

Banks Collect ₹28,000 Crore in MAB Penalties

BANKS COLLECTED ₹28,000 CRORE
AS PENALTIES FOR LOW BALANCES

Banks collected nearly ₹28,000 crore as penalties for non-maintenance of minimum average balance (MAB) in accounts during the past five years.

– MoS Finance Pankaj Chaudhary in Rajya Sabha

TOTAL PENALTIES COLLECTED (LAST 5 YEARS)

₹27,973 CRORE

(NEARLY ₹28,000 CRORE)

WHO COLLECTED THE MOST?

57%

43%

Private Sector Banks

₹15,939.62 Crore

(over 4 financial years)

Public Sector Banks

₹12,033.39 Crore

(over 5 financial years)

TOP PENALTY COLLECTORS

1

HDFC Bank

₹5,670 crore

2

Axis Bank

₹3,787 crore

3

Bank of Baroda

₹2,028 crore

4

SBI*

₹1,600.77 crore

* For Current Accounts only.

SBI has completely waived off penal charges on savings accounts for non-maintenance of MAB since March 2020.

10 OUT OF 12 PSBs

have discontinued penal charges on savings accounts to promote customer-centric and inclusive banking.

2 PSBs have rationalised such charges in accordance with their Board-approved policies and commercial considerations.

KEY FACT

Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDAs), including those set up under PMJDY, offer basic banking facilities like deposits, withdrawals and ATM access at no cost.

NO MINIMUM BALANCE REQUIRED

✓ Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDAs)

✓ Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts

NEARLY 73 CRORE ACCOUNTS

are presently exempt from any fine for failing to maintain the minimum balance.

The government is committed to promoting financial inclusion and ensuring that banking remains accessible, affordable and customer-friendly.

New Delhi, July 29: Banks across India collected nearly ₹28,000 crore as penalties from customers for failing to maintain the Minimum Average Balance (MAB) in their accounts over the past five years, the Centre informed Parliament. In a written reply in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State

for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said private sector banks collected ₹15,939.62 crore over four financial years, while public sector banks (PSBs) collected ₹12,033.39 crore over five financial years. Among all lenders, HDFC Bank topped the list by collecting around ₹5,670 crore in penalties, fol-

lowed by Axis Bank with ₹3,787 crore and Bank of Baroda with nearly ₹2,028 crore. State Bank of India (SBI) collected ₹1,600.77 crore, but the government clarified that these charges were only from current accounts, as SBI abolished penalties on savings accounts for non-maintenance of mini-

mum balance in March 2020. The government also informed Parliament that 10 of the country's 12 public sector banks have completely abolished penalty charges on savings accounts to promote customer-friendly and inclusive banking. The remaining two PSBs have reduced such charges in line

with their board-approved policies. Further, the Centre reiterated that Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDAs), including Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts, are not required to maintain a minimum balance. These accounts provide essential banking services

such as deposits, withdrawals and ATM facilities without any penalty. According to the government, nearly 73 crore BSBDAs, including Jan Dhan accounts, are currently exempt from minimum balance penalty charges, ensuring greater financial inclusion for millions of account holders.

Telangana Announces 7,437 Police Jobs

Hyderabad, July 29: The Telangana State Level Police Recruitment Board (TSLPRB) has issued four recruitment notifications for the direct recruitment of 7,437 posts across the Police, Special Protection Force (SPF), Fire Services, Disaster Response, Emergency & Civil Defence, and Prisons departments. The largest recruitment is in the Police Department, where 3,697 Police Constables (Civil) and 1,052 Police Constables (Armed Reserve) will be recruited. The notifica-

tions also include vacancies for 148 Sub-Inspectors (Civil), 14 Reserve Sub-Inspectors (AR), 12 Reserve Sub-Inspectors (TGSP), three Reserve Sub-Inspectors (SARCPL), 23 Assistant Sub-Inspectors (FPB), 24 Police Constables (SARCPL), 20 Police Constables (Driver-PTO) and seven Police Constables (Mechanic-PTO). The Special Protection Force (SPF) will recruit 1,380 Constables and 44 Sub-Inspectors. In the Fire, Disaster Response, Emergency & Civil

