

# Hundreds of people shifted to safety amid heavy rains in south Gujarat; Vapi gets 326 mm in 24 hours

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
**AHMEDABAD:** Several hundred people were shifted to safety in Valsad and Navsari districts as heavy rains lashed south Gujarat on Saturday and Sunday, officials said.

Incessant rains in the past 48 hours have inundated low-lying areas, disrupting normal life and traffic movement, they added.

As per data from the State Emergency Operation Centre, Vapi taluka in Valsad district received 326 millimetres rainfall in a 24-hour period till 6 am on Sunday, the highest in the state, while Khergam in Navsari got 248 mm since 6 am.

Districts like Surat, Tapi and Narmada have also been severely affected due to heavy rains, official said.

More than 600 persons living in low-lying areas in Valsad were relocated to safety due to heavy rains, they



added.

"A total of 17 persons were shifted in Bilimora city after flooding in low-lying areas. The administration is also keeping a close watch on rising water levels of Purna and Kaveri rivers," said AM Gamit, Executive Magistrate (Disaster), Navsari.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel spoke to collectors and asked them to take all steps to give relief to people, including timely evacuation, as well as ensure safety of livestock.

upstream, and 15 radial gates of the dam were opened for discharge.

"While 1,75,000 cusecs water was flowing out through the gates, 36,975 cusecs water was being released into the river from the riverbed powerhouse and 23,081 cusecs from canal head powerhouse," an SSNNL official said.

The state's 206 reservoirs had 3.64 lakh million cubic feet of water as on Sunday, which is 65 percent of their total storage capacity, officials said.

Out of these 206 reservoirs, 72 were put on high alert, and 15 on alert due to sharp rise in their water level, they added.

Amid rainfall in catchment areas, the water level of Sardar Sarovar Narmada dam rose sharply and stood at 135.30 metres on Sunday, just a few metres below its full-reservoir capacity of 138.68 metres, officials said.

As per SSNNL officials, the dam reservoir was receiving 2,65,748 cusecs water from

Gujarat's north and east central regions have received low rainfall compared to the southern part and Saurashtra-Kutch.

North Gujarat has so far received 64.91 per cent of average annual rainfall, while east-central Gujarat has received 68.84 per cent, the SEOC data showed.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast of 'heavy to very heavy' rain at a few places with isolated 'extremely heavy' rain in south Gujarat districts, including Vadodara, Surat, Bharuch, Navsari, Valsad, and in Anreli and Bhavnagar in Saurashtra region till Tuesday morning.

The IMD also forecast 'heavy to very heavy' rain with isolated 'extremely heavy' rain in Anand, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Porbandar, Morbi, Dwarka and Kutch districts on Tuesday.

# MP to get centres in urban areas for discussions on Lord Krishna's life: CM Yadav



**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
**INDORE:** On the eve of Jannmashtami, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Sunday announced that the state government would open centres in urban areas for discussions on various aspects of Lord Krishna's life.

Speaking at a symposium on Lord Krishna here, Yadav said one village will be developed on the lines of Gokul and Barsana in every development block in the state.

Yadav said, "Indore's Geeta Bhavan is a big centre for dia-

logue on various aspects of Lord Krishna. I am announcing today that our government will open centres on the lines of Geeta Bhavan in urban areas of the state, which will give us an opportunity to discuss and debate various aspects of Lord Krishna."

Jannmashtami, an annual festival that celebrates the birth of Lord Krishna, will be observed on Monday.

The chief minister said the state government will provide funds to the urban bodies for these proposed centres, which will be developed as places to exchange authentic knowledge on mythological subjects.

Indore's Geeta Bhavan is an institution run by a charitable trust where different religious programmes are organised.

Yadav said that taking inspiration from the mythological splendour of Gokul and Barsana, one village in every development block of the state will be developed as an ideal village. Besides cow rearing, milk production, organic farming and cleanliness, good governance, sanskars, family values, and the spirit of co-existence will be promoted in these villages, he said.

Yadav, also the guardian minister of Indore, celebrated Jannmashtami with around 5,000 children dressed as Radha and Krishna at the Dussehra ground in the city, officials said.

He showered rose petals on the children and fed butter to some of them.

## Excise policy 'scam': SC to hear Vijay Nair's bail plea on Aug 27

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on August 27 the bail plea of former Aam Aadmi Party communication in-charge Vijay Nair in a money laundering case related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam.

A bench of justices Hrishikesh Roy and SVN Bhatti issued a notice to the Enforcement Directorate on August 12 on the plea of Nair while noting that he has been in custody for two years.

