do the students get an opportunity to see beyond the frozen words stored in the textbook, articulate their own experiences and ask new questions.

I was aware of this difficulty. Yet, I kept trying. And eventually, some of these students began to speak. "There is no democracy in my family. My father takes every decision. We have no voice," a girl finally spoke. This gave me an opportunity to make them reflect on patriarchy and how it negates the spirit of democracy — democracy as dialogue, art of listening and the process of collective decision-making. Furthermore, I wanted to make them think whether democracy as a way of life can exist in the grand political system if it is not practised in our families, villages, schools and society. Yes, this conversation began to stimulate them. And this time a Dalit girl came forward and asserted confidently. "There is no equality in my village. We are looked down upon; we are stigmatised" — her voice convinced me that education is about asking critical questions and interrogating the taken-for-granted world. In the process of this free-floating conversation, they brought the experiences of lived realities and felt encouraged to see beyond bookish knowledge. At this juncture, I asked them yet another question: "Do you think that the Preamble is just a garland of noble words, and the way our country operates is far from this grand vision?" Initially, they were silent or possibly confused. I kept waiting for their response. And then, a girl began to speak: "There is economic inequality in India; there is 'Hindu vs Muslim politics'; and there is caste oppression. But then, India should try to become like what the Preamble visualises." And this inspired me to make a couple of observations and conclude the session.

## India should engage more with Taliban

Delhi must accept reality of Afghan situation without according diplomatic recognition to the regime

THREE years after the Taliban recaptured Kabul on August 15, 2021, and, for the first time, gained control over all Afghan territory, they remain firmly in the saddle. This is even though their emirate is not internationally recognised and their government is 'interim'. Top leaders of the erstwhile Afghan republic are, except Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, scattered outside the country; they have no capacity of mounting an anti-Taliban revolt, violent or non-violent, within Afghanistan. There have been reports of some small actions, but these do not constitute a threat to the Taliban. The initial general international response towards the Taliban after their victory was to demand (i) the formation of an 'inclusive' government representing all sections of the Afghan polity, (ii) the Taliban should prevent terrorist groups to operate from Afghanistan and (iii) follow internationally accepted standards on gender issues. The US, smarting from its defeat in the 'forever' war, also froze more than \$9 billion Afghan assets. Over the past three years, some countries have intensified contact with the Taliban individually. Indeed, China has sent a new ambassador.

The international community's engagement is through the 'Doha process' initiated by United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) Antonio Guterres. Its third round concluded in Doha on July 1. The demand for the formation of an inclusive government, a non-starter to begin with, has been abandoned. The focus is now on conditions set out in (ii) and (iii). There is global unanimity on (ii) because it impacts all countries. It is here that the Taliban are playing a skilful game. They are seeking to counter terrorist groups that are oriented against countries showing sympathy to their regime, including Russia and China, but are encouraging those they need to use as a card. In the latter category is the Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP). The Taliban are also against the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKAP), the Afghan branch of ISIS. ISKAP's presence is a thorn in the Taliban side but is not a threat to their structure.

On gender issues, various countries are making the right noises but the Taliban are aware that all countries do not place the same degree of emphasis on them. Certainly, it is not a priority for China and

Russia. On its part the Taliban's theological position on them has not changed but its application on the ground is not as harsh as it was in the 1990s. Women wearing the hijab move around in Kabul, and, as of now, male doctors are permitted to attend to female patients if their families permit. A recent development is the placement of mullahs in major hospitals; doctors and staff are expected to attend their short daily discourses. Discriminatory practices against women from the middle level in

Haibatullah Akhundzada, has been able to establish its sway. The Kandahari leaders are more hardline and less exposed to the world. They can be expected to resist any dilution of their interpretation of the Sharia in running the administration, though on the ground, practical ways are found by the people in major cities to deal with their decrees.

The Taliban's regional and foreign engagement has continued, though at a low level. Their relations with neighbours are stable, with the exception of Pakistan. The Pakistani establishment clearly feels that the Taliban leadership has shown scant concern for its core interests because it has not tightened the screws on the TTP. The Taliban are unlikely to change their position on the TTP, at least in the near future. Consequently, bilateral Pakistan-Taliban ties will continue to be rocky. India should shed its inhibitions in opening full ties with the Taliban. The term 'full ties' does not imply diplomatic recognition. India's interests demand that China should not be allowed to gain primacy in Afghanistan. The Taliban have been urging India to enhance its interaction with them. Indeed, India has taken some 'practical'



education is being practiced. United Nations reports on the Afghan situation persistently note the continuing impoverishment of the people. In his report to the UN Security Council in June this year — the latest on conditions in Afghanistan — the UNSG noted "Nine out of 10 households were struggling to feed themselves adequately..." Low-level economic activity is taking place, but the situation continues to be dire. Consequently, those Afghans who can leave the country are doing so even as Pakistan has forced the return of a large number of refugees living for decades there. Opium cultivation, a source of income for Afghan farmers in some provinces, has been banned and its production has fallen but not eliminated. Ephedrine is also produced to prepare methamphetamine, which is smuggled out of the country through Iran to the wider world. Tensions within the Taliban interim government continue. The principal fault line is between the Haqqanis, whose power base is in the east, headquartered in Khost province, and the traditional Pashtun leadership based in Kandahar. By now, the latter, under the supreme leader, Mullah

steps. It should now openly clothe them formally. This could begin with calling the Technical Team what it actually is — the Indian embassy — and its head should be called a charge d'affaires. Doing so would not mean a move towards diplomatic recognition of the Taliban but accepting the reality of the Afghan situation. Also, India has already given humanitarian assistance to the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. It should now resume project assistance. This can be done keeping the security of personnel, if they have to be sent to Afghanistan, in mind. The training of Afghan professionals should be resumed. The most important step India has to take relates to resuming the grant of visas to Afghans who wish to visit India, for instance, for medical and educational purposes. Naturally, security concerns would have to be addressed while doing so. The stoppage of visa issuance has deeply hurt Indian interests. The policy needs an immediate review. It was inexplicable to begin with and a foreign policy-oriented clarification on why it was undertaken needs to be given.

## PM's Ukraine visit

Tightrope walk for Modi under Russian gaze



Zelenskyy had not minced words when he described PM Modi's July visit to Russia — and a hug with Putin — as a 'huge disappointment and a devastating blow to peace

THE government's announcement that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Ukraine later this week comes amid reports of the death of a Kerala man in a Ukrainian attack on a Russian military camp. The Indian fatalities — around 10 so far in the nearly 30-month-old war — are a pressing reason why the PM is likely to tell Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy what he told Vladimir Putin last month: Moscow and Kyiv should resolve their conflict through dialogue and diplomacy. And Ukraine is expected to reiterate that it wants India to play a significant role for restoring peace, even though Delhi has deftly confined itself to being a messenger between the warring sides rather than a mediator.

In an assertion of its strategic autonomy, India has made no effort to conceal its pro-Russia leanings, but at the same time it has continued to engage with Ukraine.

efforts'. Apparently, it was this criticism that prompted the PM to do a balancing act — he lamented the loss of innocent lives in a missile strike on a children's hospital in Kyiv, a response that wasn't music to Moscow's ears.

Even as Russia will closely observe the PM's upcoming meeting with Zelenskyy, the hard fact is that the discharge of Indians from the Russian military remains a work in progress. PM Modi had reportedly got an assurance from Putin in this regard last month, but not much has happened on the ground. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told the Lok Sabha on August 9 that of the 91 Indian nationals recruited in the Russian army, 69 were awaiting discharge. Exerting pressure on Moscow to ensure their expeditious return should be a top priority, but India also has to tread warily so as not to antagonise its all-weather friend.

## Regime change can impact Bangladesh's defence ties with India

Faced with a crisis of legitimacy and the backsliding of democracy, Hasina's port of call was New Delhi.

IN a conversation with me after Pakistan's surrender at Bogra in the 1971 Liberation War, Maj Gen Nazir Hussain Shah, General Officer Commanding of the 16 Pakistan Infantry Division, had said prophetically: "Bangladesh will be a disturbed desh." Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, head of the 16-member non-political interim advisory council that has two student leaders, has described Sheikh Hasina's exit as 'the second Liberation'. It has also been referred to as the 'third revolution', a redux of the 2006 Nepalese revolution and 'Arab Spring on steroids', and likened to the 2022 Aragalaya (uprising) in Sri Lanka. There are conspiracy theories attached to last month's Anti-Discrimination Students Movement. A warning by Bangladeshi filmmaker and philanthropist Chanchal Chowdhury about an impending US-led coup has gone viral on social media. The immediate fallout from Hasina's eviction will be for India, which has historically put all its eggs in the Awami League basket. Faced with a crisis of legitimacy and the backsliding of democracy, Hasina's port of call was New Delhi, which welcomed her with a bit of nervousness. The mayhem that marked the violence and revenge killings was similar to those witnessed during the regime change in Afghanistan in 2021. The army under Gen Waker-Uz-Zaman, praised by the US, carried out a coup, the fifth in 53 years.