Defence Department, recruitment will be held for 751 Fire Fighters and 39 Station Fire Officers. The Prisons & Correctional Services Department will fill 14 Deputy Jailor (Men), one Deputy Jailor (Women), 196 Warder (Male) and 12 Warder (Female) posts. TSLPRB Chairman V.V. Srinivasa Rao said the schedule for online applications would be announced shortly. Eligible candidates can apply through the official website www.tgprb.in

prb.in) once the application window opens. He advised aspirants to undergo a medical examination by a Civil Surgeon before applying to ensure they meet the prescribed physical and medical standards. The recruitment comes weeks after BRS Working President K.T. Rama Rao urged the state government to issue notifications for 20,000 police constable posts, citing the hardships faced by thousands of unemployed youth preparing for police recruitment examinations.

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Japan's Population Falls Below 120 Million for First Time in 42 Years

Tokyo, July 29: Japan's population crisis has deepened, with the number of Japanese nationals falling below 120 million for the first time in 42 years, according to government data released on Wednesday. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications said the population of Japanese citizens stood at 119,736,483 as of January 1, 2026, a decline of 917,000 from the previous year. This is the largest annual drop since comparable records began in 1968. Among Japan's 47 prefectures, Tokyo was the only one to record an increase in the number of Japanese nationals, posting a marginal growth of 0.09 per cent. Meanwhile, the number of foreign residents reached a record 4,031,159, rising by 354,000 over the previous year. This is the highest figure since such data began being recorded in 2013. Including foreign residents, Japan's total population

stood at 123,767,642, down by around 563,000 from a year earlier. Population growth was recorded only in Tokyo, Chiba and Osaka prefectures. The latest figures add to concerns over Japan's rapidly ageing society and shrinking workforce. Earlier this year, government data showed that the country's child population had fallen to a record low of 13.29 million, with children under the age of 15 accounting for just 10.8 per cent of the total population. Japan's child population has now declined for 45 consecutive years, despite government efforts such as increased financial support for families and expanded childcare initiatives. Recognising the seriousness of the demographic crisis, the Japanese government has declared the period up to 2030 as its "final opportunity" to reverse the country's declining birth rate and population trend.

EDITORIAL

Future of Competitive Exams After NEET

Competitive examinations have long been regarded as the cornerstone of merit-based admissions in India. Among them, the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) has become the gateway to medical education for millions of students. However, repeated controversies over question paper leaks, examination irregularities, and administrative lapses have shaken public confidence, triggering nationwide demands for comprehensive reforms rather than temporary fixes. Recent proposals for stronger anti-cheating laws, greater use of technology, and structural reforms reflect the urgency of restoring credibility to India's examination system. The purpose of a competitive examination is to provide every student with an equal opportunity based on merit. When fairness is compromised, it is not merely an examination that fails—it is the trust of an entire generation. Millions of students spend years preparing for high-stakes tests, often sacrificing their childhood, mental well-being, and family resources. Any irregularity undermines not only individual aspirations but also public faith in institutions. The future of competitive examinations must therefore be built on transparency, security, and technology. Computer-Based Testing (CBT), encrypted question paper distribution, AI-powered surveillance, biometric verification, and real-time monitoring can significantly reduce opportunities for malpractice. The Supreme Court has also emphasized the need for institutional reforms and sought clarity on plans for a greater shift toward technology-driven examinations. Yet technology alone cannot solve every problem. Examination agencies must become more accountable, independent, and transparent. Timely grievance redressal, independent audits, strict action against officials involved in malpractice, and severe penalties for organized cheating networks are essential to deter future misconduct. Proposed amendments to strengthen punishments for paper leaks and examination fraud indicate that accountability is becoming a policy priority. Equally important is reducing the excessive pressure associated with a single high-stakes examination. A student's future should not depend entirely on performance during one stressful day. Policymakers should explore multi-session examinations, score normalization, greater weightage for school performance, and multiple testing opportunities, similar to international assessment models. Such reforms would reduce stress while ensuring that merit remains the primary criterion. India must also address the commercialisation of entrance examinations. Booming coaching industry has created unequal opportunities, where financial capability often determines access to quality preparation. Strengthening government schools, aligning school curricula with entrance examinations, and expanding digital learning resources can help level the playing field for students from rural and economically weaker backgrounds. The future of competitive examinations is not simply about conducting tests more securely; it is about restoring trust in the promise of equal opportunity.