Appearing for Nair, senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and Vikram Chaudhary submitted before the court on August 12 that he was arrested on November 13, 2022, and he has challenged the trial court's July 29 order dismissing his default bail plea.

Earlier, on July 3 last year, the high court refused to grant bail to Nair and other co-accused in the money laundering case.

The money laundering case stems from a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) FIR lodged after Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena recommended a probe into the excise policy 2021-22 which was later scrapped.

The CBI has alleged that Nair met some other co-accused, liquor manufacturers and distributors at various hotels in Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi for arranging "ill-gotten money through hawala operators" that was given to the AAP as a kickback in return for favours.

It was also claimed that businessman and co-accused Abhishek Boipally was part of the meetings and was involved in the conspiracy to launder money along with another accused liquor businessman Sameer Mahendru.

The ED had raided near-

ly three dozen locations in Delhi and Punjab following the arrest of Mahendru, the managing director of liquor distributor Indospirit Group, which is based in Delhi's Jor Bagh.

The other accused in the case are former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, former excise commissioner Arva Gopi Krishna, ex-deputy commissioner in the excise department Anand Tiwari and former assistant commissioner Pankaj Bhatnagar.

According to the CBI and ED, irregularities were committed while modifying the excise policy and undue favours were extended to the licence holders. The Delhi government had implemented the excise policy on November 17, 2021 but scrapped it at the end of September 2022 amid allegations of corruption.

# Many senior posts lying vacant in Assam Police; running short of over 2,250 vehicles



**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
**GUWAHATI:** Assam Police is grappling with vacancies at various levels including ADGP, IG, DIG, SP, according to official documents.

The state police force is also struggling hard to maintain its pace as it is operating at little over 70 per cent of its vehicle requirement as per official assessment to run its operations efficiently, government records revealed.

The total sanctioned strength of Assam Police is 79,852, including 4,835 personnel of Assam Police Radio Organisation (APRO).

Out of this, a total of 12,485 posts, which is 15.64 per cent of the required manpower, are at present lying vacant at various levels, as per official documents of the Home Department.

Three posts of Additional Director General of Police are

lying vacant against the sanctioned strength of six.

Three posts of Inspector General of Police are also lying vacant against 14 posts, while there are no DIG at nine places out of 15 sanctioned posts, it said.

The documents also revealed that eight posts of Superintendent of Police, Assistant IG, Commandant and Senior SP ranked officials are lying vacant out of the total sanctioned posts of 147 in Assam Police.

In the Additional SP rank, 68 posts out of 168 are non-occupied, while 146 positions of Deputy SP are lying vacant against the sanctioned strength of 483 across the state.

Besides these senior posts, there are vacancies at every level of Assam Police as per the data.

The official documents fur-

ther revealed that there are requirements for 7,800 vehicles in Assam Police for its efficient functioning as per assessment by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D).

However, the force currently has a total of 5,543 vehicles in a mix of owned and rented ones, which is 71.06 per cent of its requirement.

Assam Police is still running short of 2,257 vehicles as per the BPR&D standards.

Out of the available vehicles, 1,413 are taken on rent and the remaining are government vehicles. Of these, 1,888 are government two-wheelers, the official papers showed.

For the rented vehicles, the Assam government is shelling out crores of rupees from its exchequer every year, the set of documents showed.

Since 2016, when the BJP government came to power for the first time in Assam, a total of Rs 412.79 crore have been paid for taking the vehicles on rent in the state.

In 2024 itself, Rs 53.8 crore of rent bill has been paid till now, the official data said.

The Assam Police has a total of 336 police stations and 295 outposts. Out of them, one police station and 15 outposts are inactive.

Of the total establishments, nine stations and 17 outposts are operating from rented accommodation at present, while it has permanent buildings for 326 stations and 263 outposts.

# India considered sourcing cheetahs from Somalia, Tanzania, Sudan after biorhythm challenges

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
**NEW DELHI:** India considered sourcing new cheetahs from Somalia, Tanzania, Sudan and other range countries closer to the equator or in the Northern Hemisphere to avoid biorhythm complications observed in big cats brought from Southern Hemisphere countries like South Africa and Namibia, according to official records.

Due to the differences in circadian rhythms between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, some cheetahs developed thick winter coats during the Indian summer and monsoon last year, anticipating the African winter (June to September).

Three of these cheetahs -- a Namibian female and two South African males -- died after wounds beneath their winter coats, on their backs and necks, became infested with maggots and led to blood infections.

PTI has learnt from sources that the cheetahs from Namibia and South Africa have once again developed thick winter coats. Despite these concerns, discussions are ongoing with Southern Hemisphere countries to bring new cheetahs.