During a lecture tour to the Centre for the Study of Genocide and Justice at the Liberation War Museum in Dhaka last November ahead of the January 2024 parliamentary elections, I failed to read the graffiti (read writing) on the wall: 'Hasina go'. And so did India. My driver told me that if a free and fair election were held, the Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Begum Khaleda Zia, would sweep the polls. This was echoed by an officer of the

Indian High Commission in Dhaka and several journalists. Still, India backed Hasina to the hilt. The civil-military relations seemed harmonised, with both sides marking their red lines. During several visits to Bangladesh since 1971, one saw the Awami League focus on two areas: the glorification of the legacy of the Liberation War and strengthening India-Bangladesh relations despite the lurking anti-India sentiment. The battle between the two Begums (and the proxy war between their sons Sajeeb Wazed and Tarique Rahman) was clearly manifest in their love-hate approach towards India. During the BNP's rule, the India connect with the Liberation War diminished. And when the Awami League regained power, especially in the last 15 years, emphasis was laid on reviving the cult of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the war. Therefore, the image of a student defacing Mujib's statue in Dhaka and the public hangings of Awami League workers illustrate the vicious cycle. India's Eastern Command, which oversaw the 1971 war, commemorates the Liberation War with Mukti Jodhas from Bangladesh every year in December. And Dhaka reciprocates with warmth through a lavish felicitation of Indian veterans of the conflict. That ritual was sanctified by the construction of a war memorial for India's 1,670-odd martyrs (similar to the one for the Indian Peace-Keeping Force in Colombo) at Ashuganj. It was to be inaugurated later this year by PM Narendra Modi and Hasina. Scholarships, medical schemes and myriad welfare facilities have been introduced for the dependants of Mukti Bahini personnel, and free medical treatment has been made available for members of the Bangladeshi armed forces.

The rise in military-to-military relations is a stellar achievement, given that the Bangladeshi military used to wargame scenarios with India as an enemy

recently. Almost everyone, other than the military and the beneficiary families, seems to have forgotten about the Liberation War. Enhanced defence cooperation between the two nations is marked by the \$500-million line of credit extended by India. There are tri-service interactions with institutionalised staff and training-level dialogue. Visits by military leaders are common. Gen Zaman was to visit India later this month. Last year, personnel of the Bangladesh Air Force had visited



Dimapur, where it was christened in 1971. Bangladesh was also supposed to take part in the Tarang Shakti multi-national air exercise with the Indian Air Force this month. Joint exercises and sea patrols are rising. Service chiefs presiding over passing-out parades in each other's military academies is a regular feature. Non-kinetic military equipment has been sold, as the armed forces division responsible for modernising Bangladesh's military

has categorised defence acquisitions under A, B and C groups. While India still falls in the C category, China — the mainstay of military hardware — comes under A. How much of the enhanced defence ties will survive the regime change is crucial for India.

Anti-India sentiment, a familiar refrain in the neighbourhood, has become a metaphor for New Delhi's unflinching support to Hasina. Some Indian leaders have repeatedly called for the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act/National Register of Citizens and described Bangladeshis as 'insects' and 'infiltrators'.

The China Media Group, along with Pakistan's ISI, is encouraging the banned Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir, to fuel anti-India sentiments. Bangladesh shares its border with five Indian states. The turmoil along the India-Myanmar border, coupled with simmering unrest in Manipur, can wreck India's Act East and Neighbourhood First policies if an unfriendly regime returns to Dhaka. The threat from China to the Siliguri corridor will also reappear. The BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) will also be destabilised as a regional grouping. Consequently, the role of the Army will be the key to maintaining India's strategic interests and ensuring stable and friendly relations with Bangladesh, given the love and labour that have gone into building them. India must send the right feelers to the keepers of the keys in Dhaka. A great deal is at stake for New Delhi, which took its eyes off the neighbourhood.

## Sensex, Nifty trade flat after 4-session rally; Divi's Lab gains over 3%

**New Delhi.** Benchmark stock market indices were trading flat in early trade on Wednesday as investors held back after a four-session rally. The S&P BSE Sensex was up 54.93 points at 80,857.79 at 10:33 am, while the NSE Nifty50 rose 35.60 points to trade at 24,734.45. Most of the other broader market indices were trading in positive territory as volatility dipped slightly. However, heavyweight stocks declined marginally, leading to a lack of momentum on Dalal Street. The top five gainers on the Nifty50 were Divi's Laboratories, Adani Enterprises, Dr Reddy's, Bajaj Finserv and Cipla.

On the other hand, the top losers were Ultratech Cement, ICICI Bank, Tata Steel, LTIM and HDFC Bank.

Dr. V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said, "An important trend in the market now is the shift in market preferences from overvalued segments to fairly valued segments."

"Attractively valued financials are witnessing value buying and overvalued segments like railways and defence-related stocks are witnessing profit booking. This is a healthy trend and is likely to sustain for some more time. Prices cannot soar continuously. Reversion to mean is a normal trend," he added.

He noted that the trend of FII selling and DII buying continues, but added that the fall in the dollar index to 101.39 "has the potential to arrest the trend of FII outflows". "But big FII investment will happen only if Indian valuations correct, which appears unlikely in the present context of sustained domestic inflows. Despite high valuations the undertone of the market continues to be bullish," Vijayakumar concluded.

## Gold, silver price: Precious metals record hike on MCX

**New Delhi.** Both gold and silver prices recorded a hike on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) on Wednesday, August 21, 2024. Gold futures, maturing on October 4, 2024, stood at Rs 71,960 per 10 grams on the MCX, after recording a jump of Rs 183 or 0.25 per cent. The previous close was recorded at Rs 71,777. Meanwhile, silver futures, maturing on September 5, 2024, witnessed a marginal hike of Rs 141 or 0.17 per cent and were retailing at Rs 84,903 per kg on the MCX against the previous close of Rs 84,730.

### GOLD, SILVER PRICES IN MAJOR CITIES

The gold and silver prices in India depend on several factors, including the value of the rupee against the dollar. Global demand also plays a key role in determining the trends observed in the rate of precious metals.

### GOLD, SILVER PRICES IN INTERNATIONAL MARKET

Gold prices were trading below record high levels on Wednesday after a rally fuelled by Western fund inflows and U.S. rate-cut optimism, as investors braced for minutes of the Federal Reserve's latest meeting for clarity on the depth of cuts, news agency Reuters reported. According to the latest metal report, spot gold rose 0.1 per cent to \$2,517.08 per ounce by 0427 GMT, while, U.S. gold futures gained 0.2 per cent to \$2,554.90.

## Amid volatility, large, mid-cap funds to see more inflows

**NEW DELHI.** Amid growing volatility in the domestic equity market, large and mid-cap funds are likely to be a big draw among investors in the coming days, anticipates ICRA Analytics. It stated that the possibility of having a diversified portfolio coupled with good returns is attracting investors to such funds.

The global equity market, including India, is witnessing heightened volatility at peak levels following escalating geopolitical risks and global uncertainty. There are concerns about the valuation of equities listed in India, especially in the mid and small-cap segments.

Large and mid-cap funds have seen over five-fold growth



in assets under management over last five years at Rs 2.57 lakh crore in July 2024, as against Rs 0.50 lakh crore in July 2019. The compound annualised returns on large and mid-cap funds are 44.07% for 1-year, 21.85% for 3-years, 23.67% for 5-years and 16.40% for 7-year period. "Escalating geopolitical risks, worries over heightened valuations and uncertainty as to how the global interest rate cycle pans out in the coming months are some of the factors that may result in market volatility," said Ashwini Kumar, Senior Vice-President and head market data, ICRA Analytics. Large and mid-cap funds may be a good investment choice if these funds have exposure to companies that have comparatively strong balance sheets, established businesses and stable earnings growth which can offer the much-needed stability. "Net flows into large and mid-cap funds have increased by 276% at Rs 2,622.29 crore in July 2024, as against Rs 697.13 crore in July 2019.

# Congress to hold 20 press conferences on Aug 21 to highlight need for JPC probe into allegations against Adani, Sebi

**New Delhi.** The Congress on Tuesday informed that it will hold 20 press conferences across the country to highlight the need for a joint parliamentary committee probe into the findings of the Hindenburg Research, which in its recent report raised serious allegations against the market regulator SEBI chairperson Madhabi Buch.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said that these issues have "widespread ramifications for the economy." "Tomorrow, the Indian National Congress will conduct 20 press conferences across the country to highlight the need for a JPC into the Modani Maha Ghotala that has widespread ramifications for the economy, and for crores of small investors - for whom the integrity of capital market regulators is essential," he said. The Congress had earlier said that the demand for a JPC probe goes beyond the findings of the Hindenburg report as it is "just the tip of the iceberg." "The demand for a Joint Parliamentary



Committee (JPC) investigation into the Adani Mega Scam goes far beyond the revelations made by Hindenburg Research's reports. Irregularities and wrongdoings relating to the Adani Group span every dimension of the political economy, as documented in our 100-question series HAHK (Hum Adani Ke Hain Kaun)," Jairam Ramesh had said.

The party has been pushing for a transparent investigation into the matter since the release of the Hindenburg report in January 2023, which accused the Adani Group of stock manipulation and accounting fraud. In a recently released

report, Hindenburg Research alleged that the chairperson of SEBI, the market regulator entrusted with investigation into the matter, held hidden stakes in the 'obscure' offshore funds used by Vinod Adani, brother of billionaire Gautam Adani. The report alleged that this is the reason why Sebi was not keen to

thoroughly investigate the Adani Group. Both Madhabi Buch and Adani have refuted the allegations with the ruling party terming it as a "conspiracy."

The Congress has however demanded the resignation of the Sebi chief and announced a nationwide protest on August 22.