Lok Sabha Passes Anti-Paper Leak Bill

New Delhi, July 29: The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, strengthening legal provisions to tackle paper leaks and examination-related fraud. The Bill was passed by a voice vote after a debate that continued for two days. The legislation amends the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, with the aim of ensuring greater transparency, fairness and integrity in the country's examination system while protecting the interests of students. Under the amended law, those found guilty of paper leaks or examination fraud can face up to 10 years of imprisonment, a fine of up to ₹10 crore, and confiscation of assets. The Bill also provides for the establishment of fast-track courts, which will be required to complete trials and deliver judgments within three months. The amendment follows the Union Cabinet's approval of stricter legal measures

to curb examination malpractices. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier announced that the government would introduce a comprehensive law to ensure stringent action against those involved in paper leaks. The legislation comes in the wake of the nationwide outrage over alleged examination irregularities, including the NEET paper leak, and the large-scale 'Sansad Chalo' protest held in New Delhi on July 20. Hundreds of students participated in the demonstration organised by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP), demanding reforms in the examination system and action against those responsible for paper leaks. The protest later turned violent, leading to clashes between demonstrators and security personnel, with injuries reported on both sides. The protesters had also demanded the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who resigned from the post on July 25.



Rajya Sabha Passes Bill to Criminalise Insult to 'Vande Mataram'

New Delhi: The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday passed the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, making insult or desecration of the national song 'Vande Mataram' a criminal offence. The Bill was passed by a voice vote amid protests by Opposition members. The House witnessed repeated sloganeering by Opposition parties, who demanded a statement from Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the police action against protesters demonstrating in New Delhi over the alleged NEET paper leak. Despite the protests, Deputy Chairman Harivansh continued the proceedings and urged members to maintain order and participate in the debate. The Opposition later staged a walkout while Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale was speaking on the proposed legislation. Replying to the debate, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai accused the Congress of insulting the country's honour through what he described as appeasement politics. He recalled that several freedom fighters had chanted 'Vande Mataram' before laying down their lives during India's struggle for independence. "One cannot understand the Congress' opposition to Vande Mataram. The country's youth are watching, and the people will give them a fitting reply," Rai said, adding that the national song symbolises the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'. The amendment seeks to provide 'Vande Mataram' the same legal protection currently available to the national anthem 'Jana Gana Mana' under the existing law. The Bill also strengthens legal provisions against disrespect or desecration of national symbols, including the National Flag, the Constitution of India, and the National Anthem. Those found guilty can face up to three years' imprisonment. The legislation was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on July 24 and comes as the country marks the 150th anniversary of 'Vande Mataram' through year-long commemorative celebrations.



Trainee IPS Arrested in Sexual Harassment Case

Hyderabad, July 29: A trainee Indian Police Service (IPS) officer has been arrested in Hyderabad on charges of sexual harassment, stalking, criminal intimidation and online abuse after allegedly harassing a fellow IPS trainee following the end of their relationship. The accused, M. Uday Krishna Reddy, was arrested on Tuesday and produced before the First Class Additional Judicial Magistrate at Rajendranagar. The court remanded him to 14 days of judicial custody, following which he was shifted to Chanchalguda Central Jail. According to Hyderabad Police, Krishna Reddy previously served as a police constable in Andhra Pradesh before clearing the UPSC examination and joining the 2025 IPS batch. He has been undergoing training at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVP-NPA) in Hyderabad since December 2025. Police said the accused and the victim, who is also an IPS probationer, came into contact through Instagram in mid-2025 after she responded to a social media post about his journey to becoming an IPS officer. The two later entered into a relationship.