"Talks are ongoing with all countries, including South Africa and Namibia, but we have not formally approached

anyone. Currently, our focus is on addressing immediate issues, such as augmenting the prey base, managing the leopard population and readying the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary," a source told PTI.

Documents obtained by PTI through an RTI application revealed that during a steering committee meeting on August 10 last year, Chairman Rajesh Gopal said the time it takes for cheetahs from Southern Hemisphere countries to adjust their biorhythms to the local environment, climate, and conditions in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park might be a significant factor in their deaths.

"For want of biorhythmic adjustment, some cheetahs have succumbed to ectoparasitic infections during their winter change, which was synced with the climate conditions of their earlier habitat. The third filial generation from surviving cheetahs would be more resistant and better adapted to Kuno conditions," Gopal said in the meeting.

He acknowledged the possibility of further mortality due to this issue and recommended that "future cheetahs for reintroduction should be sourced from Northern Hemisphere countries like Kenya or Somalia to avoid biorhythmic complications".

According to the Africa



Range-Wide Cheetah Conservation Initiative, Southern and Eastern Africa are strongholds for the species, although there has been significant range loss in parts of these regions.

The current distribution in several countries, such as Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Angola, Mozambique, and Zambia, remains largely unknown.

In a meeting of the steering committee on September 4, Gopal reiterated the importance of syncing biorhythms, particularly circadian rhythms, with local climatic conditions.

He emphasised that cheetahs from South Africa are adapted to the climatic conditions of the Southern Hemisphere, which has a different climate regime. Therefore, it is crucial that the National Tiger Conservation Authority prioritise sourcing new cheetahs from Northern Hemisphere countries like Kenya and Somalia.

The taxonomic variation between subspecies is not particularly significant, "since the cheetahs from South Africa also belong to a different subspecies", he said.

In another meeting on October 27, the committee stressed that cheetahs should not be sourced from Southern Hemisphere African countries, based on experiences related to circadian rhythm adjustments and dermal infestations.

In the next meeting on December 13, Amit Mallick, the then Inspector General of Forests, NITCA, said that steps had been taken to "bring more cheetahs from other range countries, including Kenya, Tanzania, and Sudan".

However, this issue did not figure in the subsequent meetings on March 12, June 18, and August 23, which focused on

prey augmentation, managing the leopard population in Kuno and Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary, grass revival, capacity building, strengthening SOPs, and finalising the schedule for cheetah releases in Kuno.

Some of the 20 cheetahs brought to India so far -- eight from Namibia in September 2022 and 12 from South Africa last February -- were initially released into the wild but were brought back to their enclosures by August 13 last year after three cheetahs died due to septicemia.

In a meeting on Friday, the steering committee decided to release the African cheetahs and their cubs, born in India, into the wild in a phased manner after the monsoon withdraws from central parts of the country, which typically happens by the first week of October.

"While adult cheetahs will be released into the wild in phases once the rains end, the cubs and their mothers will be released after December," an official told PTI.

All 25 cheetahs -- 13 adults and 12 cubs -- are currently doing well. The animals have been vaccinated to protect them against diseases and given prophylactic medicine to prevent infections, according to the official.

## 'Vacancies, pay, health, basic amenities': RDSO report flags challenges train controllers face

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
**NEW DELHI:** A study by the Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO), which functions under the Railway Ministry, has found that train controllers face multiple challenges at work including "unattractive" pay scale, huge stress due to vacancy leading to health concerns, and a lack of basic amenities.

The report, which was submitted to the Railway Board recently, said section controllers perform high-strain jobs, their task made more difficult by the around 15-20 per cent vacancy, medically-decategorised officers posted in the department and the absence of appropriate reward either in terms of money, or esteem and career growth.

Titled 'The challenges faced by Section Controllers in carrying out their duties effectively' the report aims at exploring improvements in selection procedure, training, and infrastructures for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of train operations.

The Indian Railways is one of the largest networks in the world with thousands of trains traversing various sections of almost 1,05,555 km of tracks daily, the report states. "This mammoth activity is controlled by 68 operation centers over the IR network called the Divisional Control Office."

The Divisional Control Office, situated at divisional headquarters, plays a vital role in the entire operation of the

Expressing concern over the current practice of inducting "medically de-categorized" staff in the control department as section controllers, the study says, "A person with any medical condition or handicap will have some restricting working condition where that person will be unable to meet the demand of the job."

The study has suggested several measures such as upgradation in the initial pay scale from grade pay 4,200 to grade pay 4,600 to make them more attractive for the feeder category candidates, introduction of an aptitude test in the recruitment/selection, extension in the duration of training period.