## Rising aspirations behind deposit shift, says RBI governor Shaktikanta Das

**MUMBAI.** RBI governor Shaktikanta Das has said that it is natural for young Indians to explore other markets for their savings, given rising aspirations fueled by education and exposure to the internet. However, banks need to be prepared by managing liquidity and balancing credit growth with deposit growth. In an interview with NDTV, Das said that credit growth and disbursement have sped up, thanks to technology, but deposit collection is still mostly physical. "That's why, in the previous policy, I urged banks to create new deposit products and services and to leverage their extensive branch networks," said Das. "If youngsters are turning to stock markets, insurance, and mutual funds, it is a good thing. What we have done is to provide advance caution to banks; there is no problem now, but looking ahead, we want to ensure they are prepared," said Das.

# Starbucks' new CEO to commute by jet daily, won't relocate to Seattle HQ

**New Delhi.** Starbucks' new CEO, Brian Niccol, will be making an exceptional daily commute to his new role. Niccol, who currently resides in California, will travel 1,600 kilometres each day to Starbucks' headquarters in Seattle.

According to his employment agreement, Niccol will use a corporate jet for this daily journey. Despite the distance, he is expected to work from Starbucks' Seattle office at least three days a week, in line with the company's hybrid work policy, which has been in effect since 2023.

Niccol, aged 50, will receive an annual base salary of \$1.6 million. Additionally, he is eligible for a cash bonus ranging from \$3.6 million to \$7.2 million, depending on his performance. He will also have the opportunity to earn up to \$23 million in annual equity awards. This commuting arrangement is not new for Niccol. When he was CEO of Chipotle in 2018, he arranged a similar deal. Chipotle,



which was headquartered in Colorado, moved its headquarters to California just three months after Niccol took on the role. A Starbucks spokesperson said, "Brian's primary office and a majority of his time will be spent in our Seattle Support Center or out visiting partners and customers in our stores, roasteries, roasting facilities and offices around the world. His schedule will exceed the hybrid work guidelines and workplace expectations we have for all partners." Such flexible work terms are often negotiated by high-ranking executives who have significant

negotiating power. For instance, Hillary Super, the CEO of Rihanna's lingerie brand Fenty x Savage, was granted a similar arrangement, allowing her to work from New York City instead of Victoria's Secret's headquarters near Columbus, Ohio. However, not all CEOs have such leeway. Amazon's Andy Jassy and JPMorgan Chase's Jamie Dimon are actively advocating for a return to in-office work. The reasons behind Niccol's unique arrangement are linked to Starbucks' recent performance. Sales in the company's largest markets, the US and China, have declined this year under the leadership of current CEO Laxman Narasimhan. Niccol's appointment comes with high expectations, given his impressive track record of revitalising companies. Under his leadership at Chipotle, the company's stock reportedly increased by 773%.

## Markets Decline In Early Trade On Weak Trends From Asian Peers, Foreign Fund Outflows

**Mumbai.** Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined in early trade on Wednesday amid continuous foreign fund outflows, weak trends from Asian markets and selling in banking stocks. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 138.58 points or 0.17 per cent to 80,664.28 in early trade. The NSE Nifty snapped its four-day rally and slipped 15.20 points to 24,683.65. From the 30 Sensex firms, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tech Mahindra, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, IndusInd Bank, Power Grid and Axis Bank were the laggards. Larsen & Toubro, Bharti Airtel, Nestle India, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finserv and Adani Ports were among the gainers. In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul were trading lower on Wednesday. The US markets settled lower on Tuesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) again turned sellers on Tuesday as they offloaded equities worth Rs 1,457.96 crore, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors



(DIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,252.10 crore on Tuesday. "The trend of FII selling and DII buying continues. But the fall in the dollar index has the potential to arrest the trend of FII outflows. But big FII investment will happen only if Indian valuations correct, which appears unlikely in the present context of sustained domestic inflows, V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said. Despite high valuations the undertone of the market continues to be bullish, Vijayakumar added. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.11 per cent to USD 77.09 a barrel. The 30-share BSE Sensex rebounded 378.18 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at 80,802.86. Rising for the fourth consecutive session, the NSE Nifty surged 126.20 points or 0.51 per cent to 24,698.85.

# Reliance-Disney merger: CCI raises concern over cricket broadcast rights

**NEW DELHI.** The Competition Commission of India (CCI) is said to have raised preliminary concerns that the \$8.5 billion merger of Reliance and Walt Disney media assets might harm competition due to their power over cricket broadcast rights. As per a report, the CCI has privately told billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance and Disney its view and asked the companies to explain why an investigation shouldn't be ordered.

The report stated that rights worth billions of dollars for the broadcast of cricket would be vested with the merged entity, which could potentially peril fair pricing power and control over advertisers. The CCI earlier privately asked Reliance and Disney about 100 questions related to the merger. The companies reportedly told the antitrust body they are willing to



sell about 10 television channels to assuage concerns about market power to get an early approval.

CCI is reported to have given a 30-day timeframe to the two companies to respond and explain their position.

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and US-based entertainment giant Walt Disney in February had announced forming a joint venture (JV) that will combine the businesses of Viacom18 and Star India to create an \$8.5 billion

media behemoth whose reach in the broadcasting as well as streaming platform will be among the largest in the country. The transaction, which will create an entity merged with 120 TV channels and two streaming platforms, is expected to be completed in the last quarter of CY24 or the first quarter of CY25. Antitrust experts had earlier warned that the merger process would attract intense scrutiny due to its expected size and reach in the industry.

### Billion dollar rights

Report stated that the rights worth billions of dollars for the broadcast of cricket would be vested with the merged entity.

### May impact fair pricing power

Exclusive cricket broadcasting rights could peril fair pricing power and control over advertisers.

# Single-digit pay hike in IT new reality

## Current salary spends and increments reflect sluggish performance, says a staffing company

**BENGALURU.** Last week when Nasdaq-listed Cognizant rolled out an increment to employees after a four-month delay, it had to face criticism on social media as wage hike starting as low as 1%. Soon, the company in a statement said the merit increases for this cycle are tied to both individual performance and macro industry dynamics. As per sources, employees with the highest rating received only a 4.5% salary hike. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) rolled out double-digit wage hikes for high performers and an average 4.5% to 7% wage hike for the rest of the employees, with effect from April 1. Infosys' last wage hike was in November 2023. Its CFO Jayesh Sanghrajka said during the Q1 earnings conference that they take multiple factors into account (inflation, peer practice) in case of a wage hike. "At

this point we are evaluating all of that...we have improved our variable pay this year versus the last quarter and last year," he said. These companies are announcing single-digit hikes due to various factors including inflation. "Tech sector's compensation spend and increments are linked to the revenue performance and outlook for revenue growth. The current compensation spends and increments reflect sluggish performance on these two parameters," said Krishna Gautam, business head, Direct Hire - IT, Xpheno, a specialist staffing company. As per Xpheno, the collective of top 7 IT services firms have seen 3.4% annual revenue growth in the quarter ending June 2024 as against June 2023. The collective has accordingly controlled compensation costs with 2.8% annual growth for the same period. The compensation cost controls have been driven through headcount reductions and moderate hikes for performance and retention. The 12-month period ending June 2023 saw a 12.4% revenue growth with a compensation cost growth of



14.2%. Top 7 IT firms saw revenue growth of 3.4% in Q1. According to Xpheno, the collective of top 7 IT services firms have seen 3.4% annual revenue growth in the quarter ending June 2024 as against June 2023. The collective has accordingly controlled compensation costs with 2.8% annual growth for the same period. And the 12-month ending June 2022 saw a 19.2% revenue growth driven on a compensation cost growth peak of 24.3%. "Having incurred high spend manpower absorptions during the buoyancy of 2021 and early 2022, the

tech sector is now operating on tighter cost controls and austerity measures to preserve margins in uncertain market conditions," Gautam said. The restrained salary hikes of 2% to 4% in IT companies this fiscal year are primarily driven by global economic headwinds and tightening profit margins, said Ramesh Alluri Reddy, CEO, TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship. While the IT sector had been offering robust increments during the pandemic to retain top talent, the current economic landscape is more challenging. "Global uncertainties and potential slowdowns in key markets like the US and Europe have led to cautious client spending, directly affecting the revenue growth of Indian IT firms. Additionally, rising inflation and the need to invest in next-generation technologies are exerting pressure on profit margins, prompting companies to adopt a conservative stance on salary increments," he explained. Moreover, IT organisations are increasingly prioritising operational efficiency and are channeling significant raises towards employees in strategic roles or those possessing niche skills that are critical for business transformation.



# Badlapur: 12-hour delay in sex assault FIR but protesters arrested in 24 hours

The sexual abuse of two girls at a Badlapur school in Maharashtra has triggered outrage over allegations that the parents were made to wait for 12 hours at the police station.

**New Delhi:** Over 70 people have been arrested and five FIRs have been filed against 500 in just 24 hours over the protests in Maharashtra's Badlapur against the sexual abuse of two kindergarten students. The alacrity of the police in arresting the protesters pales in comparison to the action taken by the cops in registering the FIR, which apparently took 12 hours. The opposition has gone hammer and tongs in attacking the Mahayuti-led government over the insensitivity of the police. The opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi, which comprises the Congress, NCP(SP) and Shiv Sena (UBT), have alleged that the parents of the girls were made to wait for 12 hours at Badlapur police station before taking their complaints. The medical examination of the girls was also reportedly delayed by 10 hours, prompting fears of a cover-up by the administration.

What has added to the outrage is the fact that the mother of one of the two girls was made to stay at the police station for over 10 hours despite being two-months pregnant, a report in The Indian Express said.

