

Channi row: Punjab Congress rift out in open

Chandigarh

Former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi's supporters gathered at his residence in Punjab's Morinda on Friday, with many former MLAs demanding that he be made the state unit chief.

The development comes after the party's central leadership decided to retain Amrinder Singh Warring as the state unit chief. The announcement to retain Warring came on Wednesday, alongside the unveiling of the party's various committees for the 2027 Assembly polls.

Before the supporters started to gather at Channi's Morinda residence, some former party MLAs, who reached Channi's residence, told reporters that if the Congress has to come to power in Punjab in the next year's election, the former chief minister should be made the president of the State unit.

Channi is said to be miffed at not being appointed to the post. He is learnt to have not even made a customary call to thank the party leadership following the new announcements.

Channi's supporters have expressed disappointment



over not being given the post for which the former Punjab chief minister had been lobbying hard.

Among those who reached Channi's residence were former deputy chief minister OP Soni, former ministers Bharat Bhushan Ashu and Gurpreet Singh Kangar, former MP Mohd Sadiq, sitting MLA Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa, ex-MLAs Nazir Singh Manshahia, Gurkirat Singh Kotli, Lakhvir Singh Lakha, Darshan Singh Brar and Tarsem Singh.

Before the meeting, several supporters of Channi, including some former MLAs, threw weight behind him demanding that party should

hand over reins of Punjab Congress to the ex-CM. Ex-MLA Darshan Singh Brar said, "If Channi is not made the state president, the Congress cannot form its Government in Punjab. Under Warring's leadership, the Congress cannot come to power".

Gurpreet Kangar said, "We have to go to people to seek votes and people want Channi as the state chief." Amid talks of a change in the leadership of its Punjab unit, the Congress decided to retain Amrinder Singh Warring as the State unit president.

Jalandhar MP Channi, a Dalit, who was seen as one of the main contenders for the post of Punjab Congress

NEW CRACKS EMERGING IN CONGRESS: BJP

New Delhi: The BJP on Friday claimed that "new cracks" are emerging in the Congress, citing reports that party leader Charanjit Channi is "miffed" over the latest organisational reshuffle ahead of the Punjab polls.

The attack came a day after Congress leader Manish Tewari put out a cryptic post on X, saying he wished he had an antidote for the "insecurities of individuals" and "institutions" after he was not assigned any organisational role in the latest reshuffle in the state.

Tewari shared a media report which stated that he was "left in the cold" as the Congress appointed new working presidents and set up poll panels for Punjab.

BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said that the opposition party is in "tukde tukde mode" and facing infighting across states. "After Manish Tewari, now it is Channi's turn."

chief, has been appointed chairperson of the campaign committee, an important position for strategising and planning the party's poll campaign.

The party also did not make any change in the position of the leader of



Tewari was upset with the Congress and tweeted about it. A day later, Channi, who is also upset with the Congress, is calling a meeting of his supporters," he said in a video statement.

Poonawalla claimed that the party was coasting headless. "It seems the Congress is giving evidence every day that it has no neta, no niti, no netritva, no mission - only confusion and division," he said.

Citing factional rivalries in several states, the BJP leader alleged that internal conflicts have become the defining feature of the Congress. (PNS)

NHAI suspends officials after Dehradun Expressway cave-in

New Delhi

After a video of a section of the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway caving in went viral, NHAI has suspended the team leader of the authority engineer and the project manager of the contractor even as it said the cave-in was due to water stagnation following rains.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) in a statement, said it has also issued show cause notices to the concerned project director, authority engineer and EPC contractor. A road surface cave-in observed on the Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor on July 1, 2026 was the result of localised water stagnation following rainfall the previous night, coupled with constraints in commissioning the permanent cross-drainage system at the location, NHAI said.

"NHAI regrets the inconvenience caused to NH commuters due to the road surface cave-in at a location on the Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor following rainfall. The section has been restored and opened for regular traffic and has commenced con-



struction of an interim parallel drain to ensure safe disposal of rainwater until the permanent drainage system can be commissioned.

The affected location is under continuous monitoring to ensure safe and uninterrupted traffic movement, it added. The 213 km-long six-lane access-controlled corridor has been built at a cost of over Rs 12,000 crore.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway on April 14, 2026.

The corridor traverses through Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and reduces travel time between Delhi and Dehradun from over six hours to around two-and-a-half hours now.

Amarnath Yatra: Second batch of over 3800 pilgrims leave Jammu

Jammu

Amid tight security, the second batch of more than 3,800 pilgrims left the Jammu base camp on Friday for the Amarnath cave shrine in the south Kashmir Himalayas, officials said.

The 57-day pilgrimage to the 3,880-metre-high Amarnath cave shrine started on Friday morning simultaneously via the traditional 48-km Nunwan-Pahalgam route in the Anantnag district and the shorter but steeper 14-km Baltal route in the Ganderbal district. The yatra will conclude on August 28.

As many as 3,865 pilgrims left the Bhagwati Nagar base camp in a cavalcade of 201 vehicles escorted by security personnel and the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), they said.

Of the total pilgrims, 1,735 were headed for the Baltal base camp in 115 vehicles, while 2,130 pilgrims in 86 vehicles were proceeding to the traditional Pahalgam base camp in the Anantnag district.