13 Indian Seafarers Trapped at Ukraine Port

New Delhi/Kyiv, July 29: Thirteen Indian seafarers are among the 15 crew members stranded aboard the cargo vessel MV AMIR1 at Ukraine's Chornomorsk Port, as drone and missile attacks continue around the strategic Black Sea harbour, according to the Forward Seamen's Union of India (FSUI). The seafarers' union said the crew is facing a "terrible and life-threatening situation", with repeated attacks taking place near the vessel and the sailors living under the constant threat of a direct strike. In a post on X, the FSUI appealed to the Indian government, the shipowners, the vessel's flag state and other concerned authorities to take urgent steps to ensure the crew's safety and arrange their evacuation and repatriation. The union also shared a video allegedly recorded from the vessel, showing thick smoke rising from nearby areas, highlighting the deteriorating security situation around the Black Sea port. So far, neither the Ministry of External Affairs nor the shipping company operating the vessel has issued an official statement on the incident. The latest emergency comes amid a series of attacks on merchant vessels operating in the Black Sea. On July 18, merchant vessel MV OMORFI was hit while transiting the Black Sea in Russian territorial waters. The ship had 10 crew members, including three Indians, and one Indian seafarer was killed in the attack. A day later, on July 19, MV GOLDEN LEO was struck while departing Ukraine's Port of Odesa, killing four Indian seafarers. Following the incident, India summoned the Russian Charge d'Affaires to lodge a strong protest. In another attack, the Palau-flagged MV AGN Ragnar was hit near Odesa on Saturday evening, leaving two Indian crew members missing. With these incidents, at least five Indian seafarers have been killed and two remain missing in attacks in the Black Sea over the past week. India has summoned diplomats from both Russia and Ukraine to express its concern over repeated attacks on civilian merchant vessels and has urged both sides to ensure the safety of commercial shipping and seafarers operating in the conflict zone.

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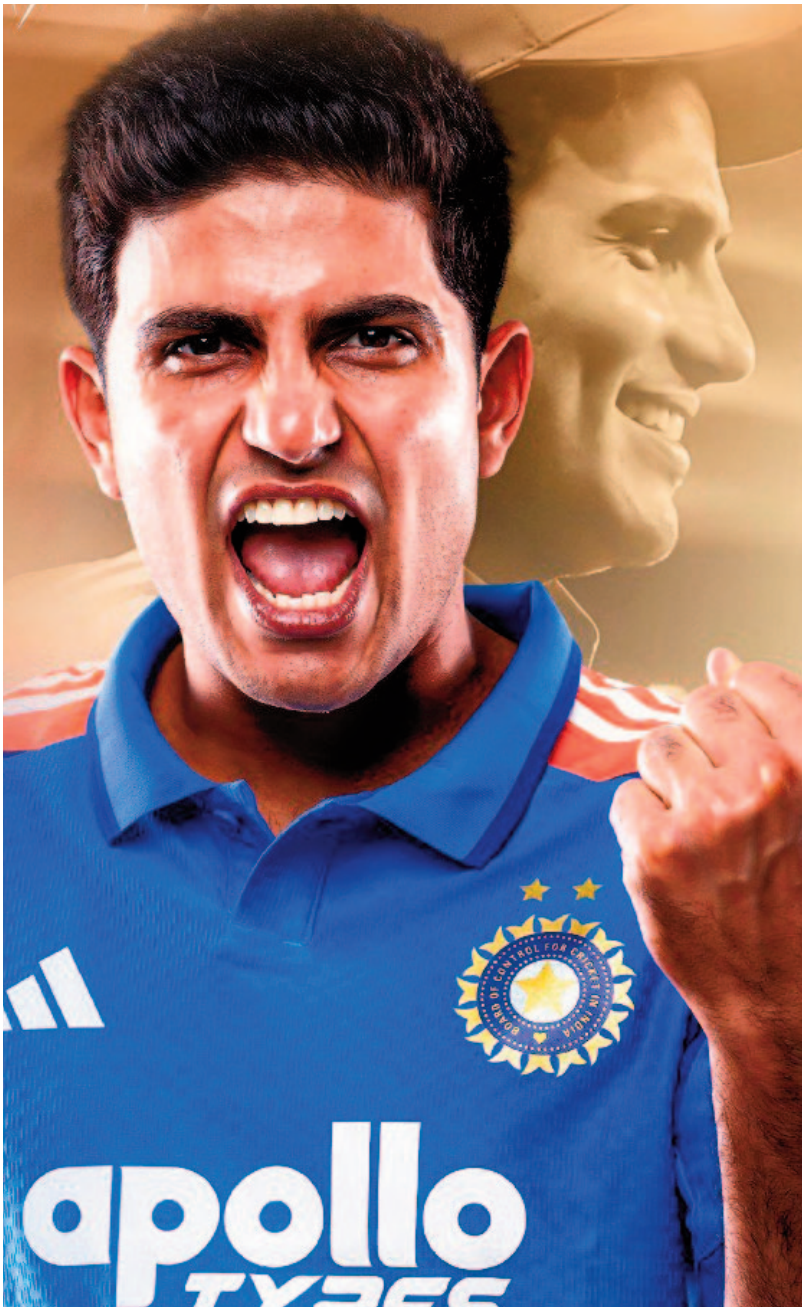
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Gill Regains No. 1 ODI Ranking