While the Maharashtra government has suspended three police officials for alleged dereliction of duty and handed the probe to a Special Investigation Team (SIT), it has done little to quell the outrage.

The school management has suspended the principal, a class teacher and a female attendant.

**BADLAPUR CASE: OUTRAGE OVER DELAY IN FILING FIR**

The two girls, aged three and four, were sexually abused at a school in



Maharashtra's Badlapur by a cleaning staffer between August 12-13. The accused, Akshay Shinde, was arrested by the police on August 17.

As per the FIR, police were informed about the incident on August 16. The FIR was allegedly filed 12 hours later -- around 9

pm on August 16. The delay in filing the FIR has led to an outrage as in such cases circumstantial and medical evidence are crucial. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought a report from Maharashtra over the "12-hour delay" in registering the FIR after the parents lodged a complaint. The Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights also said the school preferred to cover up the crime instead of helping the parents file a

police complaint, PTI reported.

On Tuesday, thousands of people entered the Badlapur railway station and stopped local trains as they protested against the incident. Protesters also ransacked the school where two girls were sexually abused. The police, who resorted to lathicharge to disperse the

protesters, were pelted with stones. A dozen policemen, including senior officers, were injured. Internet services were also briefly snapped in Badlapur.

Questioning the delay in registering the FIR, NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) MP Supriya Sule sought to know why an inquiry was not launched to probe the police's inaction.

Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, while slamming the government, drew a comparison between the Maharashtra Police's reaction to the case and how the Kolkata Police swiftly arrested the accused in one day in the rape and murder case of a trainee doctor.

"RG Kar case had videographed autopsy and Kolkata Police arrested the accused within hours. In Maharashtra, police refused to file an FIR for days. This is the real non-democratic alliance," Mahua Moitra tweeted.

## ED officer, under CBI scanner in corruption case, dies by suicide

**New Delhi:** An Enforcement Directorate officer, who was under the scanner of the agency and the CBI in an alleged corruption case, has died by suicide. The body of Alok Kumar Pankaj was found on a railway track in Sahibabad near Delhi on Tuesday. Alok Kumar, a resident of Ghaziabad, was on deputation with the ED in New Delhi. Earlier, he had worked with the Income Tax department. Recently, he was questioned twice by the CBI in an alleged corruption case but was let off due to lack of evidence. Alok Kumar Pankaj's name had cropped up in a bribery case after an assistant director of the ED, Sandeep Singh, was arrested by the CBI. The CBI received a complaint from a person that Singh had reportedly demanded Rs 50 lakh for not arresting his son. The agency then laid a trap and Singh was caught red-handed accepting a bribe of Rs 20 lakh in Delhi.

Singh reportedly also took bribes from a Mumbai jeweller whose store was raided by the Enforcement Directorate earlier. In the same case, Alok Kumar Pankaj was named as an accused along with Sandeep Singh in the FIR. Sandeep Singh was reportedly suspended following the case. The police have shifted the ED officer's body to a mortuary for post-mortem and are probing the case to ascertain the reason behind the alleged suicide.

## Malaysia PM hopes India 'plays its part' to deal with minorities, religious issues

**New Delhi:** Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, on a state visit to India, said on Tuesday that India had to grapple with "some serious issues" affecting minorities or religious sentiments. He expressed hope that New Delhi would continue to play its rightful role in dealing with the issues faced by minorities. "I will not deny the fact that you also have to grapple with some serious issues affecting minorities or religious sentiments. But our hope is that India continues to play its rightful role because I mentioned to Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi, that these were the years when Nehru and Zhou Enlai and Sukarno and Nyerere were there standing up for the Global South against colonialism and imperialism and to struggle to ensure that we recognise what humanity is about, what freedom is all about, and what dignity of men and women," he said at an interactive session at the ICWA in Delhi.

Ibrahim's remarks come at a time when India-Malaysia bilateral ties are slowly coming back on track after former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed criticised India over its move to scrap Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir that granted special status and the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act. New Delhi lodged strong protests and imposed restrictions on Malaysian oil imports.

However, since Ibrahim took charge in 2022, both countries settled trade in their own rupee and ringgit currencies in April last year. India's Malaysian palm oil imports have increased as well. Zakir Naik, a controversial Islamic preacher, who fled India in 2016, however, continues to be a major irritant in bilateral ties. He is currently in Malaysia after getting asylum there in 2018. Naik is wanted in India for serious charges related to terrorism after his name cropped up in connection with a ghastly terror attack at Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka in July 2016. During his address, Ibrahim indicated that his government may consider India's request to extradite Naik if New Delhi provided evidence against him.

He also said that the issue was not raised by the Indian side during his talks with PM Modi and asserted that it should not deter the two countries from enhancing bilateral relations. "Firstly, it was not raised by the (Indian side). PM (Narendra Modi) did raise it much earlier, some years back. But the issue is I am not talking about one person, I am talking about the sentiment of extremism, of a compelling case and evidence that suggest the atrocities committed by an individual or group or faction or parties," Ibrahim said.

## How RG Kar Hospital, at centre of storm, started from rented house 138 years ago

**New Delhi:** Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, steeped in the rich history of West Bengal, has grabbed nationwide attention after the brutal rape and murder of a trainee doctor in its premises. A portion of the hospital, the first non-government medical college in Asia, was also vandalised on the eve of Independence Day as doctors and women protested against the gruesome incident. It is probably the first time that the hospital, established in 1886 by Dr Radha Gobinda Kar (RG Kar) and which has been a cornerstone of Kolkata's healthcare system, has been hit by controversy in its 138-year-old history. Dr Radha Gobinda Kar or RG Kar was born in 1852 in colonial Bengal. His more famous peer, Nil Ratan Sircar, was born nine years later, in 1961. He established the Nil Ratan Sircar (NRS) Medical College, which is located in Sealdah in the heart of Kolkata. Both RG Kar and NRS hospitals are the top state government-run institutions in Bengal, catering to thousands of patients every day. RG

Kar remained as the secretary of the medical college till his death in 1918. The West Bengal government took over the institution on May 12, 1958. The college offers post-doctorate, PG diploma, fellowship, and



undergraduate programs. **WHO WAS DR RADHA GOBINDA KAR?**

Radha Govind Kar, a social reformer, had a keen interest in medicine from a very young age. He completed his studies at Bengal Medical College, which was the oldest medical college in Asia at that time. It later came to be known as Calcutta Medical College. He then went to England for further

studies after graduation and returned to India in 1886 with a medical postgraduate degree. After returning to India, Radha Govind Kar realised that Calcutta did not have an adequate number of hospitals as per the population. At that time, Calcutta was under the grip of several infectious diseases like Cholera and plague. This gave him the idea of establishing a new medical college. Govind Kar then started a medical college, the Calcutta School of Medicine, from a rented house in Kolkata's Baithakkhana Bazar Road in 1886. It provided a three-year medical course and studies were conducted in Bengali.

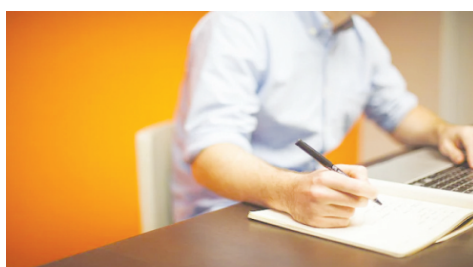
**HOW DID RG KAR HOSPITAL GET ITS NAME?**

The college became popular quickly and soon the rented area was found to be too small to cater to the students. The college was then shifted to another building in Bowbazar. However, since there was no hospital nearby, students had to go to Mayo Hospital in Howrah for training.

## 72 Employers Intend To Hire Freshers In 2024: Report

**New Delhi:** A new report reveals that 72 per cent of employers across India intend to hire freshers in the latter half of 2024. This upward trend in hiring intent is based on a comprehensive survey of over 603 companies nationwide, reflecting a 4 per cent increase from the previous half-year and a notable 7 per cent rise compared to the same period in 2023, a report by TeamLease EdTech said. "The increase in hiring intent for freshers is an encouraging sign. It reflects growing confidence among employers and presents valuable opportunities for fresh talent entering the workforce," Shantanu Roj, Founder and CEO of TeamLease EdTech, said. India's unemployment rate has declined to 3.1 per cent as per the latest National Statistical Office

(NSO) data, though challenges persist for graduates and freshers seeking employment.



The report says that industries such as e-commerce, tech startups, engineering, infrastructure, and retail are leading the charge in fresher hiring. Bengaluru tops the list, with 74 per cent of employers indicating plans to bring on new graduates, followed by Mumbai at 60 per cent and Chennai at 54 per

cent. In terms of specific roles, the demand for Full Stack Developers, SEO Executives, Digital Sales Associates, and UI/UX Designers remains high. According to the report, employers are increasingly seeking candidates with specialized skills in cybersecurity, cloud computing, data analytics, and search engine optimization. "The need of the hour is to constantly learn, not just for freshers but also for managers and employees as workplaces undergo transformation," Mr Roj said. To address the skills gap, 70 per cent of employers surveyed recommended enhancing academic curricula with experiential learning, while 62 per cent advocated for stronger partnerships between industry and academia.

