

CITY'S MEGA LIFT



Let's Save Open Spaces



Tech snags hit locals | NGT questions MPCB inaction

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Justice Yashwant Varma case

WILL HE GO SCOT-FREE?

Plea seeking FIR against former Judge dismissed by SC; lawyers speak out

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The Supreme Court recently dismissed a writ petition seeking the registration of an FIR against Yashwant Varma, former Judge of the Allahabad High Court, from whose official residence in Delhi unaccounted cash worth several crores stored in sacks

were found by fire brigade personnel who had come to douse a fire on the intervening night of March 14-15, 2025.

A high-level probe confirmed that the house was very much under the controversial Judge's control. Varma resigned from his post before impeachment proceedings could be initiated against him in Parliament.

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EYEBROWS RAISED OVER PROPOSED DATA CENTRE

Thane citizens question environmental implications; recent news report creates confusion

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A recent news report stating AI data centres do not need environmental clearance has raised a question in the minds of citizens in Thane. The Thanekars have been worried about the environmental implications of the proposed Amazon Data Centre at Balkum.

While the headline of the news report says 'AI Data Centres do not need Environmental Clearance — Centre tells Parliament,' the Union government's written reply in Parliament on August 6 stated that AI data centres do not, per se, require a separate Environmental Clearance under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006. So, the govern-

ment has not exempted data centres from environmental clearance.

But the same reply makes an important qualification: Environmental Clearance is required if the Data Centre is proposed as part of a qualifying Building and Construction Project or Township and Area Development Project.

What does this actually mean?

The EIA framework does not have a separate category called 'AI Data Centre'. Therefore, the government is essentially saying that merely calling a facility an "AI Data Centre" does not automatically trigger a separate category of Environmental Clearance.

However, if the Data Centre forms part of a building and construction project with built-up area exceeding 20,000 sq. metres, or a

township and area development project covering 50 hectares or more, or a project having a built-up area of 1,50,000 sq. metres or more, then prior environmental clearance is required under the provisions of the EIA Notification. The Centre has stated that such clearance is granted at the State level by the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA).

Therefore, the statement 'Data centres do not require Environmental Clearance' is misleading if understood as a blanket exemption. The correct statement would be: 'Data centres are not an independent category requiring environmental clearance merely because they are data centres. But a large data centre forming part of a qualifying construction or development project does require prior environmental clearance.'

Why does this distinction matter?

A data centre is not an ordinary office building. A modern hyperscale data centre can involve enormous electricity consumption, large backup power systems, diesel generators, cooling systems, water requirements, wastewater, heat rejection, noise, traffic and fire-safety concerns.

Therefore, the real question should not be: Is a data centre listed as a separate category under the EIA notification?

The real question should be: Does the particular Data Centre project fall within a category for which Environmental Clearance is mandatory?

And that has to be determined from the actual project documents.

Amazon's proposed data centre at Balkum

This clarification from the Centre makes the issue even more important for Thane.

The Wake Up Thanekar movement has been raising questions

about the proposed Amazon Data Centre at Balkum because of its enormous scale and potential impact on the city's already stressed infrastructure and environment.

The project is reportedly a hyperscale facility with a proposed capacity of around 422 MW. It is, therefore, essential to establish from official documents:

- What is the total built-up area of the Amazon project?
- Has Environmental Clearance been obtained?
- If yes, under which specific provision of the EIA Notification?
- Was the project treated as a Building and Construction Project under Item 8(a)?
- What water requirement was disclosed?
- How were the backup diesel generators and their emissions assessed?
- Were noise, heat rejection and air pollution considered?
- Was the entire project assessed, or only a particular phase?
- What permissions have been obtained from the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board?
- Were local citizens given an opportunity for public consultation wherever required?

These are legitimate questions which deserve clear answers.

Environmental Clearance is not the only environmental permission.

Another important point in the Centre's reply is that even where the project is not independently subject to EC, its operations remain governed by other environmental laws.

The Centre has specifically referred to the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981. State Pollution Control Boards are responsible for enforcing applicable standards concerning water use, wastewater discharge and air pollution.

Other aspects, such as ground-

DATA CENTRE AT BALKUM

The Wake Up Thanekar movement has been raising questions about the proposed Amazon Data Centre at Balkum because of its enormous scale and potential impact on the city's already stressed infrastructure and environment. The project is reportedly a hyperscale facility with a proposed capacity of around 422 MW. It is, therefore, essential to establish several points from official documents.

water extraction and energy efficiency, are also governed by separate regulatory mechanisms.

So, "No separate EC category" does not mean "No environmental regulation."

But there is a larger policy question.

This episode raises a much bigger question for India.

Data centres are becoming some of the most resource-intensive infrastructure projects in the digital economy.

If a massive hyperscale facility can be assessed primarily through the framework applicable to a building project, is that framework sufficient to capture the environmental consequences of a modern AI/Data Centre?

This deserves a serious national policy discussion.

India certainly needs digital infrastructure.

But development and environmental protection are not opposites.

The objective should be to ensure that investments, employment and technological development take place without compromising the water, air, electricity infrastructure, ecology and quality of life of the cities in which these facilities are located.



CITY'S MEGA LIFT

500-tonne steel giants swung into place over live tracks in 6 hours by Central Railway

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In a high-stakes operation played out under the cover of night, the Central Railway has pulled off one of the city's most ambitious infrastructure feats in recent months hoisting two massive 500-tonne steel girders over live suburban tracks to give Mumbai's long-suffering Sion Road Over Bridge (ROB) a new lease of life.

The second of the two giant semi-through steel girders was launched during a tightly choreographed night block between Matunga and Kurla, following the first girder's successful placement just a day earlier. Remarkably, both colossal structures each weighing as much as roughly 350 mid-sized cars were swung into position within a combined window of barely six hours, spread across two three-hour night corridor blocks.

The operation forms a critical piece of the CSMT-Kurla 5th and 6th line project, one of Mumbai's flagship railway capacity-expansion drives. Every minute of track access came at a premium, with engineers racing against the clock to avoid disrupting the city's relentless suburban train network.

Each girder stretches an imposing 54.5 metres, a full 14 metres wider than the span of the old bridge it replaces a deliberate upgrade to make room for the additional lines planned under the expansion project. Fabricated far away in Nagpur, the girders were transported and painstakingly assembled on-site at the bridge's east-end approach before the nerve-racking night-time launch. Behind the scenes, the operation demanded



Two giant steel girders were hoisted over suburban railway tracks

months of meticulous groundwork: temporary trestles erected to bear the load, hydraulic jacking and winching systems calibrated to hair-precision, alignment checks run repeatedly, and an exhaustive safety net put in place all to ensure that when the corridor block opened, there was no room for error over live tracks in one of the country's busiest and most densely packed urban rail corridors.

With both girders now locked into place, attention turns to the next high-pressure phase deck slab construction, road approach works, surfacing and crash barriers as engineers push to bring the new Sion ROB closer to completion.

For commuters, the payoff will be significant. Once thrown open, the reconstructed bridge will restore a cru-

cial east-west road link connecting the Eastern Express Highway, LBS Road and Dharavi Road a route that has been sorely missed since the old bridge shut down, forcing thousands of daily commuters onto longer, more congested detours.

Railway officials are calling the girder launch a textbook example of precision engineering executed at breakneck speed, crediting round-the-clock coordination between Central Railway teams and the executing agency for pulling off a job that, on paper, looked near-impossible within such a narrow window.

With the heavy lifting now behind them literally all eyes are on how fast the remaining civil works can move, as Mumbai waits for one of its key east-west arteries to reopen.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Pune Times Mirror, Mumbai
S Balakrishnan

Let's Save Open Spaces

The decision of the authorities to delete a Development Plan (DP) reservation for a football ground opposite Hotel Rangsharda in Bandra (West) and replace it with a ground for a convention centre is shocking indeed. There is already a large convention centre in nearby Bandra-Kurla Complex. So, where is the need for yet another so-called convention centre?

The ground was officially allotted to the Mumbai Football Association (MFA) several years ago to hold football matches and train youth. In the just-concluded FIFA World Cup, India, with a population of 1.5 billion, was nowhere near the tournament while much smaller countries took part in it with aplomb. Since the authorities were in no mood to listen, the MFA was compelled to move the Bombay High Court. Hopefully, the court will rule in favour of the MFA.

Similarly, in Mulund, a large plot reserved for a sports stadium is sought to be converted into a plot for a petrol pump and CNG station. Already two huge grounds in the western suburbs have been handed to a trust for

"maintenance." There is also a move to have an international-class golf course in Mulund in the place of a recreation ground. Golf is a game for the elite, whereas a recreation ground will be of use to hundreds of children and even adults.