Sooryavanshi Makes Massive T20I Leap

India continued its dominance in the latest ICC rankings as Shubman Gill regained the No. 1 position in the ODI batting rankings, while teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi made a stunning rise in the T20I rankings following his impressive performances against Zimbabwe. Gill reclaimed the top ODI batting spot after New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell slipped from the summit due to inactivity. Mitchell had held the No. 1 ranking since January. The biggest highlight of the rankings update was 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, who surged 230 places to a career-best 48th in the T20I batting rankings. The youngster scored 151 runs at an average of 50.33 during India's 3-0 series sweep over Zimbabwe and was named Player of the Series. India's Ishan Kishan retained the No. 1 T20I batter ranking with 910 rating points, after scoring a commanding 81 runs in the series. During the tournament, he briefly reached a career-high 916 rating points, the third-highest rating in T20I history, behind Abhishek Sharma (931) and England's Dawid Malan (919). Other Indian gains included: Tilak Varma moved up two places to 6th in the T20I batting rankings. Shreyas Iyer climbed seven spots to 24th. Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi jumped 31 places to 41st in the T20I bowling rankings after taking three wickets. Despite losing the series, Zimbabwe also saw improvements in the rankings: Ryan Burl rose six places to joint 85th among T20I batters. Blessing Muzarabani climbed 10 spots to 26th in the T20I bowling rankings. In the ODI bowling rankings, Namibia's Bernard Scholtz entered the top seven following impressive performances in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 tri-series. The latest Test rankings also saw notable changes: West Indies all-rounder Justin Greaves climbed to 48th among bowlers and 9th among all-rounders after an outstanding performance against Pakistan. Jayden Seales advanced to 24th in the Test bowling rankings. Pakistan pacer Mohammad Abbas moved up to 17th. Babar Azam climbed four places to 15th in the Test batting rankings after scoring a fighting half-century against the West Indies.

Ishan to Lead East Zone

Vaibhav Named Deputy for Duleep Trophy

Wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan has been appointed captain of the East Zone team for the 2026 Duleep Trophy, while teenage batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi has been named vice-captain for the tournament, which begins on August 23. The 15-member squad blends experienced campaigners with promising youngsters. Veteran India fast bowler Mohammed Shami returns to bolster the pace attack alongside Mukesh Kumar, while Abhimanyu Easwaran, Shahbaz Ahmed, and Anukul Roy add strength to the batting and all-round departments. Kishan earned the leadership role after an impressive outing in India's recent white-ball series against Zimbabwe, where he produced several explosive innings at the top of the order. The spotlight



will also be on 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, who continues his rapid rise in Indian cricket. Fresh from an outstanding international series against Zimbabwe, the youngster has been rewarded with the vice-captaincy after consistently impressive performances over the past year. The batting line-up also features Sudip Kumar Gharami, Virat Singh, Suraj Sindhu Jaiswal, Subhranshu Senapati, Denish Das, and Shikhar Mohan, while Kumar Kushagra will provide additional wicketkeeping cover. Shami's return adds invaluable experience to the bowling attack, with Mukesh Kumar and Abhijit Sarkar supporting the pace unit. All-rounders Shahbaz Ahmed and Anukul Roy are expected to play key roles with both bat and ball.