## Court dismisses driver's plea on preserving Delhi coaching centre flooding video

**A Delhi court has dismissed a petition by the SUV driver arrested in connection with the deaths of three students due to flooding at a coaching centre's basement. The plea sought directions to preserve the CCTV footage of the incident site.**

**New Delhi:** A Delhi court on Wednesday disposed of the petition of SUV driver Manoj Kathuria seeking directions to preserve the CCTV footage of the site of the flooded basement of a coaching centre in the city's Old Rajinder Nagar area. The incident killed three students.



During the hearing, the CBI informed the court that it had preserved the digital video recorder (DVR) of Rau's IAS Study Circle and the CCTV footage of Chahal Academy located in front of Rau's coaching centre. The court also gave a week's time to the CBI to file its report on the petition demanding the release of the SUV. Kathuria is accused of driving his vehicle through a flooded

road in front of Rau's coaching centre, causing the water to swell and breach the gates of the building. The sudden flooding of the institute led to the death of three students on July 27. The three civil service aspirants -- Shreya Yadav (25) from Uttar Pradesh, Tanya Soni (25) from Telangana, and Nevin Delvin (24) from Kerala -- died when the basement of their coaching centre

flooded amid heavy rain. Kathuria was arrested on the same day. The incident has stirred massive uproar, with people questioning the institute's flouting of norms and the authorities' failure to ensure proper enforcement of laws. Last month, a Delhi court rejected the bail plea of Kathuria, who is also a businessman by profession. He has filed a second bail plea in connection with the case. In his bail plea, the SUV driver said he was "innocent" and that his involvement in the incident was "completely hypothetical".

"He (Kathuria) is innocent and is not associated with the said offence in any manner whatsoever. All involvement, as speculated by the police authorities, is completely hypothetical, and there is no material to support any allegations. The blame for statewide infrastructural breakdown is being put on a single individual," the bail plea said.

## News box

## Ex-cop convicted in George Floyd killing moved to Texas prison

Washington. Derek Chauvin has been transferred to a prison in Texas, the US Federal Bureau of Prisons said on Tuesday, nine months after the former Minneapolis police officer convicted in the murder of George Floyd survived a prison stabbing in Arizona.

## KEY QUOTE

"We can confirm Derek Michael Chauvin was transferred to the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Big Spring on August 20, 2024," a spokesperson for the Federal Bureau of Prisons said in an emailed statement.

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Chauvin was stabbed about 22 times last year while incarcerated in Tucson, the US Justice Department said in December. Chauvin was seriously injured but survived.

Chauvin is serving 22.5 years for murder after being convicted in April 2021 of killing Floyd, a verdict widely seen as a landmark rebuke of the disproportionate use of police force against Black Americans. He is concurrently serving a 21-year sentence for violating Floyd's civil rights.

## CONTEXT

Floyd's death in 2020 unleashed protests worldwide against police brutality and racism after Chauvin, who is white, knelt on the neck of the handcuffed Black man for more than eight minutes in a murder caught on cellphone video. The suspect in Chauvin's stabbing was charged with attempted murder and other offences.

Thomas Lane, a former Minneapolis officer convicted of aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter in the Floyd killing, was released from federal prison in Colorado on Tuesday after serving a sentence of over three years.

## Obama praises Biden at Democratic Convention: Proud to call him my President



New Delhi Former US President Barack Obama praised US President Joe Biden for his "decency, resilience, and unshakeable belief."

It was not the US President that the world had witnessed over the years who took centre stage at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. As opposed to earlier, Joe Biden, with hands on the podium, stood a little straighter and tried to hold back the tears as everyone stood up in a rousing ovation. The moment was overwhelming for anyone to not get emotional, and so was former US President Barack Obama, who shared the clip on his official X handle. Calling President Biden by his first name, Obama said, "What I admire most about Joe is his decency, his resilience, and his unshakeable belief in the promise of our country. Over the last four years, those are the values America has needed most. I am proud to call him my president, and I'm so grateful to call him my friend," he added. Biden delivered a fiery speech on the opening night of the Democratic National Convention. Slamming Republican nominee Donald Trump, Biden said he is nothing but a "loser."

"Donald Trump calls America a failing nation," Biden said, and added, "He says we're losing. He's the loser; he's dead wrong."

## World's 'largest solar precinct' approved by Australian government

NEW CASTLE. An ambitious plan to build a massive solar farm in remote northern Australia that would transmit energy by submarine cable to Singapore is a step closer after the Australian government granted environmental approvals for the 30 billion Australian dollar (\$19 billion) project Wednesday. Australian company Sun Cable plans to build a 12,400-hectare solar farm and transport electricity to the northern Australian city of Darwin via an 800-kilometer (497-mile) overhead transmission line, then on to large-scale industrial customers in Singapore through a 4,300-kilometer (2,672-mile) submarine cable. The Australia-Asia PowerLink project aims to deliver up to six gigawatts of green electricity each year, which according to Australian Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek will "help turn Australia into a renewable energy superpower" and boost its economy.

"This massive project is a generation-defining piece of infrastructure," Plibersek said in a written statement on Wednesday. "It will be the largest solar precinct in the world - and heralds Australia as the world leader in green energy." The project was initially backed by Australian mining magnate Andrew Forrest and Atlassian co-founder Mike Cannon-Brookes. The plans were highlighted during a state visit by then Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese as part of a "green economy" agreement in 2022.

## Bangladesh authorities file 9 more cases against Sheikh Hasina, total reaches 31

Dhaka. At least nine more complaints were filed on Tuesday against deposed former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her aides, taking the number of cases against her to 31, including 26 on charges of murder, four on charges of crimes against humanity and genocide and one for abduction. Supreme Court lawyer Gazi MH Tamim filed a complaint with Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal on behalf of Mufti Harun Ijhar Chowdhury, joint secretary general (education and law) of Hefajat-e-Islam. The Daily Star newspaper reported. The complaint accused Hasina and 23 others of committing crimes against humanity and genocide during a Hefajat-e-Islam rally at Motijheel's Shapla Chattar on May 5, 2013. We registered the complaint, and thus the investigation has started from today," Deputy Director (admin) of the investigation agency Ataur Rahman was quoted as saying by the newspaper. This is the fourth complaint filed with the International Crimes Tribunal against the former premier, who resigned and fled to India on August 5 following massive protests against her regime. Of the four, three cases are connected

to the recent violence centring on the quota reform movement. Separately, eight more cases were filed against the Awami League chairperson on Tuesday across the country, accusing her of killings committed during the recent protests, the newspaper said. With these cases, Hasina is now facing 31 cases, including 26 on charges of murder, four on charges of crimes against humanity and genocide and one for abduction, it added. Hasina's son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, daughter Saima Wazed Putul and sister Sheikh Rehana were made co-accused in a killing case for the first time, the paper said. The prominent accused in the Hefajat-e-Islam case include Awami League general secretary and former road transport and bridges minister Obaidul Quader, former minister Rashed Khan Menon, former mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, ex-advisor to prime minister Salman F Rahman, former security advisor to the prime minister Tarique Ahmed Siddique, former inspector general of police AKM Shahidul Haque, editor of ABnews24.com Subhash Singha



Roy and former army chief Aziz Ahmed.

Besides them, some unnamed ministers, state ministers and lawmakers, unnamed individuals from law enforcement agencies and the then policymakers of some electronic and print media were accused in the case. According to the complaint, the accused, by giving directives and plan, committed crimes against humanity and genocide by killing Hefajat activists in Dhaka and surrounding areas and in different districts, including Chattogram, Narayanganj and Cumilla, between May 5 and 6, 2013, the paper said. The Hasina-led government set up the International Crimes

Tribunal in March 2010 to try those who committed war crimes in 1971. A second ICT was formed later. Five Jamaat-e-Islami and a Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader were executed following the verdicts of the two tribunals. BNP's Secretary-General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on Tuesday asked India to extradite Hasina to face trial as he accused her of plotting to thwart the country's revolution. Hasina, her son Sajeeb, daughter Saima and sister Rehana and 17 others were sued in a case filed over the killing of a fruit seller in the capital's Jatrabari on August 5. The victim's father, Sultan Miah, filed the case with the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Shakil Ahmed. Another case was filed against Hasina and 49 others over the death of Md Omar Faruque, a student of Kabi Nazrul Government College, at Laxmibazar of Sutrapur on July 19. Hasina and 24 others were sued for the death of 18-year-old garment worker Sohel Rana in the city's Adabor area on August 5. In Savar, Hasina and 75 Awami League men were sued over the murder of a barber shop worker on August 5.

## Mpox not the new Covid-19, says WHO official

Berlin. A World Health Organization (WHO) official stressed on Tuesday that mpox, regardless of whether it is the new or old strain, is not the new Covid, as authorities know how to control its spread. "We can and must tackle mpox together," said Hans Kluge, WHO regional director for Europe, in a UN media briefing. "So will we choose to put the systems in place to control and eliminate mpox globally? Or we will enter another cycle of panic and neglect? How we respond now and in the years to come will prove a critical test for Europe and the world," he added.

Mpox, a viral infection that causes pus-filled lesions and flu-like symptoms, is usually mild but can kill. The clade 1b variety has caused global concern because it seems to spread more easily though



routine close contact. A case of the variant was confirmed last week in Sweden and linked to a growing outbreak in Africa, the first sign of its spread outside the continent. The WHO declared the recent outbreak of the disease a public health emergency of international concern after the new variant was identified. Kluge said

that the focus on the new clade 1 strain will also help in the fight against the less severe clade 2 variety that has spreading globally since 2022, allowing Europe to improve its response through better health advice and surveillance. About 100 new cases of the clade 2 mpox strain are now being reported in the European region every month, added Kluge. Mpox transmits through close physical contact, including sexual contact, but unlike previous global pandemics such as Covid-19 there is no evidence it spreads easily through the air. Health authorities need to be on alert and flexible in case there are new, more transmissible clades or ones that change their transmission route, but there are no recommendations for people to wear masks, said WHO spokesperson Tarik Jasarevic.