Something is seriously wrong with a city where self-appointed leaders are brazenly playing with the lives of citizens and their health by destroying its open spaces. Don't the authorities want our children to play? Do they want them to stay glued to their mobiles and laptops or get addicted to drugs?

Open space availability in the metropolis is already pathetically poor compared to other cities in India and abroad. It has just 1.28 sq mtrs of open space per person. To further diminish open areas is nothing short of criminal. We, at the Pune Times Mirror, are totally opposed to these changes in reservations and will back non-political citizens' initiatives to save open spaces. This is the least we can do to save Mumbai, which is already being throttled in the name of "development."

Tech snags hit locals

Hiccups lead to delays and overcrowding in CR, WR

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Mumbai's suburban railway network witnessed disruptions on Monday after multiple technical failures hit both the Central and Western Railway lines, leaving commuters facing delays and overcrowding.

According to railway officials, on the Central Railway, sparks and smoke were seen emanating from the overhead wire of the down slow line near Mulund station. A piece of wire fell onto the overhead equipment (OHE), triggering panic among commuters at the busy station.

Officials said the wire was removed from the OHE by 12.15 p.m., following which suburban services resumed within a few minutes. The railway also said the wire may have fallen during ongoing passenger-deck work being carried out by the Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation (MRVC) at Mulund station.

Meanwhile, commuters on the Western Railway also faced disruptions due to multiple point failures.



Smoke emanated from the overhead wire near Mulund station

According to a Western Railway spokesperson, the first failure occurred at Vasai Road at 4.46 a.m. Two more point failures were subsequently reported at Dadar at 10.10 a.m. and Goregaon at 10.22 a.m. The Dadar failure affected both the up and down fast lines, while the Goregaon failure disrupted Harbour Line operations.

The disruptions led to bunched trains, with commuters reporting delays of around 20-30 minutes in the afternoon. Crowding was also reported at several stations.

With technical problems affecting both Central and Western Railway, Monday's commute turned difficult for thousands of Mumbai passengers.

NGT questions MPCB inaction

Pollution body quizzed over violations at construction site

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The National Green Tribunal (NGT), Western Zone Bench, Pune, has questioned the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) over its failure to pass a closure order despite recording multiple environmental violations at a major construction project in Vikhroli. The Tribunal has also sought a clear report from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on whether construction continued despite a stop-work notice.

The proceedings are in Original Application No. 68 of 2026, filed by Raj Kashinath Mhatre against MPCB and other authorities, including MCGM, State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Vikhroli Business City Private Limited and L&W Construction Private Limited.

The case concerns alleged dumping of construction material at a project site at CTS No.110A, Village Hariyali, Taluka Kurla, Gandhi Nagar, LBS Marg, Vikhroli. Vikhroli Business City Private Limited had obtained an Environmental



Clearance dated April 12, 2023, for expansion of a commercial building.

The applicant, represented by advocates Bhavik Lalan and Prachi Mhatre, alleged that ready-mix concrete and other construction material were being dumped on public roads, including LBS Road and the road connecting JVLR to Kanjurmarg Railway Station.

The complaint further alleged that the construction site was inadequately barricaded, roads were not regularly swept, construction material was being improperly disposed of near roadside drainage systems and effective vehicle washing arrangements and water sprinklers were not being used. The applicant also alleged that the mandatory Air Quality Index

(AQI) display board had not been installed at the site.

According to the applicant, a complaint dated April 24, 2025 was submitted to BMC, MPCB and other authorities, but no effective action was taken and the complaint was allegedly closed arbitrarily. The applicant subsequently relied on RTI applications and photographs showing construction material allegedly lying on public roads.

On April 27, 2026, the bench comprising Justice Dinesh Kumar Singh, Judicial Member, and Dr Sujit Kumar Bajpayee, Expert Member, found that the matter raised a substantial question relating to the environment and admitted the application.

The case took a significant turn during the hearing on June 16, 2026, when MPCB filed its reply affidavit dated June 12. Advocate Manasi Joshi, appearing for MPCB, submitted that several non-compliances had been recorded against Vikhroli Business City Private Limited and that appropriate action would be taken.

The latest hearing took place on August 6, 2026, when the matter was adjourned to September 21, 2026.

Actor bats for Mundhe

Paresh Rawal urges CM Fadnavis: Don't transfer FDA chief

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Actor and former politician Paresh Rawal has appealed to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to ensure that IAS officer Tukaram Mundhe, currently serving as Commissioner of the state's Food and Drug Administration (FDA), is not transferred out of his post.

In a post on his official X handle, Rawal said it should be the "priority and Dharm" of the Chief Minister to protect Mundhe and allow him to continue in his current role. The appeal lends a prominent public voice to the ongoing discussion around Mundhe's tenure, at a time when the officer has drawn considerable attention for his enforcement drive as FDA Commissioner.

The department is responsible for regulating the safety and quality of food, medicines, cosmetics and medical devices across the state. Since Mundhe assumed office on May 25,



Tukaram Mundhe

2026, he has overseen a stepped-up enforcement campaign targeting food adulteration, unsafe establishments and violations across the supply chain. The department has carried out 1,131 inspections statewide, seizing food stock worth Rs 49.57 crore, including around 1.6 lakh litres of adulterated milk. Licences of 56 restaurants, including some well-known establishments, have been suspended as part of the action.

Mundhe's tenure has also included measures around food safety near

schools. An FDA directive restricted the sale, advertising and free distribution of foods high in fat, sugar and salt within school premises and within a 50-metre radius of educational institutions.

Alongside his enforcement record, Mundhe is also known for a long history of frequent transfers during his career as an IAS officer, which has made him a recurring subject of discussion in Maharashtra's administrative and political circles. Supporters point to this pattern as evidence that his strict approach has previously led to reassignment, while transfers in the bureaucracy can also occur for a range of administrative reasons unrelated to any individual officer's conduct.

Rawal's appeal has added visibility to the broader conversation around Mundhe's future posting, with the chief minister yet to make any public statement on the matter. It remains to be seen how the state government responds to the growing public and political attention around the officer's tenure.

NGT battle continues

Case is about structure's legality under SRA scheme

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A seven-year-old environmental battle over the legality of construction undertaken under a Slum Rehabilitation Scheme at Marol, Andheri (East), Mumbai, continues before the National Green Tribunal (NGT), with the case now adjourned to November 19, 2026.

The proceedings arise from Original Application filed in 2019 filed by Mangesh Mahadev Parab against New Monarch Builders and Contractors and government and regulatory authorities. The dispute centres on whether construction and subsequent changes to a redevelopment project could be undertaken without obtaining the requisite Environmental Clearance (EC) under the EIA Notification, 2006.

The respondents include New Monarch Builders and Contractors; the Chief Secretary, Environment Department, Government of Maharashtra; Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB); Chief Executive Officer, Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA); Commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), through the General Administration Department; and State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Environment Department, Government of Maharashtra. The original application concerns construction on CTS Nos. 706, 706/1 to 106/11, 706/14 to 15 and 706/22 of Village Marol, Andheri (East) under the Slum Rehabilitation Scheme.

When the matter first came before the NGT Principal Bench on September 3, 2019, applicant's advocate Asim Sarode argued that although a layout had been approved through

a Letter of Intent issued by the Slum Rehabilitation Authority before the EIA Notification, 2006 came into force, subsequent construction could not automatically escape environmental-clearance requirements.

The applicant alleged that several amendments and changes were made to the original plan after the 2006 notification and construction was undertaken without obtaining EC.

The Tribunal did not immediately decide the allegations. Instead, it directed SEIAA Maharashtra and BMC to jointly inspect the project, verify the factual position and submit a report.

The Bench observed that if the allegations were found correct, the construction could fall within the ambit of the violation notification issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).

The NGT also directed that SEIAA Maharashtra be impleaded as Respondent No. 6, observing that it was a necessary party to the proceedings.

The matter has since passed through several stages, including additional pleadings and regulatory responses. On May 1, 2025, the Bench comprising Justice Dinesh Kumar Singh, Judicial Member, and Dr Vijay Kulkarni, Expert Member, allowed permitting the applicant to bring an additional affidavit dated April 8, 2025, along with documents on record.

Advocates Saket Mone appeared for the project proponent, while Aniruddha S. Kulkarni appeared for MPCB, Shubham Rathod/Sameer Khale and Kunal Yeole for BMC, and R. B. Mahabal and Sachin S. Gore for SEIAA.

However, the latest order dated August 7, 2026 records that the matter stands adjourned to November 19, 2026.

Man kills mother at Vashi

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Vashi police have arrested a 42-year-old man for allegedly strangling his 65-year-old mother to death. The incident took place at Ashtavinayak Society in Sector-11, Vashi, Navi Mumbai.