Neymar Retires from International Football

Brazil's all-time leading scorer Neymar has officially announced his retirement from international football, ending a remarkable 16-year career with the national team. The 34-year-old confirmed his decision after Santos' 4-2 win over Venezuela's Universidad Central in the Copa Sudamericana, putting an end to speculation following Brazil's exit from the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Brazil were knocked out in the Round of 16 after losing to Norway, with Neymar making his final appearance in the famous yellow jersey. Reflecting on his journey, Neymar said he had no regrets and had always given everything for his country. "My time with the national team is over. I made history. I was very happy. I gave my blood, my life, and always fought for the yellow jersey. But now I don't want to anymore," Neymar said. Neymar retires as Brazil's highest-ever goalscorer, having represented the nation in multiple FIFA World Cups, Copa América tournaments and the Olympic Games. The veteran forward also dismissed recent reports claiming he had intimidated younger teammates at Santos. He clarified that his post-match comments were only intended to demand higher standards from the squad. "I spoke after the match because we cannot afford to lose points through careless mistakes. As captain, I have every right to demand better," Neymar said. Neymar helped Santos secure a 4-2 victory over Universidad Central, sending the Brazilian club into the Copa Sudamericana Round of 16, where they will face Ecuador's Macará.



RCB Becomes First Cricket Franchise Worth Over \$300 Million



RCB has become the first cricket franchise in the world to cross the \$300 million brand valuation mark, while the Indian Premier League (IPL) has reached a record \$20.6 billion enterprise value, according to the Houlihan Lokey 2026 Brand Valuation Report. The report said the IPL's business value grew 11.4 per cent year-on-year to \$20.6 billion, while its standalone brand value increased 10.3 per cent to \$4.3 billion. Since 2023, the league has added more than \$1.1 billion in brand value. RCB retained the top position among IPL franchises with a brand

value of \$312 million, a 16 per cent increase from \$269 million in 2025, becoming the first cricket franchise to cross the \$300 million milestone. Mumbai Indians ranked second with a brand value of \$264 million, followed by Kolkata Knight Riders (\$245 million) and Chennai Super Kings (\$244 million). The report also highlighted major ownership deals that boosted the league's commercial appeal. RCB was acquired by a consortium comprising Blackstone, Bolt Ventures, Aditya Birla Group, and Times of India Group at a reported valuation of \$1.78 billion,

while Rajasthan Royals changed hands at an estimated valuation of \$1.65 billion. The IPL's digital reach continued to expand rapidly. According to official broadcaster JioStar, the 2026 season reached 1.06 billion screens, with total viewership increasing 7 per cent over the previous year. Connected TV emerged as the fastest-growing platform, recording a 26 per cent rise in audience reach, although traditional television ratings declined by 18.8 per cent. The report noted that strong digital growth, premium sponsorships and lucrative media rights helped the IPL generate more

than \$1.8 billion in revenue during the season, strengthening its position as one of the fastest-growing sports leagues in the world. Punjab Kings co-owner Ness Wadia said the league's transformation had exceeded expectations. "I always believed the IPL would become one of the biggest sporting leagues in the world. I just didn't think it would happen this quickly," he said. He added that the IPL has transformed India's sporting landscape by creating careers, attracting global investment and building sports brands with massive fan followings.