## Hillary Clinton seeks Trump revenge, through Kamala Harris

World. It was a night for Vice President Kamala Harris, but veteran Democratic Party leader Hillary Clinton got the loudest cheers and applause. It was a moment of revenge for Hillary, a former rival of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, when the crowd at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) erupted in chants of "lock him up", after her mention of the 34 felony convictions of the former President. The DNC is scheduled from August 19-22 in Chicago. Hillary Clinton ran against Donald Trump in a bitter 2016 election. Monday's speech at the DNC and the loud cheers were her moment of revenge against Trump, who had vilified her throughout the campaign. The means, however, was another woman, a woman of colour, Kamala Harris.

ALL APPLAUSES FOR HILLARY CLINTON AT DNC

The standing ovation that Hillary received after her speech said it all. The applause lasted for 1.5 minutes and was louder than what Kamala Harris received, according to the New York Post. Hillary Clinton focused her speech on women's struggle for political space, and contrasting Kamala the attorney to Trump, "the criminal". She thanked President Joe Biden for his life-time of service and passing on the baton to Harris. She termed it a "new chapter".

Hillary spoke about Shirley Chisholm's 1972 White House bid and Geraldine Ferraro's 1984 nomination to be the first female vice president of the US. Then she spoke about her 2016 nomination and how 66 million Americans "voted for a future where there are no ceilings on our dreams". Despite her loss, she highlighted how women ran for several top offices since 2016. "I wish my mother

and Kamala's mother could see us. They would say, keep going," NY Post reported Hillary as saying.

## HARRIS AND HILLARY VS TRUMP

Hillary Clinton then went on to contrast prosecutor Harris with the "criminal" Trump. "As a prosecutor, Kamala locked up murderers and drug traffickers. Donald Trump fell asleep at his own trial. And when he woke up, he made his own kind of history. The first person to run for president with 34 felony convictions", she said. She grinned as the crowd at the DNC erupted into chants of "lock him up", reports Politico. This was a sweet revenge for her as those were the words repurposed from the 2016 campaign of Republicans when Trump gave the rallying cry of "lock her up", demanding she be jailed. However, in a Fox News interview, Trump denied that he called for Hillary's arrest, trial and jailing.

## What's behind jailed Imran Khan's bewildering Oxford chancellor bid

World. Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan is doing more than just stare at jail walls. He has applied to be the Chancellor of Oxford University. In jail for a year now, Imran Khan's surprise move to run for the elections for the Oxford top post could be a bid to attract global attention while his party holds rallies in Pakistan on the anniversary of his jailing. It could also be a signal to the powerful military of Pakistan that Imran is done with Pakistani politics and is interested in a third career, after cricket and politics. Imran's adviser Syed Zulfi Bukhari revealed that he submitted an application to run in the October election. He has applied at a time when elections and nominations for the position of the Chancellor have become online. The former Pakistani Prime Minister will contest to replace Chris Patten, the former Conservative minister. Patten, the chancellor of Oxford University, announced he was stepping down from the post in

February. Imran's journey in Pakistan's politics started with his promise of "Naya Pakistan" or "new Pakistan". He is now languishing in jail, facing several charges, which his supporters allege are part of a political conspiracy.

## IMRAN KHAN: THE CHANCELLOR OF OXFORD UNIVERSITY?

"It's a ceremonial post but one with the utmost prestige and importance and Imran Khan, being one of the larger or more popular names coming out of Oxford, it would be brilliant to see him as chancellor," Bukhari told AFP. The list will not be made public till October. But an entry into the prestigious British university might also be a going away from Pakistan's politics for Imran Khan. Imran Khan had a playboy lifestyle during his cricket career, regularly becoming the subject of Britain's gossip magazines. He later turned to philanthropy and politics, serving as Pakistan's Prime Minister from 2018 to 2022 as the leader of



the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Movement for Justice). The party has now been banned.

He was removed as PM through an arm-backed vote of no confidence in Pakistan's parliament and has been in prison for the past one year. Khan has alleged that this is part of a political scheme against him. The Chancellor's post won't be something exceptional for him. Imran has also been the Chancellor of the University of Bradford for

eight years, from 2005 to 2014. If he does become the Chancellor, this time of Oxford, will he bid adieu to Pakistan's politics? Or is this a signal to Pakistan's powerful military, which he had taken on as the PM, that he is moving on?

## CAN IMRAN KHAN MAKE IT IN THE UK?

Imran Khan is also a graduate of Oxford, where he studied politics, philosophy and economics at Oxford's Keble College in the 1970s. He earned an honours degree for the university's cricket team. If he does become the chancellor, he would be the first of Asian descent. It wouldn't be something only for Pakistan, but it would be a great achievement for all of Asia and the rest of the world," Bukhari added. Voting will take place from October 28. But only Oxford graduates and members of the university can vote. The chancellor appoints the vice-chancellor and deals with fundraising and advocacy.

## UK Sperm Exports Lead To Global Increase In 'Half-Siblings': Report

Source: Bureau A legal loophole is allowing sperm donated in the UK to be exported to other countries, potentially leading to the creation of large numbers of donor-conceived children worldwide. This practice violates the UK's strict 10-family limit that applies within its fertility clinics, as there are no restrictions on exporting sperm or eggs abroad. Experts warn that this could result in donor-conceived children having dozens of biological half-siblings across Europe and beyond. They are urging the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) to tighten regulations to prevent this from happening. As per The Guardian, "If you believe that it's necessary to enforce the 10-family limit in the modern world then logically that should apply wherever the sperm are from," said Prof Jackson Kirkman-Brown, chair of the Association for Reproductive and Clinical Scientists



(ARCS). "There is data showing that some of the children who find the really big families struggle with that," he added.

by Taboola Sponsored Links You May Like "Once you've frozen sperm it doesn't get any older," said Mr Kirkman-Brown. This means that a donor sperm could continue to be used for years or decades. "You can end

up with donor siblings older than your parents, which is not somewhere we've been yet," he added.

## TRENDING NOW

Prof Nicky Hudson, a medical sociologist at De Montford University, said, Donations are "presented to donors as a beautiful gift to help someone create a family, not as, 'We're going to maximise the number of births from your gametes and make as much money as we can from that.'" The 10-family limit across licensed clinics is enforced by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA). According to the regulatory body, this limit reflects the number that people feel comfortable with regarding the potential number of donor-conceived children, half-siblings, and families that could be created.

"As the HFEA does not remit over donation outside of HFEA licensed clinics, there would be no monitoring of how many times a donor is used in these circumstances," said Rachel Cutting, director of compliance and information at the HFEA. According to the reports by The Guardian, until five years ago, the United Kingdom primarily imported sperm, mainly from the US and Denmark. However, between 2019 and 2021, the UK exported 7,542 sperm straws. Additionally, the world's largest sperm and egg bank, Cryos, opened a facility in Manchester this April. As per the reports, The European Sperm Bank, which accounted for 90% of exports, applies a worldwide limit of 75 families a donor and estimates that its donors help on average 25 families. "The concept of a father with many children is already ingrained in our cultural imagination. However, we don't have a similar concept for women," observed Prof. Nicky Hudson, adding that it's not something women are encouraged to consider.

## Ukraine launches drone attacks on Moscow, claim Russian officials

Moscow Ukraine launched a widespread drone attack on Russia on Wednesday, with air defence units destroying three drones some 38 km south of the Kremlin, and 15 over the border Bryansk region, Russian officials said. The three attack drones heading towards Moscow were downed over the city of Podolsk in the Moscow region, Moscow's Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said on the Telegram messaging app. According to preliminary data, there is no damage or casualties at the site where the debris fell," Sobyanin said. There were also no casualties or damage reported in the aftermath of the drone attack on the



border Bryansk region in Russia's southwest, Alexander Bogomaz, the governor of the region wrote on Telegram. Russia's RIA state news agency reported also that two drones were destroyed over the Tula region, which borders the Moscow region to its north. Separately, Vasily Golubev, governor of the Rostov region in Russia's southwest, said that air defence forces destroyed a Ukraine-launched missile over the region, with no injuries reported. It was not clear how many drones and missiles in total Ukraine launched. Reuters could not independently verify the reports. There was no immediate comment from Ukraine. In recent months, Kyiv has stepped up its air attacks on Russian territory, saying its aim is to destroy infrastructure key to Moscow's war efforts.

## NEWS BOX

## Phil Foden thanks Pep Guardiola after winning PFS player of the year award

**New Delhi** Manchester City midfielder Phil Foden won the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) Player of the Year award on Tuesday after helping his club win a record fourth successive Premier League title. The 24-year-old scored 19 times and delivered eight assists for Pep Guardiola's team as they pipped Arsenal to the title on the last day of the season. Foden expressed his gratitude for the award, highlighting the importance of recognition from his peers. Foden beat competition from City's Erling Haaland, who won the award last year, and Rodri, plus Chelsea's Cole Palmer, Arsenal's Martin Odegaard and Aston Villa's Ollie Watkins. He also acknowledged his teammates who were voted into the PFA Team of the Year, including Kyle Walker, Rodrigo, and Erling Haaland. "Winning this award is something very special and I am very



proud and grateful for it," Foden said. "To be recognised in this way by your peers means everything and I would like to thank everyone who voted for me. I would also like to give a special thanks to Pep, the City coaches and all my teammates for helping me to get better every day." Chelsea winger Cole Palmer, 22, was named Young Player of the Year after scoring 27 goals and registering 15 assists in all competitions in his first season with the London club after leaving City. Manchester City women's team forward Khadija Shaw claimed the Women's Player of the Year crown after topping the WSL scoring charts with 21 goals last season.