The atmosphere at the Bhagwati Nagar base camp was charged with devotion as pilgrims chanted "Bam Bam Bhole", "Har Har Mahadev"



Amarnath Yatra pilgrims riding ponies wave as they proceed towards the holy cave shrine via the Baltal route in Ganderbal district of J&K

and "Jai Barfani Baba Ki" before embarking on their journey. Many expressed satisfaction over the arrangements made for the smooth and peaceful conduct of the pilgrimage.

On Thursday, the first batch of 4,822 pilgrims was flagged off from Bhagwati Nagar by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. With the fresh departure, a total of 8,687 pilgrims have left the Jammu base camp for the valley since Thursday. Authorities have put in place multi-layered security arrangements along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and at all transit camps to ensure the safe and smooth movement of the yatra convoys. A multi-tier security setup has been activated in and around the Bhagwati Nagar base camp for the annual pilgrimage.

PM EXTEND GREETINGS ON AMARNATH YATRA

New Delhi: Vice President C P Radhakrishnan and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday greeted devotees on the commencement of the 57-day Amarnath Yatra.

In a two-page letter to pilgrims, Modi urged them to take five pledges, including maintaining cleanliness and promote the 'vocal for local' campaign by supporting local businesses in Jammu and Kashmir. He also asked the devotees to follow instructions related to security and traffic movement during the pilgrimage. Noting that the yatra will conclude on Raksha Bandhan, he asked pilgrims to gift their brothers and sisters a sapling to promote greenery.

BJP seeks ₹51,000 payout for women over AAP scheme delay

Chandigarh

Punjab BJP chief Kewal Singh Dhillon on Friday said the Punjab Government should transfer ₹51,000 to every woman in the State, ₹1,000 for every month AAP has been in Government, for delaying financial aid promised ahead of the last elections.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday rolled out his Government's monthly financial assistance scheme for women - 'Mawan Dhiyan Satkar Yojna', and said the AAP has fulfilled its final poll "guarantee" made ahead of the 2022 assembly elections.

Under the scheme, women from the general category will receive ₹1,000 per month, while those belonging to the Scheduled Castes will receive ₹1,500.

Mann said more than 40 lakh women have already been regis-



Punjab BJP chief Kewal Singh Dhillon

tered under the "landmark" initiative. Speaking to reporters here, state BJP chief Dhillon said Mann Government has cheated the women of Punjab.

"We demand that the Government immediately transfer ₹51,000, the total amount due for 51 months of AAP rule in Punjab, as per the third guarantee given by AAP supreme Arvind Kejriwal on November 21, 2021, during a programme titled 'Kejriwal di Teji

Guarantee, Mahilavan Nu Vadhayan' in Moga," Dhillon said.

Dhillon, who was flanked by Punjab BJP leader Vineet Joshi, claimed the "delay" in the rollout of the scheme a "historic betrayal".

First, by transferring only ₹1,000 per month to general category women and ₹1,500 per month to Scheduled Caste women, the Mann Government has effectively denied the ₹51,000 due for 51 months under Kejriwal's original promise of ₹1,000 per month to every eligible woman, he said.

The AAP came to power in Punjab in March 2022. "Second, Kejriwal's guarantee was for every woman above 18 years of age in Punjab, covering more than 1.25 crore women. Yet, the Mann Government claims to have transferred money to only 36 lakh women, meaning over 89 lakh women have been denied even the promised ₹1,000 assistance," Dhillon

said. The AAP has mastered the art of misleading people through false claims and propaganda, the BJP leader alleged. He said Kejriwal had claimed at the Moga rally that he delivers on his promises.

But in reality, this promise appears to have been a calculated attempt to mislead Punjab's women and secure votes through false guarantees when Punjab polls were barely few months away, Dhillon said. Dhillon said that Kejriwal had then claimed that there was no shortage of money for the scheme and that stopping ₹20,000 crore worth of illegal sand mining would finance the initiative.

"But after AAP came to power, illegal mining has not stopped; rather it has increased manifold," Dhillon alleged. The Punjab BJP chief asserted that BJP will continue to fight for Punjab's women until every promised rupee reaches their bank accounts.

Adi Kailash Yatra suspended due to monsoon

Pithoragarh

The Adi Kailash and Om Parvat Yatra in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh has been suspended in view of the monsoon, risk of landslides and safety of pilgrims, officials said on Friday.

Dharchula Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Ashish Joshi said that 52,441 pilgrims visited Adi Kailash and Om Parvat within two months of the commencement of the



pilgrimage on May 1. "Inner Line Permits for the Adi Kailash and Om Parvat Yatra will now be issued only after further orders," he said.

Joshi said that 103 pilgrims were last issued permits on July 1 before the suspension came into effect. The Adi Kailash pilgrimage in Pithoragarh began in 1981 - alongside the Kailash Yatra in Tibet - but gained popularity following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit on October 12, 2023.

Karnataka LoP questions Shivakumar's silence over Mekedatu project

Bengaluru

Senior BJP leader R Ashoka on Friday hit out at Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar accusing him of maintaining "silence" over Tamil Nadu Congress' warning that it would not allow even a single brick to be laid for the Mekedatu dam on river Cauvery.