Style of the Day



Divya Agarwal

40 Killed in PoK as Pakistani Crackdown Intensifies



Islamabad, July 29: At least 40 people were killed and dozens injured in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) over the past two days as Pakistani security forces intensified their crackdown on protesters amid escalating unrest in the region. According to reports cited by the United Kashmir People's National Party (UKPNP), around 40 civilians were killed, while many others were injured and arbitrarily detained between July 27 and 28 in Rawalakot, Mirpur and several other areas. The organisation alleged that more than 100 people have been killed since June 5, with hundreds critically injured and many reportedly subjected to enforced disappearances during the ongoing protests. Condemning the violence, the UKPNP stated that the use of excessive force against peaceful civilians constitutes a serious violation of international human rights and may amount to crimes under international law. The group urged the United Nations, the European Union and the international community to intervene, calling for independent investigations into the reported incidents and immediate measures to protect civilians. Meanwhile, Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) leader Sardar Amman Khan accused Pakistani forces of carrying out a "massacre" of unarmed protesters. "In just two days, Pakistani forces have brutally killed 38 peaceful Kashmiri protesters. This is not law enforcement; it is a massacre of civilians demanding their basic rights," Khan posted on social media. He alleged that peaceful demonstrations are being met with lethal force and demanded justice for the victims through an independent investigation. The ongoing protests in PoK have emerged as a major challenge to Islamabad's control over the region.

South Made Me More Adaptable



Actress Seerat Kapoor says working in the South Indian film industry has played a key role in shaping her career, making her a more instinctive, adaptable and emotionally honest performer. Speaking to IANS, Seerat said the opportunity to work across different languages and cultures helped her evolve as an actor. "The South Indian film industry gave me a platform to grow and evolve as an actor. Working across different languages and cultures challenged me to become more instinctive, more adaptable, and more honest in every performance. It reinforced something I deeply believe: human emotion doesn't need subtitles. That's the most beautiful part of storytelling," she said. Reflecting on the challenges actors face today, Seerat said earning lasting respect through meaningful work is more important than temporary popularity. "Being remembered for the right reasons is the biggest challenge. Visibility is fleeting and trends change, but the respect you earn through your work endures. People may recognise your face because they see it

often, but they remember your work because it made them feel something," she said. She added that authenticity, continuous growth and allowing one's work to speak for itself are the keys to a long career. On the professional front, Seerat will next be seen in 'Jatasya Maranam Dhruvam', which is scheduled for release next month in five languages. The actress recently recalled sustaining an injury while filming the movie's climax sequence. "We were shooting the final climax sequence and I was wearing bangles for the scene. After the shoot, my wrists had swollen so much that the bangles could not be removed. Though the team ensured complete safety, some experiences are inevitable when you choose the method acting route. In the end, it will all be worth it when audiences watch the film," she said. 'Jatasya Maranam Dhruvam' also stars veteran actor JD Chakravarthy in a pivotal role.

SC Upholds Green Clearances for Key TG Projects

Hyderabad: In a major relief for Telangana, the Supreme Court has upheld the validity of environmental clearances granted to the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme, Seethamma Sagar Multipurpose Project, and Gouravelli Reservoir, removing a significant legal hurdle to their implementation. A Bench headed by Chief Justice B.R. Gavai and Justice Surya Kant struck down the Union Environment Ministry's 2021 Office Memorandum (OM) but ruled that the decision would apply prospectively. The court clarified that environmental clearances already granted under the 2021 OM would remain valid, ensuring that ongoing projects are not dis-

rupted. The verdict provides certainty for the three major irrigation projects, whose environmental approvals had been challenged in court. The Bench also made it clear that completed projects and those already under construction would not be affected by the ruling. However, the apex court laid down stricter guidelines for future projects, stating that prior environmental clearance would be mandatory before any new project begins. The court observed that executive orders or office memorandums cannot override statutory provisions and held that any exemption from environmental laws must be issued through a legally valid government notification. The



judgment is expected to speed up work on the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme, Seethamma Sagar Multipurpose Project,

and Gouravelli Reservoir, providing a major boost to Telangana's irrigation infrastructure and water resource development.

'Ramayana' Music Rights Sold for ₹75 Crore

Mumbai: Director Nitesh Tiwari's ambitious mythological epic 'Ramayana' has created another milestone ahead of its release, with its music rights reportedly sold for ₹75 crore, making it the biggest audio rights deal for a Hindi film. According to media reports, producer Namit Malhotra had initially aimed for a record ₹100 crore deal for the global music rights of the film. The project, mounted on an estimated ₹4,000 crore budget with an additional USD 40 million earmarked for global marketing, attracted strong interest from leading music labels, including T-Series, Sony Music, Saregama and Universal Music. After multiple rounds of negotiations, T-Series reportedly acquired the music rights by paying an advance of ₹75 crore.

Ramayana