The team has also suggested the Railway Board reintroduce direct recruitment of section controllers through the Railway Recruitment Board which was discontinued in 2020.

It also said no controller should be allowed to work without undergoing the periodical refresher courses, the Study said.

"Increase in the frequency of refresher courses will also equip the Section controllers with frequent updates in their knowledge and skill. It may be increased from once in 03 years to once in a year as in the case of Air Traffic Controllers," it added.

The study also found that basic amenities such as water purifiers, automatic tea/coffee vending machines, and restrooms were unavailable in Section Control offices, which it recommended.

"During interaction with Section Controllers on their health-related issues, it was revealed that most of the Section Controllers are suffering from various lifestyles related disorders like, Blood Pressure, Diabetes, or Heart disease. This is a matter of concern for an employer. Therefore, Periodical Medical Examination (PME) is recommended for this category which will improve their physical well-being," the study says.

It added, "As the job is strenuous in nature, Yoga, meditation or other specialised mitigation programs may also be arranged to promote their well-being."

## Infosys scouting for acquisitions; more buys matching 'in-tech' scale possible, says CEO Salil Parekh

**STATE TIMES NEWS**  
**NEW DELHI:** After two acquisitions this year, India's second-largest IT services company Infosys is on the lookout to scoop-up more firms and says the acquisition matching scale of recent in-tech buy is certainly a possibility.

In an interview to PTI, Infosys CEO Salil Parekh said the company is keen on acquisitions in areas like data analytics, SAAS, and may look at some geographies within Europe, and the US. Asked if more acquisitions could be of the scale matching in-tech, which came with a price-tag of 450 million euros, Parekh said, "Absolutely, I think those would be the size that we will look at in terms of scale, and given our structure we could do a few of those."

Back in January, Infosys announced a definitive agreement to acquire 100 per cent of the equity share capital in InSemi Technology Services, a semiconductor design services company headquartered in India, for a consideration (including earn-outs, and management incentives and retention bonuses) totalling up to Rs 280 crore.

A bigger acquisition followed in three months. In April, Infosys Germany, a wholly-owned step-down subsidiary, entered into a definitive agreement to acquire 100 per cent of the equity share capital in in-tech Holding -- leading provider of engineering R&D

services headquartered in Germany -- for a consideration of up to 450 million euros (about Rs 4,045 crore). "...we have very good business in engineering services already within Infosys and then we did those two acquisitions, both of them in engineering services, one on semiconductor side and one on the automotive side... very strong businesses, and we feel quite good about expanding that footprint," Parekh said.

Infosys is eyeing more acquisitions, he said, adding that the company is evaluating several firms. "...we have a good balance sheet and good cash generation and now we are quite comfortable with the integration of acquisition in different areas. We have done engineering services, we will look at other areas... for example data analytics... may look at SAAS (software as a service) areas, and maybe at some other geographies in Europe, maybe the US as well," he said. Parekh, however, said a lot depends on strategic synergies, financial cost, cultural fit and integration aspects. "We are continuing to look, and we have things that are normally in the pipeline but those take their own time... there are a lot of discussions on strategic fit, on financial cost of it and cultural fit into the company and then how will we integrate them.

Many of those discussions are ongoing and we will see what comes out," the Infosys top honcho said. On whether he is hopeful of clos-

ing more acquisitions this fiscal year, Parekh indicated that it is tough to put a timeline on the outcome of ongoing discussions. "It is difficult to say... we are evaluating several (of them). But to get a fit on the strategic parameters, financial parameters, culture, integration... all of it may not work out. But these two (InSemi and in-tech) happened relatively quickly... before that for some quarters we had not done anything. It is not a predictable thing, but the evaluation is ongoing," he said. According to the Grant Thornton Bharat Dealtracker Q2 2024 report, Indian dealmaking saw overall 501 deals, valued at USD 21.4 billion. The report said the second quarter of 2024 witnessed the highest quarterly volumes since the second quarter of 2022, while values declined due to the absence of big-ticket merger and acquisition transactions. Grant Thornton Bharat Dealtracker further said the merger and acquisition (M&A) activity during the second quarter saw 132 deals worth USD 6.2 billion, marking a slight increase in volumes but a substantial 50 per cent drop in values.

As per the report, domestic deals drove growth with volumes rising 29 per cent and values increasing 2.5 times compared to the first quarter of the current year. In contrast, cross-border deals experienced a decline, with volumes decreasing 24 per cent and values plummeting 85 per cent from the first quarter of 2024.