Questioning whether Shivakumar was hiding out of fear of coalition politics in Tamil Nadu, the Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly challenged the CM to march to Chennai now and stage a hunger strike in front of the Tamil Nadu Congress office, if he had courage.



BJP leader R Ashoka

UCC bill to be passed in West Bengal Assembly in August: Senior official

Kolkata

The bill for implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in West Bengal will be passed in the assembly next month, a senior official of the state government said on Friday.

The West Bengal cabinet on Thursday approved the formation of a committee to examine the draft UCC bill and the panel will have four weeks to scrutinise the draft legislation and submit its recommendations.

"August is a month of many significant events in the country,

and West Bengal is set to become the fourth. The West Bengal UCC bill aims to standardise civil laws across all communities regarding marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption. The bill is similar to the models in Uttarakhand and Assam in key parameters.

The UCC was one of the BJP's key electoral promises in the 2026 Assembly polls. The party came to power ending the Trinamool Congress's 15-year rule in the state. Talking about the priorities of the BJP government in Bengal, the functionary said every month, at least two

new industries are coming to the state and the trend will continue for many months to come. Adhikari on June 12 had said that his government would bring the Tata Group back to the state.

However, he had said, the land at Singur on which Tata Motors had set up a car factory is no longer with the state government as it had been returned to the farmers by the previous Mamata Banerjee-led government.

The functionary also said that ever since the BJP government came to power in West Bengal, about 10,000 illegal immigrants

were handed over to the Bangladesh authorities along the border after verifying their Bangladeshi nationality.

About 1,800 more illegal Bangladeshi immigrants are kept in holding centres in West Bengal and they would also be sent back to the neighbouring country.

On June 23, Adhikari had said his government has identified thousands of illegal immigrants and begun deporting them while assuring genuine Indian citizens they would not be affected, irrespective of their faith.



The West Bengal Legislative Assembly

change the life of the last person while fulfilling the hopes of the common people of Bengal," Birla said. He said great visionaries from West Bengal played a crucial role in social reformation and the struggle for freedom, along with spirituality, religion and culture.

"Bengal gave voice to the freedom movement with the proclamation of 'Vande Mataram'. The MLAs should work tirelessly to enrich the heritage, spiritual consciousness and cultural renaissance of Bengal again.

They should make all efforts for making India a developed country and empower the democracy with democratic dialogue," he said.

may be agreement and disagreement, but the tradition of democracy and excellent dialogue should remain intact.

He said the newly elected MLAs should learn from the experiences of old and experienced members and study old proceedings of the Assembly. "The newly elected MLAs should have a desire to learn and understand, a desire for innovation," he said. Birla said legislative members keep themselves updated in the times of AI technology and digitalisation.

"The newly elected members should sit in the House for maximum time and listen to the statements of other MLAs," he said.

Help the common man, LS speaker Om Birla tells new Bengal MLAs

Kolkata

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla asked the newly elected MLAs of West Bengal on Friday to make efforts to change the life of the last person in society while fulfilling the hopes of the common people.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of an orientation programme for the newly elected members of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, Birla also said a developed West Bengal is necessary to build a developed India by 2047. He said each MLA represents their area as well as the collective aspirations of people.

"Their aim should always be to



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju, West Bengal CM Suwendu Adhikari, Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly Ritabrata Banerjee and others at a two-day orientation programme for the newly-elected members of the State Assembly in Kolkata

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Paswan promises justice in Bharat Tiwari killing case

Bhojpur

Union Minister Chirag Paswan on Friday said police officials allegedly responsible for the killing of Bharat Tiwari in Bihar's Bhojpur district would face strict punishment.

Tiwari, a resident of Bilauti village within Shahpur police station limits, allegedly opened fire on a police team with an illegal firearm when officers attempted to arrest him on June 17, officials said.

Police claimed they retaliated in self-defence, during



which Tiwari sustained bullet injuries and later died while undergoing treatment.

EDITORIAL

Digital Detox A Dire Need;

Limit Screen Time

The Union Budget 2025-26 has finally met the long-awaited demand of the middle class, pinned down as it is by a persistent inflation, particularly of food items, and stagnancy in wages despite a record surge in the after-tax profits of corporates. FM Nirmala Sitharaman did not waver at the outgo of Rs 1 lakh crore due to tax exemption for up to Rs 12 lakh, saying the tax base itself is small and reposes trust in the middle class loosening their purse strings to boost private consumption – a critical factor amid RBI lowering GDP forecast to 6.6% from 7.2%, and gov't lowering it to 6.4%. Also Read - Centre mulls new IT Act for tech-driven taxpayers Even as the dust has settled and analysts are poring over allocations for critical sectors, the euphoria among the middle class is spilling over and all eyes are now on the Reserve Bank of India if it will also cheer them by easing interest rates. The next RBI Monetary Policy Committee meeting is scheduled from February 5 to 7. There are keen expectations from the common man and the industry alike for lower rates. Following a budget booster to private consumption, in view of slackness in investments by industry and businesses, people feel enthused about the new RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra recognising the need to support growth rather than status quo for fear of stoking inflation further. They feel the onus is on the RBI to further stimulate the demand generation. Also Read - Govt creating new Income Tax Act for techdriven taxpayers, scrapping convoluted older law In recent weeks, the RBI undertook certain measures to infuse liquidity in the system, despite the inflation ruling above its target (4% with +/- 2%). For more than four years, it has shunned easing the repo rate from 6.5%. The repo is the rate that the RBI lends to commercial banks. RBI also uses cash reserve ratio or CRR, the percentage of a bank's deposits that it must keep in reserves with the RBI. By raising or lowering the CRR, the central bank affects liquidity in the economy. In December 2024, the RBI slashed the CRR by 50 basis points to 4% to infuse ₹1.16 lakh crore into the banking system. Also Read - Budget caters to every section of society: CM It is true that interest rate cuts won't increase disposable incomes of consumers, unlike fewer taxes or more direct benefit transfers; but, they will lead to more investments and less unemployment. A cut in repo rate will lead to lower loan interest rates, paving way for more borrowing and spending in the economy. But there are as many sceptics as hopefuls. They point out that with the inflation not showing any signs of abatement, the central bank may not be willing to risk making borrowing any less expensive for banks. If done, it will increase money supply in the system, making it difficult to cool down inflation.



