

# Indian student was on video call with family moments before drowning in Russia

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
JALGAON (MAHARASHTRA): The Pinjari family faced a devastating turn of events as siblings Jishan and Jia were swept away with two others by a strong wave in the Volkhov river in Russia.



Both medical students at Novgorod State University, the pair had ventured out for a leisurely stroll with friends Harshal Ananttrao Desale, Malik Gulangous Mohammad Yakub and Nisha Bhupesh Sonawane.

In a heart-wrenching moment, captured on video as Jishan made a call to his family, the family witnessed the siblings being swept away by a powerful wave despite desperate pleas for them to exit the water.

Sonawane, who survived, is currently under the care of Russian medical professionals. A family member shared with local media, "When they entered the Volkhov river, Jishan made a video call to his family. His father and other family members were pleading with Jishan and others to come out of the river waters when a strong wave swept them away."

The Pinjari family now grapples with the aftermath of this tragic incident, highlighting the dangers that can unexpectedly arise in seemingly peaceful settings.

Jalgaon district collector Ayush Prasad said that efforts are underway to repatriate the bodies of the

deceased students back to India.

Jishan and Jia were siblings from Amalner in Jalgaon district, while Harshal Desale hailed from Bhadgaon, also in Jalgaon district.

The University has reached out to the Indian envoy in Russia to express their condolences over the tragic loss.

The students had been enjoying a leisurely walk near the city's beach along the Volkhov river during their study-free time when the accident occurred.

The Consulate General of India in St. Petersburg has confirmed that the students, aged between 18-20, were pursuing medical education at the University.

"In the incident, a fifth Indian student was saved from drowning and is presently receiving medical attention," an official statement released by the Ministry of External Affairs said.

It said the consulate in St. Petersburg remains in contact with the university and local authorities and is providing all possible assistance. "Local emergency services

have so far recovered two dead bodies from the Volkhov river. We offer our condolences to the families. The search for the remaining two missing students continues. The five students involved in the accident belong to the Jalgaon district of Maharashtra," it said.

The consulate is coordinating with local authorities for the repatriation of the mortal remains and continues to be in contact with the families and the district administration in Jalgaon, Maharashtra.

# RBI raises GDP growth projection to 7.2 pc for FY25

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India on Friday revised upwards the GDP growth projection for the current fiscal to 7.2 per cent from 7 per cent on rising private consumption and revival of demand in rural areas.

Unveiling the bi-monthly monetary policy, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said estimates released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) placed India's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth at 8.2 per cent in 2023-24.

"During 2024-25 so far, domestic economic activity has maintained resilience," he said, adding that manufacturing activity continues to gain ground on the back of strengthening domestic demand.

Also, the services sector maintained buoyancy, as evident in available high-frequency indicators.

Later replying to a question if the economy was overheating, RBI deputy governor

Michael Debabrata Patra said: "We are not seeing signs of overheating because, remember, that level of output had fallen very low during the pandemic and even these high rates of growth are enabling it to catch up with that level. So, no signs of overheating".

In his monetary policy statement, Governor Das said private consumption, the mainstay of aggregate demand, is recovering with steady discretionary spending in urban areas.

The revival in rural demand is getting a fillip from improving farm sector activity, and investment activity continues to gain traction on the back of ongoing expansion in non-food bank credit.

He also said the forecast of above normal south-west monsoon by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) is expected to boost kharif production and replenish the reservoir levels.

"Taking all these factors into consideration, real GDP



growth for 2024-25 is projected at 7.2 per cent with Q1 at 7.3 per cent, Q2 at 7.2 per cent, Q3 at 7.3 per cent, and Q4 at 7.2 per cent. The risks are evenly balanced," Das said.

He also emphasised that the healthy balance sheets of banks and corporates, the government's continued thrust on capex, high capacity utilisation, and business optimism augur well for investment activity.

External demand should get a fillip from improving prospects of global trade, the governor said.

The developments relating

to growth and inflation are unfolding as per "our expectations", he noted.

When the projected GDP growth of 7.2 per cent for 2024-25 materialises, it will be the fourth consecutive year with growth at or above 7 per cent.

On global economic growth, Das said the growth is sustaining its momentum in 2024 and is likely to remain resilient, supported by a rebound in global trade.

Also, global inflation is easing, but the final leg of this disinflation journey may be tough. Central banks remain

steadfast and data-dependent in their fight against inflation.