Vashi police have arrested the accused, identified as Mahesh Raulkar



The victim

Kadam. His mother, the victim, has been identified as Nanda Raulkar Kadam.

Preliminary investigations suggest that the accused was angered by his mother's behaviour. Police state that the accused alleged his mother did not give his wife sufficient importance and only sided with his sister,

which left him extremely angry.

A dispute between the two took place at the home on August 9 between 6 p.m. and 9.50 p.m. It is alleged that in a fit of rage, the accused strangled his mother and subsequently smashed her head against the floor, causing her death.

A case was registered at the Vashi police station at 3.34 a.m. on August 10. The police and arrested the accused at around 4.50 a.m.

WILL HE GO SCOT-FREE?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Since no criminal action was taken against Varma, an advocate from Delhi, Ghanshyam Upadhyay, moved the Supreme Court seeking a court-monitored investigation and criminal prosecution of Varma. A division bench comprising Justice P.S. Narasimha and Justice Alok Aradhe said the filing of the petition was an attempt at "cheap publicity."

Upadhyay said Varma's resignation did not extinguish criminal liability arising from the discovery of a huge hoard of cash from his official residence. He noted that a similar petition was dismissed by the apex court on the ground that there was no predicate complaint. But this technical lacuna was rectified, and he moved the court only after filing a complaint. However, the court would have nothing of this and dubbed the petition, which had raised serious issues of law, as a "cheap publicity" stunt.

Pune Times Mirror spoke to several city advocates to ascertain their reaction to the dismissal of Upadhyay's petition:

Adv. Ulhas Naik:

"He cannot and must not be allowed to go scot-free merely because he has resigned and the impeachment proceedings have consequently come to an end. Resignation may terminate his tenure as a Judge; it cannot terminate accountability for an alleged criminal act.

"If such a huge amount of cash was indeed recovered from his residence, the matter cannot simply end with his resignation. The remedy is to investigate the source, ownership and circumstances of the alleged cash recovery and, if the investigation discloses a cognizable offence, to register the appropriate case and prosecute the offender strictly in accordance with law.

"Of course, nobody should be condemned without a fair and impartial investigation. People's faith in the judiciary will remain intact only if the system demonstrates that no person, however high the office once held, is above law. If there is credible material indicating an offence, let the law take its course. But the matter cannot simply be buried.

Accountability is not vengeance. Investigation is not conviction."

Adv. Siddh Vidya:

"The greatest test of the rule of law is not whether the law can punish the powerless, but whether it has the courage to hold the powerful accountable. If the discovery of unexplained cash at the premises of a person who occupied high judicial office can end without a criminal investigation merely because he resigned, what message does that send to the common citizen?

"Resignation may end an office; it cannot, by itself, erase an alleged offence. Impeachment has become infructuous, but criminal accountability remains. The Constitution promises equality before law. That promise must be seen to operate equally at the highest levels of power. Otherwise, society will rightly ask: Is there really one law for all, or is equality before law only a principle on paper?"

Adv. Alaukik Pai:

"It is unclear on what ground the petition is dismissed. I don't think Justice Varma will go scot-free. Otherwise, citi-

zens will lose faith in the judiciary."

Adv. Mahesh Menon:

"This is strange on the part of the Apex Court of our country. Resignation is no reason to not direct registration of an FIR. No citizen, however high the post he or she holds, is immune from prosecution for an offence."

Adv. Hitendra Gandhi:

"The dismissal of a petition seeking an FIR cannot be treated as a clean chit, just as resignation cannot become an amnesty. Judicial independence must protect judges from motivated prosecution, but it cannot place anyone beyond the reach of law.

"The real question now is larger than one individual: if impeachment ends with resignation and criminal process does not begin, does our present system leave an accountability vacuum for Judges?

"That is a debate Parliament, the judiciary and the legal fraternity must seriously confront. The credibility of the judiciary is strengthened not by avoiding scrutiny, but by ensuring that scrutiny itself is independent,

lawful and fair."

Adv. Mohit Bharadwaj:

"Neither of these proceedings gives Justice Varma a clean chit, nor do they preclude further action. The State or any competent authority can initiate proceedings against him on the basis of the evidence or material available with, or gathered by, it."

Adv. Trivan Kumar Karnani

"The judiciary and Parliament established a clear stance of zero tolerance for corruption in the judiciary by removing him from judicial duties, publishing inquiry findings, initiating removal proceedings, and effectively forcing his resignation. This forced exit stripped him of his office and constitutional privileges.

"While the Supreme Court declined public interest litigation (PIL) petitions seeking direct judicial intervention or court-monitored SIT probes, the rejection does not provide permanent statutory immunity from criminal investigations. The investigative agencies (such as the Income Tax Department or statutory law enforcement) maintain the jurisdiction to examine unaccounted assets and tax liabilities through standard legal channels and can also take suo motu cognisance."

NATIONAL INTEREST VS GLOBAL GOOD

Nations may speak of peace, cooperation, and a shared global destiny, but beneath these ideals lies a more fundamental reality: every nation seeks first to preserve itself. National interest is not merely a matter of policy—it is the instinct of a collective entity to survive, remain secure, and advance its interests. Yet in an interconnected world, the pursuit of national interest can collide with the interests of humanity as a whole. The great challenge of our age is to reconcile self-preservation with global responsibility

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There are often debates about whether a particular policy serves the national interest of India. Yet, what is considered to be in the national interest of one country may at times conflict with the broader interests of the international community. This raises a fundamental question: What exactly constitutes the national interest of a country?

National interest is the foundation of a country's foreign policy and security strategy. It encompasses the sovereign state's fundamental goals, ambitions, priorities, and long-term interests. At its core, it concerns the collective well-being, security, survival, prosperity, identity, and advancement of the nation in an increasingly interconnected world.

Today, nations are dependent on each other. Nations seek to shape their external environment to minimise threats. This includes building strategic alliances, maintaining a balance of power in their region, and participating in international bodies like the UN or WTO to ensure global rules don't work against them.

Today, global threats like climate change, cyber warfare, pandemics, and supply chain disruptions mean that a country's national interest is increasingly tied to global cooperation and some central body to regulate relations between countries.

Often, a country's national interest includes the projection/ protection of its core values, culture, or governance model—whether that is promoting democracy, human rights, or historical philosophies. While secondary to physical survival, public diplomacy and cultural capital (often called “soft power”) enhance a nation's global standing.

Survival and security are the most fundamental, non-negotiable aspects of national interest.

These encompass protecting the nation's physical borders from foreign invasion, maintaining territorial integrity, and ensuring the safety of its citizens. Without security, a state cannot pursue any other goals.

Ultimately, national interest is the ultimate North Star that guides how a country acts, reacts, and interacts with the rest of the world.

Self-interest

Nations put ‘self-interest’ first—which is expressed as ‘national interest’. A nation is not merely a land mass; it can be understood and behaves like a living being.

If a nation is viewed as an organism, its different parts function much like human organs, working together to maintain homeostasis. Citizens are like cells; leadership and government are the head; shared language and values form its cultural identity; the media acts as the nervous system; and the armed forces, police, and health system provide its immunity and protection. A healthy nation consumes resources and energy, builds infrastructure, and continually evolves its systems to sustain and support its growing “body.” Above all, every nation possesses a unique spirit, or “folk soul.” A nation, as an organism, is therefore a delicate, interconnected ecosystem. When one part suffers, the whole body feels the pain. Therefore, the nation must preserve itself at all times.

Self-preservation

If there is a fire in a cinema hall, everyone will run to save their lives. Yet there are people who help

others instead of saving themselves. A nation, like a living entity, first tries to preserve its own being. Some nations, which are strong enough, do help others in crisis. There are no free lunches amongst nations too—you get returns in kind or just build a strong good will—to be encashed on a later date. There are 195 nations in the world, some very small and some huge; some very rich, some very poor, but each needs to survive.

Vasudeva kutumbakam

India says the world is one family—Vasudeva kutumbakam. One wishes that the world adopts this sanity.

However, in today's world, it would seem that national interest is antagonistic to international interest. There are strong reasons for this idea.

Resources, power, and security are finite. If a country acts strictly in its own national interest (e.g., by hoarding supplies, raising tariffs, or aggressively expanding territory), it almost always hurts the international interest by affecting global stability, free trade, and peace.

For instance, most of the western nations hoarded vaccines during Covid crisis. This was self-preservation. But it was also downright selfish.

The two—national and international interest—are inherently incompatible. When a country defines its “national interest” purely as isolationism or dominance, it absolutely threatens the international community.