Manchester City began their title defence with a win over Chelsea in their first game. Erling Haaland and Mateo Kovacic were on the scoresheet as they clinched a clinical 2-0 win over the Enzo Maresca team.

## All eyes on Jay Shah as ICC chairman Barclay opts out of 3rd term

**New Delhi** Current ICC chairman Greg Barclay on Tuesday opted out of a third term following the end of his tenure on November 30, fuelling speculations on BCCI secretary Jay Shah's future at the sport's governing body.

Whether Shah will be interested to throw his hat in the ring will be clear by August 27, the last date for filing nominations for the chairman's post. An ICC chairman is eligible for three terms of two years each and Barclay, a New Zealand-based attorney, has so far completed four years. "ICC Chair Greg Barclay confirmed to the Board that he will not stand for a third term and will step down from the post when his current tenure finishes at the end of November. Barclay was appointed as the Independent ICC Chair in



November 2020, before being re-elected in 2022," the ICC stated in a media release. As per ICC rules, the chairman's election comprises of 16 votes and now a simple majority of nine votes is required (51%) for the winner. Earlier, to become the chairman, the incumbent needed to have two-third majority. Current directors are now required to put forward nominations for the next Chair by 27 August 2024 and if there is more than one candidate, an election will be held with the term of the new Chair commencing on 1 December 2024. "Shah is considered as one of the most influential faces in the ICC board room. He is currently the head of ICC's all-powerful Finance and Commercial Affairs (F&CA) sub-committee. He enjoys a lot of goodwill with most of the 16 voting members. Currently, Shah has another one year left as the BCCI secretary before going on a mandatory cooling off period of three years from October, 2025. As per the BCCI constitution approved by the Supreme Court, an office bearer can stay for six before he needs to go for a cooling off of three years. In all, a person can stay in office for a cumulative period of 18 years.

## Mayank Yadav cannot be wrapped in cotton wool: Mhambrey on injury-prone pacer

**Former India bowling coach Paros Mhambrey has advocated that Mayank Yadav bowl as much as he can. The injury prone pacer has been away from the game after playing 4 matches in the Indian Premier League's 2024 season.**

**New Delhi.** After a sensational debut in the Indian Premier League's 2024 season, things have been eerily quiet for Mayank Yadav. The young pace sensation from Delhi who took the world by storm with his exceptional speed and accuracy has not played a single match since the conclusion of the tournament. Former India bowling coach

Paras Mhambrey has advised that Yadav should not be kept in a cotton wool by the Board of Control for Cricket in India and rather should be bowling as many overs as possible in the nets, at this young age.

The 22-year-old, playing for LSG consistently breached the 150 kmph mark in the 4 matches that he bowled in, leaving seasoned batsmen bewildered. In his debut match against PBKS, Mayank clocked a speed of 155.8 kmph, the fastest ball of IPL 2024 at that point. He took three wickets, including those of Jonny Bairstow and Prabhshir Singh, and was instrumental in LSG's victory. This performance was not a one-off, as he continued to impress against RCB, where he clocked a speed of 156.7 kmph, the fastest delivery in IPL 2024.

Mayank Yadav: Dark horse in BGT? Manchester City began their title defence with a win over Chelsea in their first game. Erling Haaland and Mateo Kovacic were on the scoresheet as they clinched a clinical 2-0 win over the Enzo Maresca team. However, the pacer has been out of action since then. Mhambrey, while speaking to Indian



Express said that Mayank Yadav needs to play first-class cricket to build his bowling muscles and adjust his body to the load of fast bowling. "I don't agree that if he is not ready, just don't play him. This is the age where he has to bowl. A bowler should bowl. The more you bowl, the more you will have control, you will know your threshold as to how much your body can take. You can't wrap him up in cotton wool saying he will get injured. We can't overbow and burn him out but we have to be smart about how much he should bowl. As a fast bowler, he needs to play first-class cricket," Paras Mhambrey told The Indian Express. "When you play

one season, you understand your bowling. You bowl in different conditions. Physically, you will be tested in different phases of the game. Sometimes, you will have to be on the ground for six sessions. And to be able to bowl with the same intensity in the last session will give you confidence when you play at the international level. I strongly feel Mayank needs to grind it out in the domestic season," Mhambrey added. The former India bowling coach said he did not care about the long term plan with Mayank, but wanted to see what the pacer brings to the table in the next 5 years. "I am not looking at the next 10 or 15 years. I want to see what he can do in the next five. The next three-four years will be extremely crucial for him. Once he is 25-26, he will understand his body much better. And then he will have a good five years at the international level," Mhambrey added on the matter.

Mayank Yadav is currently training at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru after opting out of the Delhi Premier League.

## ENG vs SL: England to pay tribute to Graham Thorpe ahead of Manchester Test

**England cricket team will pay tribute to the late Graham Thorpe before the start of its Test match against Sri Lanka at Old Trafford, Manchester on Wednesday, August 21. Thorpe died by suicide, aged 55 on August 4.**



**Manchester.** The England cricket team will pay tribute to former batter Graham Thorpe, who died earlier in the month, ahead of the first of their three-match Test series against Sri Lanka. Before the national anthems at Old Trafford in Manchester on Day 1, England players will remember the celebrated cricketer. A tribute video will be played on the big screen at the iconic cricket ground. Stand-in captain Ollie Pope confirmed that the England players will wear black armbands throughout the Test match, which gets underway on Wednesday, August 21. Thorpe died by suicide on August 4 after battling 'major depression and anxiety'. His widow Amanda confirmed that Thorpe decided to take his own life despite multiple

attempts from his family and friends to help him battle mental health issues. Ollie Pope conceded that the news of Graham Thorpe passing away had hurt a lot of people in the England dressing room, especially those who worked with the former cricketer. Thorpe played 100 Tests for England before he worked with the senior national team in coaching roles.

**England vs Sri Lanka, 1st Test: All you need to know**

"We'll have our black armbands on throughout the game and there'll be a tribute to him before. It has hurt a lot of people in that changing room. He was a great man. I probably had two or three years playing with him as a batting coach. I really admired

him," Pope said ahead of the series opener. "I remember him saying one thing to me, which was: 'Never let the runs you're scoring define you as a person'. In a bit of a rut when you're young, that was exactly what I needed to hear. It shows, for me, what a people's person he was." He was loved in the changing room. He's such a sad loss to everyone: to the country, his family, and the boys as well. He's missed, and we'll honour him this week," he added. The opening of an inquest into the death of Graham Thorpe heard he died from multiple injuries sustained after being struck by a train at Esher railway station in Surrey on August 4, 2024. The coroner, Simon Wickens, expressed heartfelt condolences to Thorpe's family and all those affected by his life and career. England will begin the first of their three Tests against Sri Lanka on August 21, hoping to stitch an unbeaten run as the race of the World Test Championship final berths reaches its last phase. England, who are at the 7th spot, need to win all the remaining nine matches to stand a chance of making it to the final. England will be without injured Ben Stokes for the rest of the English summer due to a hamstring injury.

## Onus on Australia to prove dominance at home: Gilchrist on BGT 2024-25

**New Delhi** Legendary Australia wicketkeeper batter Adam Gilchrist feels that the onus is on the Pat Cummins side that they are still dominant at home, when India visit Australia late in 2024 to play the Border Gavaskar Trophy. India will be touring Australia for the showpiece 5-match Test series, starting late November. Australia have not won the BGT in the last decade and will be looking to exact revenge against India. The Rohit Sharma side come to Australia on the back of winning two back to back BGTs down under, once under the captaincy of Virat Kohli and the other under Ajinkya Rahane. Speaking to the Times of India, Gilchrist said that India knew how to win overseas and Australia would have to work hard to beat the Rohit Sharma team. "Onus is on Australia to prove they are the dominant force at home. India know how to go away and win overseas," said Gilchrist, speaking to The Times of India



said that it was going to be a close call. "Naturally, I'm going to say Australia, hope they get there. But it's too close to call. It will be a close tussle," Gilchrist said.

**Pat Cummins puts focus on BGT**

The BGT will be both India and Australia's final Test series before the World Test Championship Final in 2025. India

currently leads the WTC points table, while Australia are in the second position. It is expected that these two teams are going to qualify for the final, set to be hosted in Lord's during the English summer of 2025. While Australia lost the BGT 1-3 in 2023 while playing in India, they clinched the World Test Championship title beating Rohit Sharma's team. Australia went on a tremendous run by winning the ODI World Cup as well, once again beating India in the final. Australia spinner Nathan Lyon has already said that he is hungry to win back the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Speaking about the series Lyon said that Australia have unfinished business with India in red-ball cricket.

The spinner praised the Indian side but said that he was really hungry to bring the trophy back to Australia. "It's been ten years of unfinished business, it's been a long time, and I know we're extremely hungry to turn things around especially here at home," Lyon said.