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Briefs

800+ Chinese entrepreneurs attend India investment conference

Over 800 Chinese entrepreneurs, investors and tour operators on Friday took part in a conference highlighting investment opportunities in India in China's Hangzhou city. The conference was organised by the Indian Consulate in Shanghai. Indian Consulate General in Shanghai Pratik Mathur addressed the conference. "India's Major Economic Initiative in Eastern China! India's First 3-Ts (Trade, Technology & Tourism) Business Conference Held in Hangzhou," the Consulate said in a social media post.

Air India rejects claims of 11 grounded Boeing 787s

Air India on Friday dismissed reports claiming that 11 of its 26 Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner aircraft are grounded, describing the assertions as "factually inaccurate" and clarifying that aircraft undergoing scheduled maintenance or upgrades should not be classified as grounded. In a post on X, the Tata Group-owned airline said three Boeing 787-8 aircraft are currently undergoing cabin retrofits as part of its fleet modernisation programme, while four are in scheduled heavy maintenance checks. One aircraft is undergoing routine line maintenance, another is scheduled to return to India, and two are currently in active service.

Knack Packaging IPO subscribed over 83 times

The initial public offering (IPO) of packaging solutions provider Knack Packaging Ltd received strong participation from investors, with the issue getting subscribed 83.33 times, on the final day of bidding on Friday. The ₹439.5-crore IPO received bids for 1,58,02,77,688 shares against 1,89,64,018 shares on offer, as per NSE data.

IEX electricity trade volumes grow 16% in June quarter

Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) on Friday posted a 15.9 per cent on-year rise in electricity trade volumes to 37,534 million units in the first quarter of this financial year. The uptick in trading volumes on power exchanges was largely owing to a spike in power demand primarily driven by heavy usage of air conditioners and cooling appliances as persistent heatwaves swept across North, Central, and Eastern India.

NCLT OKs ABFRL subsidiary merger

The National Company Law Tribunal has approved the merger of Jaypore E-Commerce and TG Apparel & Decor, both wholly owned subsidiaries, with Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail. The tribunal said the restructuring will simplify operations, reduce costs and strengthen financial flexibility. However, it clarified that tax authorities may still review any tax implications arising from the amalgamation. The merger is expected to improve efficiency, strengthen operations and enhance long-term shareholder value for the company.

Indian officials to testify before USTR to counter tariff move

Indian officials are set to challenge proposed US tariffs on exports before the US Trade Representative (USTR) next week, contending that the findings on forced labour are legally flawed and would negatively affect American businesses and consumers. Representatives from the commerce ministry and industry bodies, including the APEDA, the FICCI, the CII, and the ACMA, are scheduled to present India's counter-arguments at a public hearing on July 8. India has already stated in written submissions that the USTR's findings fail to account for India's robust domestic legal regime. This framework reflects a structured, progressive approach that combines statutory prohibitions, institutional mechanisms, and ongoing policy measures aimed at reducing vulnerability to forced labour.

-PTI

TRADE AMBITION SOARS | Goyal sets bold FY27 roadmap for stronger intl trade

India eyes trillion-dollar exports with aggressive growth targets

PTI NEW DELHI

India is targeting an ambitious 16-17% growth in merchandise exports to about \$530 billion in the current fiscal year, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday, July 3.

Speaking at the Board of Trade meeting in New Delhi, Goyal said the target for the services sector is 11% growth to about \$470 billion in 2026-27.

"We want to grow to \$1 trillion export this year. To reach \$1 trillion, our goods export will have to increase from \$442 billion to about \$530 billion, a \$90 billion increase," Goyal said.

In 2025-26, the country's



total exports were \$863 billion, comprising \$442 billion in goods and \$421 billion in services. During the April-June quarter, the country registered 15% growth in merchandise shipments and 11% in services exports.

"We are on track. But when you fly a kite, you have to hold it tight. We have to achieve this with collective effort," the minister said.

vast domestic market.

The minister added that the FTA with the UK will be operational from July 15. Under the trade pact, 99% of Indian goods will get zero-duty access. He also noted that India is exporting defence goods to 100 countries, recording a historic ₹38,400 crore export of defence material last year.