The real question is whether nations will ever realize that their own long-term survival depends on the well-being of the whole. In a globalised world, threats don't stop at borders. Pandemics, climate change, and economic collapses don't care about passports.

A country's true national interest is actually served by maintaining a stable, cooperative international system. If the interna-

“The love of one's country is a splendid thing. But why should love stop at the border?”

— Pablo Casals

“The nation (Rashtra) comes before the narrower kingdom (Rajya), and the ruler is merely the chief servant duty-bound to protect it.

— Chanakya

“Nationalism is an infantile disease. It is the measles of mankind.

— Albert Einstein

tional interest fails, everyone's national interest goes down with the ship. It has to be collective cooperation.

Modern international relations often talk about “enlightened self-interest” or cooperative national interest. This is the idea that a nation can best serve its own people by cooperating globally.

Saints cannot run nations

A saint operates on moral principles—honesty, compassion, non-violence, and total selflessness. A nation, however, operates on power, resource competition, and survival. For example, MK Gandhi was hell bent on giving Rs 50 crore to Pakistan after the Partition. This however, appeared questionable to those who did not think like saints.

While pure, cloistered ascetics rarely make good heads of state, there is a rare hybrid archetype: the statesman-saint or the prophet-reformer.

Think of figures like Nelson Mandela, or Abraham Lincoln. While they weren't flawless saints, they injected an uncompromising moral framework into political realities. They proved that while you might need tough, practical strategies to run the day-to-day machinery of a state, a nation without a moral compass eventually loses its legitimacy and crumbles from within.

The race for superiority

Among the top five nations too, there is a perceived pecking order—mostly judged by GDP and political stance. There is also a race for ‘superiority’. Every nation wants to be in the limelight.

It is important to be good to your people to an extent without losing grip on power and at the same time flex muscles in front of the rest of the world. This is like walking on a tightrope.

Machiavellian realism

Niccolò Machiavelli famously argued in ‘The Prince’ that a ruler who tries to be good in every way will inevitably be ruined by the many who are not good. In his view, a ruler must learn “how not to be good” when necessity demands it, purely to preserve the state.

Be that as it may—a nation's own interest comes first and always and that of the others in the world comes next.





Those stubborn white flakes are not always a sign of poor hygiene. From excess oil and sweat to scalp microbes and product build-up, here's what could really be behind the recurring problem.

For many people, dandruff is a frustrating cycle: wash your hair, see the flakes disappear for a few days and then watch them return. The usual reaction is to change shampoos, wash the hair more often or reach for home remedies. But if the problem keeps coming back, your scalp may be asking for more than just another shampoo. Dandruff is not necessarily

caused by poor hygiene or simply having a dry scalp. It can be linked to a combination of excess oil, scalp irritation, naturally occurring microorganisms and changes in the scalp's protective barrier.

Meet Malassezia — the tiny organism behind the flakes

One of the key players is *Malassezia globosa*, a yeast-like microorganism that naturally lives on most people's scalps. Under normal conditions, it causes no trouble. Problems can arise when the scalp produces excess oil or becomes irritated.

Malassezia feeds on sebum, the

GET RID OF WHITE FLAKES

Dandruff keeps coming back? Your scalp may be telling you something

natural oil produced by the scalp. When the scalp environment becomes favourable for its growth, it can contribute to irritation and inflammation. This can speed up the shedding of skin cells, turning what would normally be invisible shedding into the familiar flakes we call dandruff.

Is it dry or oily dandruff?

Not every flaky scalp looks the same.

Oily dandruff usually produces larger, yellowish or off-white flakes that can feel sticky and remain attached to the scalp. The scalp may also become greasy soon after washing, with itching and mild irritation.

Dry flaking, meanwhile, tends to appear as smaller, powdery white flakes. The scalp can feel tight, particularly after using harsh shampoos or washing too frequently.

The distinction matters because treating every type of flaking in the same way can sometimes make irritation worse.

Why summer can make it worse

If your scalp seems particularly

troublesome during hot weather, there may be a reason. Heat, humidity and sweating can increase oil and moisture on the scalp, creating conditions that favour dandruff flare-ups.

Helmets, caps, tightly covered hair and leaving sweaty or damp hair tied up for long periods can add to the problem. Product build-up from styling creams, gels and dry shampoos can also irritate an already sensitive scalp.

The biggest mistake? Stopping too soon

One reason dandruff repeatedly returns is that people often stop treatment as soon as the visible flakes disappear. That may provide temporary relief without addressing the factors driving the problem.

Anti-dandruff products work differently depending on their active ingredients. Some help control microorganisms, while others help loosen scale or reduce associated symptoms. Consistency is important, and the right product depends on the individual's scalp and the severity of the problem.

Small habits, big difference

A healthier scalp routine does not necessarily have to be complicated. Washing the scalp regularly, particularly after heavy sweating, keeping helmets and hair accessories clean, avoiding prolonged periods with wet hair and limiting excessive product build-up can all help.

Stress may also contribute to flare-ups in some people, making overall lifestyle and scalp care important parts of managing recurring dandruff.

Most importantly, don't assume every flake is dandruff. If persistent scaling comes with significant redness, pain, sores or hair loss, it may point to another scalp condition and deserves professional evaluation.

The takeaway is simple

Your scalp is more than a surface to clean.** Recurring flakes can be a sign that its natural balance needs attention. Instead of constantly chasing the next quick fix, understanding whether your scalp is oily, dry, irritated or experiencing recurring dandruff can help you build a routine that actually works.

Not made for you

Baby cream on your face, baby powder on your hair? Adults, please stop!

They may feel gentle, but "made for babies" doesn't automatically mean "made for you". Here's why those cute little bottles may not be the skincare shortcuts you think they are.

Let's be honest — many adults have, at some point, reached for baby lotion because it promises soft skin, or dusted baby powder onto their scalp hoping to rescue an oily hair day.

After all, if it is gentle enough for a baby, how bad could it be for an adult?

Quite a bit, depending on what you are using and why.

Baby products are designed around one basic job: protecting and soothing delicate baby skin. Adult skin, meanwhile, has a very different set of concerns — from acne and pigmentation to excess oil, ageing and sun damage. Dermatologists therefore caution against treating baby products as a complete replacement for adult skincare.

Baby skin is not adult skin

According to Dr Shireen Furtado, senior consultant in medical and cosmetic dermatology at Aster CMI Hospital, Bengaluru, baby skin is thinner, softer and more sensitive,

with a weaker protective barrier that loses moisture quickly.

Adult skin is thicker and more developed, but environmental exposure and lifestyle can bring their own problems.

That is why a product designed to be mild and protective for babies may not necessarily contain the ingredients needed to tackle adult concerns.

The baby-product swaps we need to rethink

■ Diaper rash cream as moisturiser:

Diaper creams often contain zinc oxide and are designed to create a protective barrier. While they can calm irritated skin, their thick texture may not be ideal as a daily facial moisturiser and could contribute to clogged pores in some people.

■ Baby powder as dry shampoo:

Yes, powder can absorb excess oil and make greasy hair appear fresher. But frequent use can lead to product build-up and scalp irritation. There is also a concern about inhaling loose powder.

■ **Baby shampoo as face wash:** Its mild formula may sound perfect, but "gentle" does not necessarily mean effective for removing sun-

screen, makeup and the excess oil commonly found on adult skin.

■ Baby oil as moisturiser:

Baby oil can help lock moisture into the skin, but it does not actually add water to the skin. It may also feel heavy for people with oily or acne-prone skin.

■ Kids' sunscreen for the face:

It can provide sun protection, but formulations made for the body may feel greasy or leave a visible white cast when used on the face.

So, should adults avoid baby products completely? Not necessarily. Dermatologists say some baby products can be useful for adults with sensitive or irritated skin, particularly when simple, low-irritation formulas are needed. Certain products may also be recommended during periods of skin recovery or after dermatological procedures.

The key is not confusing "gentle" with "universally suitable."

The word "hypoallergenic" can also create a false sense of security. Dr Saurabh Shah, senior clinical and cosmetic dermatologist and dermatologist at Saifee Hospital, Mumbai, points out that such language can strongly influence consumers, but it does not guarantee that a product will never cause irritation.

Baby skincare is intentionally

simple. It is primarily designed to protect, soothe and hydrate — not to treat adult concerns such as acne, pigmentation, fine lines, clogged pores or sun damage.

So the next time you see that adorable baby lotion sitting on your shelf, remember: you don't necessarily need to

throw it away. Just don't expect it to do the job of an adult skincare routine.

Gentle is good. But the right product for your skin is better.