## Border Gavaskar Trophy on par with Ashes for Australia: Mitchell Starc

**Australia fast bowler Mitchell Starc feels that the Border Gavaskar Trophy against India is on par with the iconic Ashes series. Starc has hoped that Australia will win the bilateral series after 10 long years.**

**Pakistan had failed to chase down 120 runs in New York**

**New Delhi** India are set to travel to Australia at the end of this year to play their showpiece Test series of the season - the Border Gavaskar Trophy. India and Australia have been the fiercest rivals over the past two decades and the BGT has turned into one of the most important Test bilaterals for India since they stopped playing bilaterals against



Pakistan. Australia fast bowler Mitchell Starc has said that the BGT is one of the most important Test series for their fans as well. Speaking to the Wide World Sports website, Starc has said that the BGT is on par with the

Ashes for Australian cricketers and fans. "Being five matches now it's probably right on par with an Ashes series. We always want to win every game at home and we know India are a very strong team," Starc

said. BGT 2024-25: Full Schedule

India and Australia are currently placed at the top of the World Test Championship points table and are once again likely to meet at the final, set to be played in 2025 at Lord's. India have made to two finals of the WTC but have not been able to win the competition yet. Last year, Australia outplayed India in the final of the competition at the Oval in London.

"As we're placed at the minute we're the top two teams on the Test ladder... so a very exciting series coming up for the fans and certainly the players," Starc said.

Australia last won the BGT back in 2014, after which the series has been dominated by India, under the leadership of Virat Kohli, Ajinkya Rahane and Rohit Sharma. In the last BGT, hosted in India in 2023, India beat Australia 3-1 to reach the final of the WTC.

"Hopefully when we're sitting there on the 8th of January we have that trophy back on our shores," Starc further added.

The India vs Australia Test series starts on November 22 and will end in January with

# Ananya Panday's

'Bae' Is a 'Glorious Gen Z 2.0 Derivative' of Kareena Kapoor's Poo, Says Karan Johar

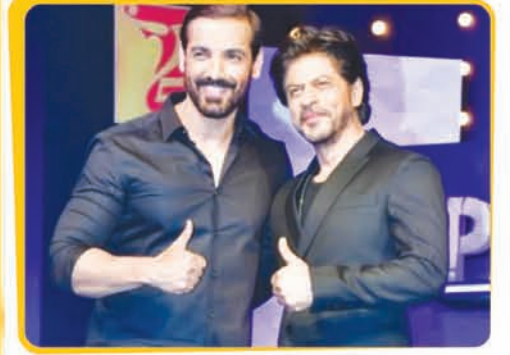
Producer-director Karan Johar on Tuesday said it's been 23 years since "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham" released and if two of its characters, Rohan Raichand and Pooja Sharma, had a baby girl, she would be Bae from the upcoming series "Call Me Bae". Johar, who serves as an executive producer on the Prime Video show, said the character of Bae — played by Ananya Panday in her series debut — is a "glorious Gen Z 2.0 derivative" of Kareena Kapoor Khan's iconic fashionista Poo aka Pooja from his 2001 feature film.

"Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham" ends with Poo and Rohan, essayed by Hrithik Roshan, tying the knot. "If Rohan and Pooja now would have had to have had a baby girl, she would be Bae. I'm just talking because she really is a glorious Gen Z 2.0 derivative of Poo. It's like where Poo ends, Bae takes off. That's the best way that I can describe her because even when you saw the character of Poo, it started with all the fun and games and then, she contributes to the emotional gravitas of the ongoings in 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhie ham' Johar told reporters here at the trailer launch of the series. "Call Me Bae" will see Panday essay the role of Bae, a billionaire fashionista, who is disowned by her ultra-rich family. How she fends for herself by becoming a journalist, overcomes stereotypes, and discovers who she really is forms the core of the story.

Johar said the series, directed by Collin D'Cunha and created by Ishita Moitra, is fun and cool but it also has a "universal appeal and message". "Full credit to Ishita Moitra, who is the creator of the show along with her glorious team, both Rohit Nair and Samina Motlekar who have given all the fun, the needed and required gravitas (to the series). There are a lot of meaningful things that happen in the show through this character. But I will not say that it is a textbook-on-journalism kind of show. The show's communication and politics is strong, everyone in India and abroad will be able to relate to it," he added. "Call Me Bae" hails from Dharmatic Entertainment, the digital arm of Johar's Dharma Productions. Besides Johar, Apoorva Mehta and Somen Mishra also serve as executive producers on the show. Johar, who launched Panday in his 2017 production "Student of the Year 2", said it is the actor's best work so far.



John Abraham Reveals He Asked Shah Rukh Khan For A Motorcycle After Pathaan's Success: 'Unhone Bola...'



John Abraham's last film, Pathaan, was a mega success when it was released in theatres. John played the villain, Jim, against Shah Rukh Khan's Pathaan. The film also starred Deepika Padukone in a prominent role. After the film's super success, the cast and crew of the film celebrated with a special success party. However, John, who sleeps early, wanted to give it a miss. Hence, Shah Rukh had a special gift for him. "My last film Pathaan was with him. I remember there was a success party after the film's release, and Shah Rukh was like, 'Come on John, let's party! Apni picture chal rahi hai. Achha opening mila hai. Maine bola nahi mujhe sona hai. 'Kya, sona hai?' 'Han, mujhe sona hai.' Toh unhone bola kya chahiye tumhe? Maine bola ek motorcycle de do bas. Toh unhone mujhe motorcycle gift ki. Main khush ho ke gaya ghar. (Our film is doing well. It's got a good opening. I said no, I've to sleep. 'What, you've to sleep?' 'Yes, I've to sleep.' So he asked me, 'What do you want?' I said just gift me a motorcycle. So he gifted me one. I went home happy)," John recalled on Zakir Khan's TV show.

Meanwhile, John Abraham is currently seen in Vedaa. Inspired by true and harrowing events, Vedaa delves into the dark and brutal world of caste-based violence and social discrimination. Drawing from the tragic stories of Manoj-Babli, victims of a heinous honour killing, and Meenakshi Kumari, who was subjected to a barbaric punishment by an all-male village council, the film centres on three key characters caught in the storm of societal injustice. News18 Showsha gave the film 3/5 stars. Our review of the film read, "On the acting front, Sharvari Wagh delivers a standout performance, showcasing a remarkable range that surprises and captivates. Whether portraying fierce determination, fear, or confusion, Sharvari handles each emotion with finesse, never compromising her craft.

Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala Planning For a Destination Wedding?



Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala surprised everyone earlier this month when they announced their surprise engagement. While everyone is now waiting for the two actors to tie the knot, it has now been revealed that they might have a destination wedding soon. Several unverified reports claim that Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala are planning to host a destination wedding. Reports claim that the couple might announce their wedding date once the venue is finalized. However, there is no official confirmation about this as of now. Previously, in an interview with Times Now, Chay's superstar father, Nagarjuna also asked if the wedding date is set to which he said, "Not immediately. Like I told you, we chose to have a hurried engagement because it was an auspicious day, and since Chay and Sobhita are very sure that they want to marry, we said, Let's do it."

Naga Chaitanya, who was previously married to Samantha Ruth Prabhu, got engaged to Sobhita Dhulipala on August 8, 2024. It was an intimate ceremony at Chaitanya's home, attended only by close family members. Sharing their first official pictures online, Naga Chaitanya's father, superstar Nagarjuna wrote, "We are delighted to announce the engagement of our son, Naga Chaitanya, to Sobhita Dhulipala, which took place this morning at 9:42 a.m.! We are overjoyed to welcome her into our family. Congratulations to the happy couple! Wishing them a lifetime of love and happiness. God bless! ?? 8.8.8 A beginning of infinite love ??."

Later, the couple also shared new romantic pictures from their engagement ceremony and wrote, "What could my mother be to yours? What kin is my father to yours anyway? And how did you and I meet ever? But in love, our hearts are as red earth and pouring rain: mingled beyond parting." Rumours about Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita's relationship began circulating in May 2023 when they were first spotted together in Hyderabad. Their bond drew further attention after a viral photo from their European holiday in June showed the couple enjoying a wine-tasting session, adding fuel to the speculation.



# Sanya Malhotra

Can't Wait For Fans To See Mrs At Indian Film Festival Of Melbourne

Sanya Malhotra is enjoying all the buzz surrounding her upcoming film, Mrs, which is an official remake of Malayalam hit, The Great Indian Kitchen. Even before its Indian release, the movie has been making noise at the global film stage. Recently, the movie received a thunderous response at the New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF) and the team is now gearing up for its premiere at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM) in Australia. Taking to her Instagram story, Sanya shared her excitement for the screening, which is scheduled to be held on August 22. The actress also shared the IFFM poster and announced that the attendees will have a unique chance to understand her perspective on film's subject during a special QnA session. Directed by Aarti Kadav, the flick also stars Kanwaljit Singh and Nishant Dahiya in key roles. In the movie, Sanya plays Richa, who starts her journey with high hopes as she marries and moves into her new home. However, she soon faces a number of challenges. Despite her efforts to impress her in-laws by doing housework and cooking for the family, but whenever she tries to make her own choices, she is reminded to follow house rules. Sharing her excitement ahead of the Melbourne premiere, the actress wrote, "I can't wait for you guys to watch this." In June, when Mrs premiered at the New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF), impressed by Sanya Malhotra's performance, the actress was honoured with the Best Actress award. Actor Harman Baweja's production company, Baweja Studios shared the good news on Instagram and congratulated the actress for winning the award at such a prestigious event.