Goyal suggested seven action points to boost trade, including participation in the Centre's ₹33,660 crore Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA) scheme and utilizing the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) in cases of dumping. The ministry will provide funds for testing facilities to help industry meet international regulations.

Sebi issues unpaid securities guidelines

PTI NEW DELHI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) on Friday, July 3, issued a regulatory framework for trading members (TMs) to handle clients' unpaid securities, introducing an auto-pledge mechanism alongside new investor safeguards.

Under the framework, if trades executed outside the Margin Trading Facility (MTF) remain unpaid, the securities will be credited directly to the client's demat account. Instead of withholding the securities, an auto-pledge will be created in favour of a dedicated account of the trading member—the Client Unpaid Securities Pledge Account (CUSPA)—without requiring specific instructions or approval from the client. The pledge must be specifically marked as "unpaid" per Sebi guidelines.



After the pledge is created, the TM is required to inform the client via email or SMS regarding the payment obligation and the member's right to liquidate the securities if dues remain unpaid.

The regulator has directed TMs to formulate and maintain a policy for handling unpaid securities, either as a standalone policy or as part of their risk management framework, in line with guidelines issued by stock exchanges. This policy must be communicated to clients before implementation. It should clearly specify the reasons, manner, and timeline for the invocation or release of the pledge and the liquidation of securities.

Forex kitty drops \$5.65 bn to \$666.93 bn

PTI NEW DELHI

India's foreign exchange (forex) reserves dropped by \$5.654 billion to \$666.933 billion during the week ended June 26, the RBI said on Friday, July 3. In the previous reporting week, the reserves jumped by \$963 million to \$672.587 billion. The reserves had expanded to an all-time high of \$728.494 billion during the week ended February 27 this year, prior to the onset of the West Asia conflict. That conflict led to several weeks of decline as the rupee came under pressure and the RBI intervened in the forex market through dollar sales.

For the week ended June 26, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by \$150 million to \$541.067 billion, according to the central bank's

The value of gold reserves declined by \$5.394 billion to \$102.536 billion. -PTI

Time has come to look at separate AI legislation: IT Secy

PTI NEW DELHI

India appears set to move towards a dedicated regulatory framework for artificial intelligence (AI), with IT Secretary S Krishnan on Friday, July 3, saying the time has come to consider separate AI legislation.

Krishnan noted that while existing legal provisions have so far been adequate in addressing concerns such as deepfakes and AI-generated synthetic content, additional regulation may be required.

"It is a conversation which has commenced, and my Minister, Ashwini Vaishnaw, and I have both been on record earlier that we will look at AI regulation when the time is right. It appears that the time is getting right, and we will start looking at it," Krishnan said.

He added that while the



'Investigating Tata Electronics data breach'

PTI NEW DELHI

The government is investigating an alleged data breach at Tata Electronics that reportedly exposed sensitive information related to an unreleased iPhone model, with the incident having been reported to the Indian CERT-In. "We are investigating it; it has been reported to CERT-In," IT Secretary S Krishnan told reporters on Thursday when asked about the reported cyber incident involving Tata Electronics. His comments follow a report detailing how component specifications, supplier information, and photographs of an unreleased iPhone 18 Pro model were allegedly posted on the dark web by a ransomware group that stole data from the Apple supplier.

Last month, Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw told PTI that the current IT law was framed before the rapid emergence of AI, and a new legal framework may be required to deal with the changing landscape.

Services sector growth hits 17-month low in June on softer domestic demand: PMI

India's services sector growth fell to a 17-month low in June as challenging market conditions and reduced client interest dampened total sales and output, a monthly survey said on Friday, July 3. Several firms indicated that market conditions and reduced client interest resulted in stagnant hiring activity and lower business confidence. The seasonally ad-

justed HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index fell to 57.4 in June, down from 59.8 in May, registering the weakest upturn in 17 months.

Despite this decline, the index remained above the neutral mark of 50.0 and its long-run average. The deceleration in services output was attributed to the slowest expansion in new order in-

takes in over two-and-a-half years. "India's services PMI remained in expansionary territory but eased to 57.4 in June, the lowest reading in 17 months. The loss of momentum points to more challenging market conditions and weaker demand, particularly at home," said Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC. -PTI

CD issuances up 38% in June

Fundraising by banks through certificates of deposit (CDs) surged 38% y-o-y in June, driven by tighter liquidity conditions and robust credit growth. Compared to May, CD issuances rose 61.79%. According to data compiled by PTI from the CCIL, banks raised ₹1.80 lakh crore through CDs in June.

Japan largest contributor to India's GCC ecosystem in APAC

PTI NEW DELHI

Japan has emerged as the largest contributor to India's Global Capability Centre (GCC) ecosystem in the Asia Pacific (APAC) region, with over 100 centres already established, a report showed on Friday, July 3.

These centres are rapidly evolving into strategic hubs for engineering, digital transformation, and product innovation, spanning areas such as AI, embedded systems, cloud, advanced analytics, and digital manufacturing, according to the Deloitte India report. Japanese enterprises are accelerating their GCC expansion in

India to support innovation-led, capability-driven growth. "As Japanese enterprises expand their global capability networks, India is emerging as a strategic hub for Japan that combines scale, engineering talent, and digital expertise," said Rohan Lobo, partner and GCC Industry Leader, Deloitte India.