NCP (SP) MPs meet PM Modi

Discuss water shortage, farmers and development works; hold discussions under Supriya Sule's leadership

#NEW DELHI
@ThePuneMirror

Eight MPs of Nationalist Congress Party (SP), led by senior party MP Supriya Sule, met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Monday (August 10). The important meeting was held at the Prime Minister's Office around 11.30 am.

During the meeting, the MPs held a positive discussion with the prime minister on various issues, including pending development works in their constituencies, the acute water shortage in Maharashtra, farmers' concerns, students' issues and public health.

Although the meeting has triggered various interpretations in political circles in Parliament, the MPs clarified that the discussion was focused solely on matters concerning public welfare and development.

After the meeting, MP Dr Amol Kolhe spoke to the media and provided details of the discussions. He dismissed speculation that the Nationalist Congress Party (SP) would join the NDA.

Kolhe said that no political issues were discussed during the meeting. He added that the MPs honoured Prime Minister Modi by presenting him with a traditional Mahatma



NCP (SP) President Sharad Pawar and MP Supriya Sule met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi

Phule turban and shawl, along with a statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj holding a royal sceptre.

On the proposed delimitation Bill, Kolhe said that there was currently no official information about it and that it would therefore be pointless to comment on the matter at this stage.

At the beginning of the meeting, Prime Minister Modi enquired with considerable warmth about the health of NCP chief Sharad Pawar. Modi also praised Pawar's long polit-

ical career and working style.

"Sharad Pawar's energy and enthusiasm for work are an excellent example for everyone in politics. Age is merely a number," the prime minister said, according to those present.

Water and PM CARES Fund: Beed MP Bajrang Sonawane made an urgent appeal for water to be released from the Ujani Dam for Beed district. He also raised the issue of increasing the quota of 35 cases for which MPs can recommend assistance from the PM CARES Fund and making the

FILE PHOTO

On the proposed delimitation Bill, NCP (SP) Amol Kolhe said that there was currently no official information about it and that it would therefore be pointless to comment on the matter at this stage

increased quota applicable to all MPs.

Naming of Navi Mumbai airport: MP Suresh 'Balya Mama' Mhatre requested the Central government to take an immediate final decision on the proposal to name Navi Mumbai International Airport after the late D. B. Patil.

Healthcare and infrastructure: MP Nilesh Lanke stressed the need for a dedicated cancer hospital in every district. MP Amol Kolhe raised the long-pending issue of the Nashik-Pune high-speed railway project. MP Amar Kale also drew attention to various local issues in his constituency.

'We met openly, not secretly': Supriya Sule

MP Supriya Sule said that, as the functioning of Parliament had been disrupted, it was necessary to bring the pending issues affecting the public and constituencies directly to the Prime Minister's attention. "We met the Prime Minister openly and transparently, without any attempt at secrecy, to seek solutions to

Maharashtra's water shortage, farmers' loan waivers and students' problems," Sule said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut also reacted to the meeting.

"There is nothing surprising about MPs meeting the Prime Minister after taking a proper appointment rather than meeting him secretly," he said.

Raut said he had spoken to Supriya Sule and expressed confidence that the party would not take a position against the INDIA bloc under any circumstances, nor would it support the NDA.

Meanwhile, MLA Rohit Pawar sought to put an end to the political speculation surrounding the meeting. He expressed confidence that MPs from the Sharad Pawar faction would vote against the proposed delimitation.

He also clarified that the meeting with the prime minister was solely aimed at resolving pending development issues in the MPs' constituencies and addressing problems faced by the public.

MERGER OF MPS WITH SHINDE-LED SENA

Top court adjourns plea

SS (UBT) lawyer Kapil Sibal seeks interim relief

#NEW DELHI
@ThePuneMirror

The Supreme Court on Monday adjourned for two weeks a plea of Shiv Sena (UBT) challenging Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's decision to recognise the merger of six rebel MPs with Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

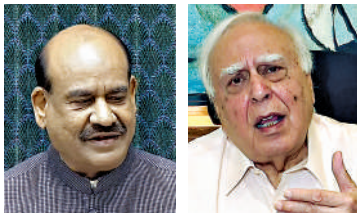
A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe noted that there was no appearance of the lawyer on behalf of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and the Joint Secretary and adjourned the matter for two weeks.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Shiv Sena (UBT), informed the bench that notice was served on them.

He also said that there was an urgent need for interim relief in the matter.

The bench, however, said that it would give time to the respondents before deciding on interim relief.

Sibal said the Speaker has no power to pass an order approving the merger when there is no disqualification petition filed against the MPs. He added that no opportunity of hearing was given to the Sena UBT side by the Speaker.



Om Birla

Kapil Sibal

On July 22, the apex court had declined to immediately stay the merger while issuing notices to the Lok Sabha Speaker, its secretary and six rebel MPs who merged with Shinde-led Shiv Sena. It had sought response from respondents and posted the matter for hearing after two weeks.

On July 18, ahead of the monsoon session of Parliament, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla approved the merger of six Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs into the Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde. The Shiv Sena (UBT) now has only three MPs in the Lok Sabha.

Six rebel MPs, Sanjay Jadhav, Sanjay Patil, Sanjay Deshmukh, Omraje Nimbalkar, Nagesh Patil Ashtikar and Bhausaheb Wakchaure, had joined the Shiv Sena. Shiv Sena's strength in the Lok Sabha is now 13 from seven.

ANI

Fadnavis backs FCRA Bill

Those doing good work will face no obstacle, says chief minister

#NAGPUR
@ThePuneMirror

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis (in pic) on Monday emphasised that transparent and law abiding organisations have nothing to fear from the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) Bill.

He said that the primary objective behind tightening FCRA norms is to plug loopholes exploited by certain entities to bring foreign money into the country for subversive or unlawful activities.

"The reason for bringing the FCRA Bill is that some organisations have been continuously bringing funds into the country through FCRA and using that money for anti-national activities. Those who are doing good work will face no obstacle or difficulty because of this Bill. The FCRA provisions will continue to remain in place, and those who provide proper accounts will continue to get licences," he said.

The chief minister further welcomed the legislation to raise and debate their points on the floor of Parliament. "I believe that if anyone has anything to say on this issue, they can raise it in Parliament. This is not an issue concerning any one particular community. FCRA is not meant only



for Christian organisations. It is applicable to all organisations, irrespective of which community they belong to. Any organisation receiving foreign donations is required to comply with FCRA," he added.

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 was reintroduced in the Lok Sabha during the monsoon session. The Bill seeks to amend the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, with the stated objective of enhancing transparency and accountability in the regulation of foreign contributions.

It seeks to establish a Designated Authority tasked with overseeing foreign contributions and assets acquired through such capital in instances where an entity's FCRA registration stands cancelled, surrendered or lapsed. Further, he extended

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 was reintroduced in the Lok Sabha during the monsoon session

support to the Nationalist Congress Party's (NCP) recent meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, terming it "a good thing". Fadnavis underlined that the Prime Minister belongs to the entire nation rather than any single political party.

"The Prime Minister does not belong to any particular party, but belongs to the country. Therefore, if someone meets him, there is nothing wrong in it. Since I am the Chief Minister, many people from opposition parties also meet me and tell me about their work. Therefore, there is no reason to look at this meeting from a different perspective. If they are going to meet him, then it is a good thing," he said.

Outlining his schedule for the 'Tiranga Yatra' campaign, the Maharashtra Chief Minister confirmed that he will participate in events in Mumbai and Pune, and attend the rally in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar on August 14.

ANI

LEADERSHIP RESHUFFLE IN IRAN

Moves come after Tehran issued conditions for reopening Strait of Hormuz

#TEHRAN

@ThePuneMirror

Iran has carried out a sudden reshuffle at the top of its political and national security establishment, with Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei moving former Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Secretary Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr into the role of his political adviser while appointing veteran Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commander Mohsen Rezaei as his representative on the powerful security council.

In a series of posts on X on Sunday, Khamenei announced the appointments, saying, "In consideration of your valuable experience, I hereby appoint you to be my Political Advisor." Addressing Zolghadr, he added, "I hope that in carrying out this responsibility and in advancing the ideals of the Islamic Revolution, you will be successful and your actions will be accepted under the auspices of the attention of our Master, Imam Mahdi (aj)."

The moves come just days after Iran issued sweeping conditions for



Iran Ambassador to India Mohammad Fathali addresses the media on Israel-Iran conflict, in New Delhi on April 23

ANI Video Grab

reopening the Strait of Hormuz and as Tehran and Washington continue to communicate indirectly through intermediaries, adding a new layer of uncertainty to Iran's decision-making structure at a particularly sensitive moment as the West Asia crisis continues.

The reshuffle is significant because Zolghadr, a former senior IRGC commander, had only taken over as SNSC secretary in March after the killing of Ali Larijani and had emerged as one of the most prominent hardline voices in

Tehran's security establishment.