Market expectations regarding the timing and pace of interest rate cuts are also changing with incoming data and central bank communication, the governor said.

"There is a view that in matters of monetary policy, the Reserve Bank is guided by the principle of 'follow the Fed'.

"I would like to unambiguously state that while we do keep a watch on whether clouds are building up or clearing out in the distant horizon, we play the game according to the local weather and pitch conditions," Das said.

In other words, he said, "While we do consider the impact of monetary policy in advanced economies on Indian markets, our actions are primarily determined by domestic growth-inflation conditions and the outlook".

# Vande Bharat average speed down from 84 kmph to 76 kmph in 3 years: RTI response

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
NEW DELHI: The average speed of Vande Bharat trains has decreased from 84.48 kmph in 2020-21 to 76.25 kmph in 2023-24, the railway ministry said in a response to an RTI query.

Railway officials said not only Vande Bharats but many other trains are also maintaining cautionary speed at places where "huge infrastructural work" is underway.

"Besides this, some Vande Bharat trains have been launched in difficult terrain areas where there are speed restrictions due to geographical reasons or extreme weather conditions," a railway official said.

Citing the example of the Vande Bharat train between Mumbai CSMT and Madgaon, an official of the Central Railway Zone said, "Most of the Konkan railway area is 'ghat' section where trains pass through low height mountain ranges.

It is a difficult terrain area where increasing speed could compromise safety."

"Things become very challenging during the monsoon season when we have to keep the maximum speed for all trains at 75 kmph," he added.

The RTI applicant, Madhya Pradesh-based Chandra Shekhar Gaur, said, "The data, obtained through



the RTI, shows that the average speed of Vande Bharat trains was 84.48 in 2020-21, which decreased to 81.38 kmph in 2022-23. It further deteriorated in 2023-24 to 76.25."

Launched on February 15, 2019, the Vande Bharat is a semi-high speed train which can run at a maximum speed of 160 kmph. However, it cannot go beyond 130 kmph anywhere in the country, except on the Delhi-Agra route, due to unsuitable track conditions.

"There are certain segments of tracks between Delhi and Agra which were developed in 2016 for India's first semi-high speed train Gatiman Express to run at 160 kmph. Only on those segments, the Vande Bharat also runs at 160 kmph speed. Rest of the places, its maximum speed is either 130 or

less than," another railway official said.

He said the railways has been upgrading tracks to meet the speed requirement of the Vande Bharat and "it is because of these reasons there are cautions at various places". "Once these upgrades are over, we will have trains which will go up to 250 kmph," the official said.

Some of the routes on which the Vande Bharat's speed is worse than its overall average speed are Dehradun-Anand Vihar (63.42 kmph), Patna-Ranchi (62.9 kmph) and Coimbatore-Bangalore Cantt (58.11 kmph). An expert engaged in track construction said the first Vande Bharat was launched in February 2019 and it has been more than five years since then, but the railways

is yet to replace tracks on any route so that the train can run at its maximum operating speed of 160 kmph.

"The railways' argument is that since infrastructure work is going on, it restricts the speed of Vande Bharat trains. But this is also true that in five years, it has failed to lay tracks suitable for running semi-high speed trains," the expert said requesting anonymity.

However, the railway ministry maintains that Vande Bharat trains are very popular and till March 31, more than 2.15 crore people have travelled by it.

The Vande Bharat lists a number of features such as Kavaach protection, faster acceleration and semi-high speed operation up to 160 kmph, fully sealed gangway for free passenger movement, automatic plug doors, reclining ergonomic seats and comfortable seating with revolving seats in executive class, better ride comfort among others.

"A total of 284 districts across the country have been connected to the Vande Bharat Express and this number will continue to increase in the future.

A total of 102 Vande Bharat trains are providing services on 100 routes of the railway network," a railway official said.

# RBI permits automatic replenishment of UPI Lite wallet



**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank on Friday proposed a facility to allow customers to automatically replenish their UPI Lite wallets to promote small-value digital payments.

Currently, the UPI Lite has a daily limit of Rs 2,000, while the upper limit for a single payment is Rs 500.

UPI Lite is a simplified version of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI). It acts as an on-device wallet for small-value transactions.