UIDAI enables free email update via Aadhaar app

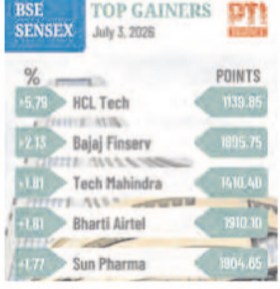
The UIDAI has enabled free email update facility directly through its new app for Aadhaar holders without the need to visit any centre, according to an official statement issued on Friday. This is a free service via the Aadhaar app only, effective July 1, 2026 for a period of six months, making it easier for residents to keep their Aadhaar information up to date, the statement said. The UIDAI has allowed people to add or update their email ID in Aadhaar directly through the Aadhaar App. -PTI

Mkts extend gains as IT, reaty and pharma stocks lead rally

PTI MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty ended higher on Friday, July 3, extending their winning momentum to a third consecutive day, supported by a rally in IT stocks and softer-than-expected US jobs data.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 261.79 points, or 0.34%, to settle at 77,763.91. During the day, it surged 655.4 points, or 0.84%, to 78,157.52. The 50-share NSE Nifty went up 95.15 points, or 0.39%, to end at



Asian markets showed positive trends, with South Korea's Kospi rebounding nearly 6%. Japan's Nikkei 225, Shanghai's SSE Composite, and Hong

Kong's Hang Seng also closed in positive territory.

"Domestic markets closed the session higher, despite intermittent volatility and profit-taking, aided by supportive global cues and growing expectations of a more accommodative global rate environment following softer US labour market data," said Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services Ltd.

On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark climbed 663.44 points, or 0.86%, and the Nifty climbed 214.85 points, or 0.89%.

US retains top spot as India's largest LPG supplier in June

PTI NEW DELHI

The United States retained its position as India's largest supplier of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) in June, extending its lead over traditional Gulf exporters as the country continued to diversify energy imports in response to geopolitical uncertainties in West Asia. According to data from commodity analytics firm Kpler, India imported 773.78 TMT of LPG from the US in June, marking a 19.4% increase from May. -IANS

Homebuyer affordability steady in 6 of 8 Indian cities

PTI NEW DELHI

Homebuyer affordability remained broadly supportive across India's residential markets during HI 2026, aided by a cumulative monetary easing of 125 basis points. Ahmedabad emerged as the most affordable among the top eight cities, a report said on Friday, July 3.

According to the report from Knight Frank India, six of the eight tracked cities remain within the 50% affordability threshold.

Ahmedabad secured an affordability ratio of 23%, followed by Kolkata at 25% and Pune at 28%.

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and the National Capital Region (NCR) continue to remain above the affordability threshold of 50%. Affordability worsened marginally in Bengaluru (35%) and NCR (65%) compared with 2025, while the remaining markets remained largely stable. The index measures the proportion of household income spent on equated monthly instalments (EMIs).

Govt bonds end a tad up on short covering

Government bond prices ended slightly higher on Friday, July 3, likely due to short covering ahead of the weekend, dealers said. Prices recovered from earlier losses after the cut-off price at the weekly gilt auction came in at the upper end of market expectations. The intraday fall in swap rates and the rupee's rise against the dollar also supported bond prices. Sentiment remained positive on hopes that Indian bonds would be included in Bloom-

berg's flagship Global Aggregate Index.

The 10-year benchmark 6.94% 2036 bond ended at ₹101.62, up from ₹101.57 on Thursday. The yield on the bond settled at 6.7108%, down from 6.7180% at the end of the previous session.

"There was some buying after the auction," a dealer at a public sector bank said. "Cut-off price was higher, so those who had bid at lower prices likely bought in the secondary market." -Informist

FIEO urges gov't to revive export credit

The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) on Friday urged the government to restore export credit as a strategic priority, address rising logistics costs, create a dedicated green transition fund for exporters, and operationalise long-pending GST refunds for foreign tourists, saying these measures are critical to sustaining India's export growth and enhancing global competitiveness. -Informist

Middle class growth engine of India; 500 cities to emerge as econ hubs: FM

PTI NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday, July 3, described the middle class as the growth engine of India, stating that nearly 500 cities are poised to emerge as the country's next centres of economic activity.

Participating in a panel discussion on "How to promote the rise of a new middle class" at the Rencontres Economiques d'Aix-en-Provence in France, Sitharaman said 31% of



India's population is middle class. Since the liberalisation of the economy, this segment has grown at an annual rate of 6.3%.

"We think 93% of all spending in India will be because of the middle class or slightly affluent consumers. This middle class is not concentrated in our metropolitan cities; India's model has resulted in development such that they are present in tier two and tier three cities," Sitharaman said.

She added that wealth distribution is spreading to cities beyond metropolitan areas, and the middle class is serving as an engine of growth through their consumption.