His transfer does not necessarily diminish his influence; instead, his elevation to become a direct political adviser to Khamenei could place him closer to the centre of strategic decision-making.

At the same time, the appointment of Rezaei -- another veteran of the Revolutionary Guards and a former IRGC commander -- as Khamenei's representative on the SNSC ensures that a highly experienced military figure remains directly embedded in the country's top

security deliberations. The result is a reshaped leadership architecture in which Zolghadr moves from the formal security machinery into Khamenei's political inner circle, while Rezaei assumes the institutional security role. Announcing Rezaei's appointment, Khamenei said, "Considering your valuable experience, I am hereby appointing you, who were one of the first commanders in the triumphant 8-Year Sacred Defense, to be my representative in the Supreme National Security Council."

Khamenei also expressed appreciation for Zolghadr's work, saying, "Meanwhile, I would like to appreciate the round-the-clock efforts of our dear brother,

Dr. Mohammad Baqer Zolghadr." The change is likely to fuel speculation over where real power is accumulating in Tehran.

Zolghadr is no ordinary political bureaucrat. A former IRGC officer with decades of experience in Iran's military, security and political institutions, he was appointed SNSC secretary in March following Larijani's death.

At the time, his selection was widely interpreted as strengthening the influence of the Revolutionary Guards over Iran's strategic decision-making.

His political views have also attracted attention. Reports earlier this year said Zolghadr argued that the IRGC should exercise greater influence over Iranian politics. Rather than simply disappearing from the security establishment after leaving the SNSC, Zolghadr is moving closer to the Supreme Leader himself.

That has prompted speculation that the reshuffle could represent an attempt to concentrate strategic political and security decision-making around a smaller circle of trusted figures with deep IRGC backgrounds.

But the picture is more complicated than a simple "Zolghadr takeover".

The appointment of Rezaei simultaneously creates another powerful IRGC-linked channel into the SNSC.

The move could therefore reflect an effort by Khamenei to balance, coordinate and consolidate competing security and political centres, rather than hand unilateral authority to any single commander.

The timing is striking. The leadership changes were announced after Khamenei met President Masoud Pezeshkian, with the meeting taking place as the Iranian president entered the third year of his presidency.

ANI

Board of Peace defends Gaza roadmap

Netanyahu rejects US President Donald Trump's 15-point peace plan

#TEL AVIV

@ThePuneMirror

US-backed Board of Peace High Representative Nickolay Mladenov has attempted to counter scepticism in Israel regarding the board's proposed roadmap for disarming Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Times of Israel reported that Mladenov, in his interview with Channel 12, argued that fully implementing the plan is Israel's sole 'guarantee' against a recurrence of the October 7, 2023, massacre, emphasising that the process relies on verifiable actions rather than trust in the terror group.

The roadmap aims "to make sure that Gaza is never again a threat to Israeli security, that what happened before October 7 never happens again," Mladenov told Channel 12, referencing the 2023 Hamas-led assault in southern Israel that triggered the ongoing conflict, Times of Israel reported.

"What happened on October 7 will never ever be allowed to happen, as long as we have a full implementation of the Board of Peace's plan... The



U.S. President Donald Trump and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi hold the signed agreement of the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Sharm El-Sheikh on Oct 13, 2025

ANI Photo

option that we are offering today is the only way that we move forward that guarantees that this tragedy will not occur again," he said.

Addressing security concerns, Mladenov stressed that verification would precede any strategic shifts on the ground.

"Nobody is required to do anything - last of all Israel - before we actually have verified steps on the ground," Mladenov stated. "If there is verified decommissioning of weapons, that they are taken away from the factions, and stored, and ultimately rendered unusable, Israel then withdraws from Gaza."

Mladenov also emphasised that the

framework would preserve Israel's freedom to act against "imminent" threats.

"None of the plan that we are preparing limits Israel's options to react to a threat if it's imminent and if it's really endangering its troops," Times of Israel cited him as saying.

While noting that eradicating Hamas's vast network of tunnels in the Strip would normally require "more than a decade," Mladenov asserted that cooperating through the Board of Peace could expedite the timeline.

"With the Board of Peace, together, it can be done much quicker and much more effectively," he added, according to The Times of Israel.

Mladenov's interview aired just

hours after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected US President Donald Trump's 15-point Gaza peace plan and denied to withdraw its forces from the enclave until Hamas is "genuinely" disarmed.

"Israel rejects the 15-point document," Netanyahu said, referring to a proposal endorsed in late July by Hamas, according to Israeli media.

Speaking at a cabinet meeting, Netanyahu emphasised that the Israeli military "will not carry out any withdrawal until Hamas is genuinely disarmed, and will continue to thwart threats against our forces and our citizens." Facing pressure from far-right coalition partners urging a fresh

cabinet vote to abandon the peace plan, Netanyahu, who is locked in a competitive electoral race according to opinion polls, noted that Israel remains in discussions with Washington on the issue. "They have ideas; some of them are acceptable to us, and some are not, and we know how to stand our ground on these matters," he stated.

Trump's 15-point framework outlines a phased strategy aimed at terminating the Gaza conflict, disarming armed factions, withdrawing Israeli troops, and transitioning governance of the strip to a Palestinian technocratic body, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza.

ANI

EGYPT CALLS FOR FULL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL

CAIRO: During a phone conversation with US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace Director-General Nikolay Mladenov, Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty called for the implementation of all provisions of the Gaza roadmap, including a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian enclave and sustained humanitarian aid delivery, according to a report by Anadolu news agency. According to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry statement, Abdelatty and Mladenov discussed developments in Gaza and efforts to implement Trump's peace plan. The two officials also reviewed arrangements for the deployment of the International Stabilisation Force, which is expected to monitor security during the transitional period. Abdelatty emphasised the need for ensuring the "full, safe and sustainable" delivery of humanitarian assistance to Gaza and said that a complete Israeli withdrawal would help pave the way for the second phase of the roadmap, including early recovery and reconstruction efforts.



ASK THE SEXPERT

DR ROHAN JAHAGIRDAR
 Psychiatrist & Sexpert

1 I'm a 30-year-old female. I get turned on more when my partner wears his glasses while having sex. It makes me feel like sprinkles on an ice cream sundae! Is this feeling normal? Do other women also have such weird sexual quirks?
 Dear Ma'am, one can clearly see that you certainly have a flair for sexual thoughts, words, and I guess ice creams too! You may find certain clothing, perfume, or any other accessory which makes your partner more desirable to you – which is completely normal. As long as both of you are comfortable, please don't worry and tell your partner to see u HAPPY through his GLASSES (pun intended)!

2 I am a 40-year-old female. I have always felt hotel sex is super fun and greater than home sex with my partner. Why is that so? Why can't I enjoy the same sex at home?
 Dear Ma'am, probably you feel more relaxed, less stressed, and in a holiday mood in a hotel. One also needs to assess if there are any stressors, interpersonal problems at home. Address your problems, if any, at home, or until then you can keep CHECKING-IN once in a while! Take care.

3 I'm a 52-year-old man. I would like to know if I can take painkillers with Viagra?
 Dear Sir, it depends upon what medical condition and what is the painkiller that you have been prescribed. Normally, it is safe to take it, but do check with your doctor before going ahead.

4 I'm a 34-year-old woman. I'm currently on OC pills. I think my sex drive has gone down drastically after starting them. Is that possible?
 Dear Ma'am, many women experience an increase or a decrease in their sex drive after taking OC pills. You need to talk with your doctor and think of some other contraceptive method if the problem is severe.

SEND YOUR QUERIES RELATED TO SEXUAL PROBLEMS TO
 sexpert@punemirror.com

BRAIN DEFENDS BODY FAT

Weight regain after dieting may be driven by brain biology, research finds

Losing weight is not simply a matter of willpower. New research suggests the human brain is biologically programmed to defend body fat, making it difficult for many people to maintain weight loss even after successful dieting.

According to an article published by The Conversation, the human brain evolved to protect energy reserves during periods of food scarcity. While this mechanism once helped early humans survive, researchers say it now works against people living in environments where calorie-dense food is widely available and physical activity is less common.

The researchers explain that when a person loses weight, the body responds as though it is facing

a threat to survival. Hunger signals increase, food cravings become stronger and the body reduces its energy expenditure in an effort to conserve fat stores.

The article also highlights findings from recent research suggesting that the brain can effectively "remember" a person's previous higher body weight. Once the body has reached a heavier weight, the brain may begin treating that weight as its normal state and attempt to restore it after weight loss.

"The fact that our bodies have this capacity to 'remember' our previous heavier weight helps to explain why so many people regain weight after dieting," the authors wrote.