Presently, the UPI Lite app can only hold a maximum of Rs 2000 at a time. "To encourage wider adoption of UPI Lite, it is now proposed to bring it under the e-mandate framework by introducing a facility for customers to automatically replenish their UPI Lite wallets if the balance goes below the threshold limit set by them," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said.

This will further enhance the ease of making small

value digital payments, he said while announcing the bi-monthly monetary policy here.

UPI Lite was introduced in September 2022 to enable small value payments in a quick and seamless manner through an on-device wallet. Das further said that the adoption of e-mandates for recurring payment transactions has been increasing.

It is now proposed to include payments, such as replenishment of balances in Fastag, National Common Mobility Card (NCMC), etc., which are recurring in nature, but without any fixed periodicity, in the e-mandate framework, he noted.

"This will enable customers to automatically replenish the balances in Fastag, NCMC, etc. if the balance goes below the threshold limit set by them. This will enhance convenience in making travel/mobility-related payments," he said.

# Parliament security breach case: Delhi Police files charge sheet against six accused



**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
NEW DELHI: The Delhi Police on Friday filed a charge sheet before a court here against six accused in the Parliament security breach case.

The 1000-page charge sheet under the stringent UAPA was filed before Additional Sessions Judge Hardeep Kaur against Manoranjan D, Lalit Jha, Amol Shinde, Mahesh Kumawat, Sagar Sharma,

and Neelam Azad. The final report was filed under the relevant sections of the UAPA and the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Special public prosecutor Akhand Pratap Singh also submitted before the court that sanctions for prosecution under section 186 IPC and under section 13 of UAPA are awaited for which supplementary charge sheet will be filed within a period of two weeks.

The court has listed the matter for filing of the supplementary charge sheet on July 15.

The court also extended the judicial custody of all the six accused till July 15 after they were produced on expiry of their custody.

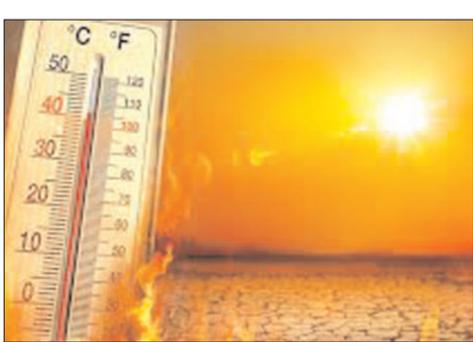
# May heat wave in India 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than warmest heat wave

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
NEW DELHI: Heatwaves similar to those experienced in May in India are almost 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than the warmest heat waves previously observed in the country, according to a new rapid attribution study by an independent group of climate scientists and researchers.

The analysts at ClimateMeter said the intense and prolonged heat wave India endured in May was a result of the naturally occurring El Nino phenomenon -- unusual warming of the ocean surface in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean -- and the rapidly increasing concentration of greenhouse gases -- primarily carbon dioxide and methane -- in the atmosphere.

The researchers analyzed how events similar to the high temperature in India's May heatwave changed in the present (2001-2023) compared to what they would have looked like if they had occurred in the past (1979-2001).

"The temperature changes show that similar events produce temperatures in the present climate at least 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than what they would have been in the past over a large area of the region analyzed. The precipitation changes do not



show any significant variations," the analysis read.

"ClimateMeter's findings underscore that heatwaves in India are reaching unbearable temperature thresholds because of fossil fuels burning," said Davide Faranda of French National Centre for Scientific Research.

"There are no technological solutions for adapting Indian metropolises for temperatures approaching 50 degrees Celsius. We should all act now to reduce CO2 emissions and avoid exceeding vital temperature thresholds in large areas of the subtropics," he said.

Gianmarco Mengaldo of National University of Singapore said the findings show the complex interplay between natural variability and climate change, with the latter playing an important role in critical synoptic-weather-pattern changes in

tropical and subtropical regions that may significantly aggravate heatwaves in the near future.

The world is witnessing weather extremes under a combined effect of the 2023-24 El Nino and human-caused climate change.

May 2024 was the warmest May ever and the last 12 consecutive months - June 2023 to May 2024 - have broken data from the health ministry.

According to data compiled by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), 46 of these deaths were recorded in May alone (till May 30). Between May 1 and 30, 19,189 suspected heat stroke cases were reported in the country, it said.

The data does not include deaths from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Delhi, and the final numbers are expected to be higher, a source said.