APAO tells govt airline fee relief no longer warranted

Private airports' association APAO has asked the civil aviation ministry to discontinue reduced landing and parking charges for domestic flights once the three-month period ends on July 6 and allow airport operators to recover the foregone fees from airlines. In the wake of the Iran war, posing challenges for India's airlines, regulator AERA, on April 7, allowed a 25% reduction in landing and parking charges for domestic flights at all major airports for three months. -PTI

Title: **Alpha**

Director: Shiv Rawail

Cast: Alia Bhatt, Sharvari,

Anil Kapoor and Bobby Deol

Where: In theatres near you

Rating: ★★★

Murtuza Iqbal

The last two movies of YRF's Spy Universe, *Tiger 3* and *War 2*, failed to leave a strong mark in the audience's hearts and minds. Even though the former did reasonably well at the box office, content-wise, it received mixed reactions. So, now all eyes were on YRF's first female-led Spy Universe movie, *Alpha*, starring Alia Bhatt and Sharvari. The teaser of *Alpha* received mostly negative reviews, and the trailer got a mixed response. So, it was clearly an *Agni Pariksha* for YRF to deliver a good film. So, did they pass the *Agni Pariksha*? Read on to know that...

The film starts on an interesting note, but soon looks like a very regular action film that will offer nothing great. However, after around 45 minutes, the movie picks up when the twists and turns start appearing on screen. In the first half, there's an elaborate action sequence (Alia vs Sharvari—which has been choreographed wonderfully).

While the interval block makes it look like we will get to watch a never-before-seen action sequence, the action scene post-interval just falls flat. The movie later moves towards an emotional journey between the characters of Alia and Sharvari. The second half has some really good and well-choreographed action sequences and interesting twists and turns that keep us engaged to the screen. Even the climax impresses. But the problem with *Alpha* is that the characters get things very easily. They travel from one place to another without any hurdles.

Actors' performance

Alia Bhatt once again proves that she



Womaniyas kick and tell

is one of the best actresses we have in the industry. Her performance is outstanding, and she has nailed it in the action sequences. Well, in *Alpha*, she actually shows what *Jigra* means!

Sharvari gets less screen time compared to Alia, but she steals the show whenever she comes on the big screen.

Anil Kapoor impresses us, and he proves that even though he might play a father's character, he still has the hero swag in him. Bobby Deol's performance is also quite good, but his Haryanvi accent is uneven and fails to impress. Hrithik Roshan has an interesting cameo, and he is looking SUPER HOT in it.

Music

No songs from *Alpha* were unveiled before the release, so whatever you hear in the movie will be new for you, and once the film is over, you will feel like searching for the jukebox of the movie. Also, the background score is wow and elevates the action sequences.

FPJ verdict

Overall, *Alpha* is a classy action entertainer that you can watch in theatres once for sure. But don't compare it with *Dhurandhar*, as both are totally different films.



Photos: IMDb

India's first hitwoman misses the mark

Satis Sundareshan

Touted to be a film about India's first hitwoman, *Baby Do Die Do* is about a deaf and mute person who then transforms herself into a hitwoman.

Actors' performance

Giving the devil its due, one needs to acknowledge Huma Qureshi's dedication towards the role, which is tailor made for her. The problem begins when her character starts developing, the flawed and convoluted narrative (Nachiket Samant, Gaurav Sharma—overshadows that, which remains till the end. Despite all that, Huma's commanding screen presence demands your attention. With this, she proves that she is quite capable of shouldering a film entirely on her shoulders.

For reasons best known to the filmmaker, Rachit Singh is shown as a Sardar, which is not at all 'asar-daar'. He hardly gets any platter to showcase his skills as an actor. Donning an attire

of a builder, does not make you one... Sikandar Kher needs to understand that, who is just not convincing in his role, unlike the veteran actress Seema Pahwa who is flawless despite her limited screen time. Marudhar Shekhawat too falls in the same bracket. Actors like Vidya Malavade, Hi-

Title: **Baby Do Die Do**

Director: Nachiket Samant

Cast: Huma Qureshi, Sikander Kher, Chunky Pandey, Seema Pahwa, Rachit Singh, Vidya Malavade, Himanshu Malik, Marudhar Shekhawat and Arun Kushwah

Where: In theatres near you

Rating: ★★

manshu Malik and Arun Kushwah are purely wasted. Speaking of Himanshu Malik, one does feel sorry for him for having chosen such a role. He is the same stud dude who had become the national crush with his role in films like *Tum Bin*. But, with a role in *Baby Do Die Do*, he seems to have crushed that image. All that, one feels like asking him is "Himanshu babu, aisi kya majboori thi.?" Veteran actor Chunky Pandey's character seems to be openly challenging the script in terms of who is more convoluted than the other!

FPJ verdict

While we credit and applaud Huma Qureshi for shouldering the film single handedly, the film does not qualify for a repeated viewing. But, for the die-hard Huma's fans, here is a film that you all had been praying for and waiting for. But, for others... 'sabr ka phal... OTT hota hai'!



Meenakshi revisits her Shahenshah moment

Meenakshi Seshadri takes a nostalgic trip down memory lane as she revisits one of her most iconic on-screen moments with Amitabh Bachchan

Veteran actress Meenakshi Seshadri has taken a nostalgic trip down memory lane as she revisited one of her most iconic on-screen moments with Amitabh Bachchan. She recently recreated the beloved song *Jaane Do Mujhe Jaana Hai* from *Shahenshah* (1988—originally shot nearly 40 years ago).