They added: "This weight regain is not due to a lack of discipline; rather, our biology is doing exactly what it evolved to do: defend against weight loss."

The researchers say these biological mechanisms help explain why maintaining long-term weight loss is often more challenging than losing weight in the first place.

The article also discusses newer

obesity medications such as Wegovy and Mounjaro, which work by mimicking gut hormones that signal the brain to reduce appetite. While these treatments have shown promise for many patients, the authors note that they are not effective for everyone. Some people experience side effects, while others see limited benefit. In many cases, weight can return after treatment ends as the body's biological signals resume.

Researchers believe ongoing advances in obesity and metabolism research could eventually lead to therapies that reduce the brain's drive to regain lost weight, even after medication is stopped.

Beyond medications, the authors stress that health should not be measured solely by body weight. They point to evidence showing that regular exercise, sufficient sleep, balanced nutrition and good mental well-being can improve heart and metabolic health even when body weight changes little.

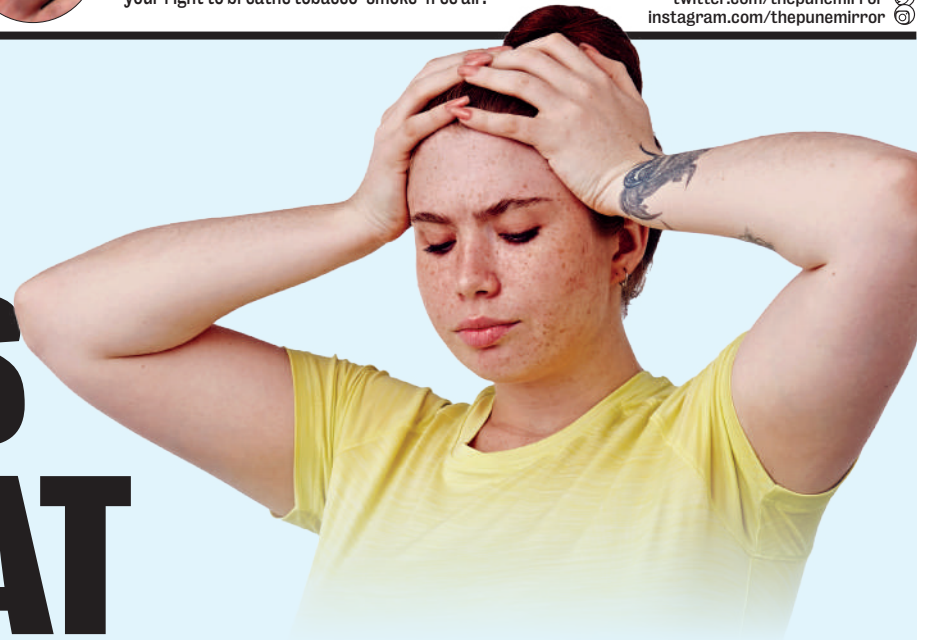
The article also argues that obesity requires a broader public health response rather than being viewed

solely as an individual responsibility. Suggested measures include healthier school meals, limiting junk food marketing aimed at children, designing communities that encourage walking and cycling, and standardising restaurant portion sizes.

Researchers are also focusing on early childhood, from pregnancy through around seven years of age, when the body's weight regulation systems are considered especially adaptable. According to the article, parental diet, infant feeding practices and early lifestyle habits may all influence how the brain regulates appetite and fat storage later in life.

The authors conclude that obesity should be understood as "a biological condition shaped by our brains, our genes, and the environments we live in."

They add that advances in neuroscience, pharmacology and preventive public health strategies are creating new opportunities for improving obesity treatment and reducing future risk. **ANI**



New findings on poor sleep

Research finds why it may harm some brains more

A gene involved in the brain's overnight cleaning system may change how strongly poor sleep affects Alzheimer's-related brain changes. The findings point toward more personalised prevention strategies based on both genetics and sleep habits.

New research from Edith Cowan University (ECU) suggests that sleep habits and genetics may interact to influence subtle brain and cognitive changes associated with Alzheimer's disease years before noticeable symptoms develop.

The study, conducted by ECU's Centre for Precision Health (CPH), examined the aquaporin-4 (AQP4) gene. This gene helps control the movement of fluid through the brain, a function that supports the organ's natural waste-clearing system.

The Brain's Overnight Waste Removal System

The brain's waste-removal process becomes especially active during

sleep. Scientists believe it helps clear potentially harmful proteins, including proteins associated with Alzheimer's disease.

Researchers found that the effects of sleep appeared to vary depending on which version of the AQP4 gene a person carried.

"Our study shows that individuals carrying certain AQP4 variants showed faster grey matter loss when they reported shorter sleep," researcher Dr. Ayeisha Milligan Armstrong said.

"It's not just which genes you carry -- it's how those genes interact with the world around you. The same variant can look protective or detrimental depending on how someone is sleeping. That's important, because sleep is one of the few modifiable factors people can actually act on."

Grey matter contains many of the brain cells involved in memory, decision-making, movement, and other essential functions. A decline in grey matter volume can be a sign of structural changes in the brain.

Sleep Effects Differed by Genetic Variant

The researchers analysed 13 common AQP4 gene variants, along with participants' self-reported sleep patterns, brain scans, and cognitive test results.

Among some participants, sleeping for fewer hours was associated with a faster decline in grey matter. In others, taking longer to fall asleep was linked to structural brain changes involving lower brain volume.

Cognitive performance also changed differently over time among people who experienced sleep disturbances. Whether the effect appeared beneficial or harmful depended on the specific AQP4 variant each person carried.

"We've known for a while that poor sleep and Alzheimer's risk are linked," researcher Dr. Teneille Porter said.

"What this shows is that rather than assuming everyone at risk follows the same pathway, a more targeted and personalized approach to Alzheimer's prevention may be needed. But we're not at the point of recommending genetic testing; our findings need replication in larger and more diverse cohorts."

Toward Personalized Alzheimer's Prevention

The findings suggest that two people with similar overall Alzheimer's risk may not respond to poor sleep in the same way. Genetic differences could help explain why brain decline progresses more quickly in some individuals than in others.

The researchers recommended conducting clinical trials that incorporate genetic information. Such studies could test whether improving sleep habits can reduce inherited vulnerability and change long-term brain outcomes associated with Alzheimer's disease.

"This moves us closer to understanding why some people decline faster than others, even when they have similar risk on paper," CPH Director Professor Simon Laws said.

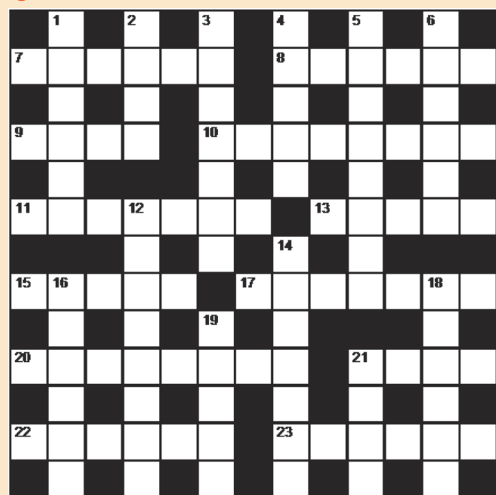
"Identifying who is most vulnerable, and who is most likely to benefit from a particular lifestyle intervention, is where precision health needs to go rather than treating everyone at risk of Alzheimer's the same way."

The study, "Evidence for Direct and Sleep-Moderated Relationships between Aquaporin -4 Genetic Variants and Alzheimer's Disease Phenotypes" is published online in Alzheimer's & Dementia, the Journal of the Alzheimer's Association. **ANI**



QUICK

6660



ACROSS

- 7 Sleeveless jacket (6)
 8 Come to an end (3,3)
 9 Football club
 Manchester ____ (4)
 10 Camera accessory
 (8)
 11 Saved from danger
 (7)
 13 Titter - "E thee"
 anagram? (5)
 15 Berate (5)
 17 Constant grumbler
 or complainer (3,4)
 20 Dilemma (8)
 21 White flower (4)
 22 Wait on, help (6)
 23 Rough (6)

DOWN

- 1 Emend (6)
 2 Alright (4)
 3 Consolidates or
 merges (7)
 4 Inflict, as in ____

DOWN

- 5 Falling (2,3,3)
 6 A group of
 performers (6)
 12 Co-operative
 housing societies (8)
 14 Appeals to a higher
 power (7)
 16 Hard surface layers
 (6)
 18 Inverted dents (6)
 19 Obscene (5)
 21 Lower limbs (4)

FOR ANSWER SCAN



Please send copies of your children's artworks along with a photo of the artist in A4 size.
 Do mention their age and the name of the school they attend. You can also mail us unpublished poems by children.