# 73 per cent of newly elected MLAs in Odisha are 'crorepatis'

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
BHUBANESWAR: Seventy-three per cent of the newly elected MLAs in Odisha are 'crorepatis' with BJP's Sanatan Mahakud the richest legislator having total assets worth Rs 227.67 crore, a report said.

The Odisha Assembly has 147 members.

Odisha Election Watch and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) have analysed the self-sworn affidavits of all 147 elected MLAs candidates and found that 73 per cent of the newly elected MLAs in 2024 are 'crorepatis' while 95 (65 per cent) 'crorepatis' MLAs were elected in 2019 polls.

Out of 107 crorepati MLAs, 52 candidates are from BJP, 43 from BJD, 9 from Congress, 1 from CPI (M) and 2 independent candidates.

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
MUMBAI: Voices for interest rate cut are growing within the Reserve Bank's rate-setting panel with external member Ashima Goyal joining ranks with another member Jayanth R Varma who for long has been advocating to reduce the key policy rate by at least 25 basis points.

Reserve Bank's monetary policy committee voted for a status quo in repo rate with four members voting in favour and two against. "Dr. Shashanka Bhide, Dr. Rajiv Ranjan, Dr. Michael Debabrata Patra and Shri Shaktikanta Das voted to keep the policy repo rate

The BJP won 78 Assembly seats while BJD secured 51, Congress 14, three independent nominees emerged victorious and CPI (M) won one seat in the 2024 Assembly polls.

Out of the 147 winning candidates, 85 candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves, which includes 67 candidates who are facing serious criminal cases.

As per the report, 46 out of 78 winning MLA candidates from BJP and 12 out of 51 winning MLA candidates from BJD have declared that they are facing serious criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits.

Similarly, five out of 14 winning assembly candidates from Congress, one of CPI (M) and three independent winning candidates are also facing serious criminal cases,



it said. The average assets per winning candidate in the Odisha Assembly elections is Rs 7.37 crore while it was Rs 4.41 crore in the 2019 Assembly elections.

Among the winning MLA candidates, Champua MLA Sanatan Mahakud (BJD) is the richest with total assets of Rs 227.67 crore. BJD's Subasini Jena, who won the election from the Balasore assembly segment, is the second richest MLA with total assets of Rs 135.17 crore.

Three candidates with the lowest assets are BJP's Sanjali Murmu (Rs 35,076) who won from the Bangripasi

Assembly seat, Congress candidate Mangu Khilla (Rs 1.47 lakh) from Chittrakonda assembly segment and Congress' Pabitra Saunta (Rs 2.90 lakh) who won from Lakshimpur Assembly constituency, the report said.

As many as 43 winning candidates have declared their educational qualification to be between class 5 and 12 pass, while 97 winning candidates have an educational qualification of graduate and above and 7 others are diploma holders.

Out of the total 147 winning candidates, 68 are of the age between 25 and 50 years while 79 have declared their age to be between 51 and 80 years, it said.

Moreover, the number of women candidates in the state assembly decreased to 11 from 13 elected in 2019 polls.

# Voices for interest rate cut within RBI's rate-setting panel growing

unchanged at 6.50 per cent. "Dr. Ashima Goyal and Prof. Jayanth R Varma voted to reduce the policy repo rate by 25 basis points," according to Monetary Policy Statement, 2024-25 Resolution of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) released by the central bank. Goyal, Varma and Bhide are external members on the MPC. Ranjan, Patra and Das are RBI officials.

The six-member MPC takes decision based on majority vote.

Two members advocating rate cut comes close on the heels of some central banks from advanced economies like Switzerland, Sweden, Canada and Euro area have begun their rate easing cycle during 2024.

On the other hand, market expectations of rate cut by the US Federal Reserve, which was higher earlier, have moderated subsequently.

Unveiling the monetary policy, Governor Das said there is a view that in matters of monetary policy, the Reserve Bank is guided by the principle of 'follow the Fed'.

"I would like to unambiguously state that while we do keep a watch on whether clouds are building up or clearing out in the distant horizon, we play the game according to the local weather and pitch conditions.

"In other words, while we do consider the impact of monetary policy in advanced economies on Indian markets, our actions are primarily determined by domestic growth-inflation conditions and the outlook," Das said.

The Reserve Bank of India has been holding the key interest rate (repo) at 6.5 per cent since February 2023.