Taking to Instagram, Meenakshi posted her reel where she is seen recreating the song in a yellow outfit that she paired with blue accessories from the original song. In the caption, she explained the video is a tribute to her memorable yellow

A still from *Shahenshah*

outfit and that she deliberately chose to bring back the same colour palette for this shoot.

She also recalled how the original sequence was shot in the scenic locations of Ooty. Meenakshi added that this film marked her first on-screen role opposite megastar Amitabh Bachchan.

The *Ghagyal* actress wrote, "*Jaane Do Mujhe Jaana Hai*, as an ode to my iconic yellow outfit with blue accessories that I wore in the original song from the movie, *Shahenshah*. I

decided to repeat the same colour palette for this reel shoot. The original choreography in the movie involved dance and comedy in the scenic locations of Ooty."

"We kept the same vein of dance meets comedy in this choreography. This was my first movie role opposite Shree Amitabh Bachchan it's about 40 years since this original song was shot! This was my first shoot with Amit ji. I have tried my best to bring the same joy and fun with which the original song Picture Rise w a s created and to present that same excitement and energy in this reel as well," she added.



Amitabh Bachchan

Meenakshi Seshadri

Photos: Instagram/IMDb

Tree falls on Urvashi Dholakia's son's car

Heavy rainfall in Mumbai led to a frightening incident for actor Kshitij Dholakia, son of television actress Urvashi Dholakia. A large tree collapsed onto his parked car, causing extensive damage.

Fortunately, the actor was not inside the vehicle when the incident occurred. Kshitij Dholakia shared videos of the aftermath on Instagram, showing the massive tree lying across his badly damaged car. In another clip, officials can be seen clearing the fallen tree from the vehicle as rescue work continued at the spot.

Speaking in one of the videos, Kshitij said, "That's the condition of my car right now. Luckily, no one has been hurt."

Sharing his gratitude on Instagram, he tagged the Mumbai Police and wrote, "A scary reminder of how unpredictable life can be. Grateful that I wasn't in the car and everyone is safe. Huge thanks to the police and fire brigade for their swift help. Forever grateful."



Urvashi Dholakia with her son Kshitij

Preity Zinta moves HC over deepfakes

Urvi Mahajani

Preity Zinta has approached the Bombay High Court, seeking an injunction against AI-generated deepfakes, morphed images, videos and other unauthorised content depicting her on online platforms.

In her suit, she has named several intermediaries as respondents, including Google and Meta, along with domain name registrars and identified infringers. Hearing the matter on Friday, Justice Madhav Jamdar indicated that he would pass appropriate orders on July 6 after the parties work out a mechanism for taking down the offending material. The court observed that any relief granted must be carefully calibrated to ensure objectionable material is removed without disrupting legitimate online content.

Senior advocate Venkatesh Dhond, appearing for the actor, submitted that the sophistication of AI-generated deepfakes has increased significantly, making them more convincing and harmful. He sought urgent ex parte directions directing identified websites and intermediaries to remove all infringing content cited in the suit. He also sought John Doe orders—legal injunctions against anonymous or unidentified defendants—restraining any person or entity from creating or publishing fake content featuring the actor.



Photo: Instagram @realpz

Fairytale wedding at MSG

Speculation surrounding Taylor Swift and fiancé Travis Kelce's reported wedding celebrations reached a fever pitch on Thursday as a star-studded gathering unfolded at Madison Square Garden in New York City. While neither Swift nor her team confirmed that wedding festivities were underway, a mix of celebrity arrivals, heightened security, and elaborate preparations fuelled reports that the event marked the beginning of an extravagant multi-day celebration expected to culminate on Friday.

A-list guests arrive amid heightened security

The evening drew several high-profile guests, including actor Lena Dunham, music producer Jack Antonoff, designer Rachel Antonoff, sports broadcaster Erin Andrews, and Swift's longtime publicist, Tree Paine. Reports also suggested that Bradley Cooper, Gigi Hadid, and Selena Gomez were among those heading to events linked to the celebrations.

Guests arrived in a convoy of black SUVs beneath a white canopy erected outside Madison Square Garden, while Swift and Kelce were expected to use a private underground entrance. Around 100 guests arrived at Thursday's event, widely described as a party or rehearsal dinner, with a much larger gathering of nearly 1,000 people reportedly

planned for Friday, BBC reported. At the time of publication, reports stated that Taylor and Travis' wedding was slated to take place on Friday at Madison Square Garden, where the couple's closest friends and family—and several hundred more—were expected to attend what was expected to be an elaborate event inside the iconic New York venue. Many of the details surrounding the pending nuptials are still unknown, but a city permit obtained by The AP shows that Friday's wedding event is scheduled to start at 5 pm and could last until 4 am the next morning.

A law enforcement official briefed on security plans had previously told AP that a smaller rehearsal dinner would be held on Thursday night. A tented area shielded guests from view as they were dropped off on Thursday evening. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorised to discuss the events publicly. The wedding is the latest development in the superstar singer and football player's relationship, which has continued to thrill and fascinate millions around the world—particularly the Swifties, the pop star's enormous and ardent fan base—for the past three years, ever since the pair first started dating. One factual note: if this is intended for publication, the story should be independently verified. As written, it reports the wedding as imminent based on media reports.



Photos: X