Vihaan Padole, 10 years,
 The Orbis School, Keshav Nagar



Ritvik Sabat, 5 years,
 Priyadarshani School, Moshi



Purva Kulkarni, 8 years,
 Sinhgad Spring Dale Public School, Vadgaon Budruk, Pune



Purna, 9 years,
 Priyadarshani School, Moshi



WHAT YOUR STARS SAY TODAY



Aries

March 21 - April 20

Everything falls into place. You find the right solution. If you're at odds with your family, you smooth things over with a calm, peaceful attitude. And if technical trouble strikes, you'll figure out exactly how to fix it!



Taurus

April 21 - May 20

Today, you'll have a thousand and one things to do... so take it easy. Use your time wisely and play it smart. Your body looks great, even if your emotions are running a little high and throwing you off balance—but those surges are exactly what's fueling your optimism.



Gemini

May 21 - June 21

You rarely commit to anything that feels casual, and this period should match your need for authenticity. The planets are lining up to fill your calendar and bring out your best intentions. Just know that your bond with the children will be protected today.



Cancer

June 22 - July 23

You're kind and easygoing with everyone, and the relationship atmosphere is steadily improving. You feel completely at home—like a fish in water. With a thriving Venus, your intimate connections come naturally and flow effortlessly. This is the perfect time to deepen your bonds, gently and without pressure.



Leo

July 24 - August 23

Your carefree attitude will be contagious today. You've got the skill and flair to create the vibe you love—so you can show up as your best self. Shake off your timidity and make a decisive move.



Virgo

August 24 - September 23

You'll see things in a brighter light, and your loved ones will notice. This will help you put your talents to work for everyone—and take fresh initiatives. Stay on track and ride the momentum you've built!



Libra

September 24 - October 22

You'll need to make some radical choices. You've been circling this for a long time—this is the moment. Negative emotions are draining your energy. Now it's time for real, concrete action and to push past your limits.



Scorpio

October 23 - November 22

A family influence is throwing a wrench into your day-to-day life today. Whether it's rooted in the past or not, it's still very much at work. Take a moment to question it—so you can reconnect with your own values, free from those outside influences.



Sagittarius

November 23 - December 22

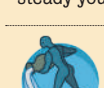
You're ready to face the big questions—and you'll have the power to rally the people around you. Take a clear, honest look at your eating habits to spot any imbalances that are quietly throwing you off.



Capricorn

December 23 - January 20

Your indecision leaves you feeling uneasy. It's time to cut through the noise and find your own inner peace. You may feel low on energy, but your sharp mind helps steady you. A little flexibility would do you a lot of good.



Aquarius

January 21 - February 19

Today is packed with lessons. You'll pass an important milestone on your way to maturity. You're handling your fatigue impressively, but it's time to catch up on the sleep you've been missing.



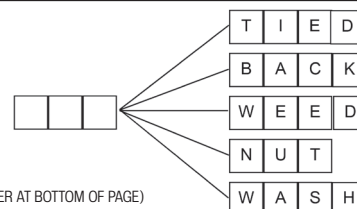
Pisces

February 20 - March 20

You need to be efficient, but don't look down on those who are a step behind you. Today, provocation comes naturally—and it helps you see the truth hiding behind the facade.

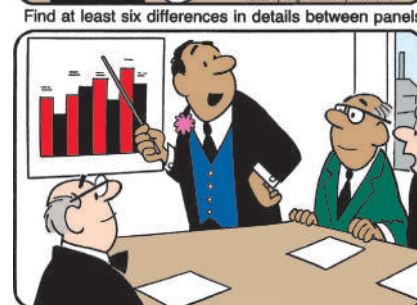
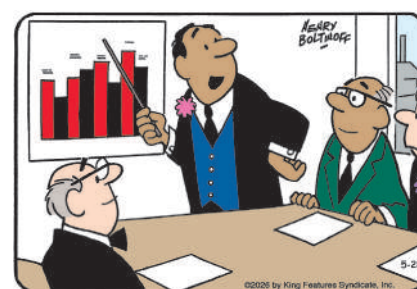
DOUBLE - BARRELLED

What word can be placed in front of the five words shown to form in each case another word?



(ANSWER AT BOTTOM OF PAGE)

HOCUSFOCUS



Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Paper is moved. 2. Arm is lower. 3. How the is moved. 4. Bottom corner is missing. 5. Back of chair is shown. 6. Mouth is open.

ANSWER FOR DOUBLE-BARRELLED : Hog

Sunny Deol admits he is an 'OVERTHINKER'

The actor takes a playful dig at Aamir Khan on KBC 18

Bollywood stars Sunny Deol, Aamir Khan and Preity Zinta brought their trademark charm and humour to the latest episode of Kaun Banega Crorepati 18, hosted by Amitabh Bachchan. The trio appeared on the popular quiz show to promote their upcoming period drama Batwara 1947, but it was Sunny Deol's candid admission about being an "overthinker" that became one of the episode's most entertaining moments.

The episode marked Sunny Deol's first appearance on KBC. Amitabh Bachchan, in his trademark witty style, asked the actor why he had taken so long to make his debut on the show, considering the quiz programme is already in its 18th season.

Sunny admitted that he gets nervous about appearing on shows and said he had spent a lot of time thinking about whether to come. His response prompted Aamir Khan to point out that he had already appeared on KBC several times.

That gave Sunny the perfect opportunity for a playful one-liner. "He doesn't think much, I do," the actor joked about Aamir, leaving both Aamir and Bachchan laughing. The light-hearted exchange quickly became one of the high-

lights of the promotional clips shared from the episode.

The fun continued as Aamir turned the spotlight on Amitabh Bachchan and questioned him about the new season's tagline, "Is baar sochna padega." Aamir asked Bachchan what exactly contestants would have to think about this time.

Bachchan responded with his usual wit, suggesting that simply looking at him would not help the contestants. He further warned that the game would not be as easy as expected. Aamir then agreed that this season would indeed require contestants to "think" more.

Preity Zinta also featured in the episode, adding another dose of nostalgia and humour to the star-studded opening. Bachchan jokingly brought up the fact that Preity had not responded to his messages, even showing a birthday message he had previously sent her.

The special episode comes ahead of the release of Batwara 1947, directed by Rajkumar Santoshi and produced by Aamir Khan. Set against the backdrop of the 1947 Partition, the film stars Sunny Deol, Preity Zinta, Shabana Azmi, Karan Deol and others. It is scheduled to release in theatres on August 14.

With three popular stars sharing the stage with Amitabh Bachchan, KBC 18's opening episode promises a mix of nostalgia, humour and plenty of entertaining moments for Bollywood fans.



SOULFUL CONNECTION

Sonu Nigam sings Mohammed Rafi classic during surgery: 'It happened organically'

Singer Sonu Nigam has once again shown why music is deeply connected to his life. A video of the singer performing Mohammed Rafi's iconic 'Suhani Raat Dhal Chuki' while lying on an operating table recently went viral, leaving fans surprised and concerned. Nigam has now explained how the unusual musical moment happened.

The singer revealed that he was undergoing surgery for a recurring growth on his left ring finger. According to Nigam, he had undergone a proce-

cedure for the same issue around four months ago, but the growth returned. He said he believes it could possibly be linked to an arthritis-related condition, although there is no confirmed diagnosis mentioned by him.

While the surgery was underway, Nigam's doctor, Dr Nilesh Sathbhay, who is an admirer of the singer, played some of his music in the operating room. The songs included tracks from 'Rafi Resurrected', Nigam's album in which he recreated Mohammed Rafi's classics with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

It was during one of these tracks that the unexpected performance began.

"As the surgery was happening, between some songs, there were a couple of songs that came without the voice," Nigam explained. With the music playing but the vocals missing, he simply began singing along.

The singer described the moment as completely unplanned, saying that "singing in the OT just happened



organically."

The doctors reportedly enjoyed the impromptu performance and told Nigam that they had never experienced a patient singing for them

while undergoing surgery. For Nigam, however, the moment was equally special because Mohammed Rafi's songs hold a deep place in his heart.

Interestingly, the viral clip featured only one of several songs he performed. Nigam revealed that he sang around two or three songs for the medical team during the procedure. He also suggested that the doctors record the performance as a memory. The medical team later sent him the recording, which eventually became the video shared with fans.

Despite undergoing surgery, Nigam said he has no plans to slow down. He revealed that he continued with his professional commitments, including attending an event and performing soon after the procedure.

The unusual hospital moment has since become a reminder of Nigam's lifelong connection with music — even when he was on the operating table, the singer found himself unable to resist the pull of a Mohammed Rafi melody.

