

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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AFTER RAKING IN £55M LAST YEAR, BEYONCE IS RICHEST YOUNG CELEBRITY | 11

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On Page 2
● Father of first Gujarati encyclopedia
● A class, 25 km away from city...

NEWS DIGEST

'Gunshots' spread panic at Delhi airport: Within hours of the security being beefed up at Indira Gandhi International Airport following intelligence warning about a terror attack on December 6, there was panic early Friday morning when some passengers claimed they had heard gunshots. **P 10**

MARKET WATCH

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R K LAXMAN



The function is at 6 pm, sir. We will be happy if you arrive punctually no more than a couple of hours late to inaugurate it, sir.

indiatimes.com Poll

Yesterday's Result: Does Chidambaram as new home minister mean a safe India?

Yes 15% No 69% Can't say 16%

Today's Poll: Is corruption the main cause for security breach?

Vote on indiatimes.com or SMS 'Poll' to 58888

WEATHER

Ahmedabad **34°/21°**
Surat **35°/22°**
Vadodara **35°/20°**

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Times Classifieds | P 6 & 8

Islands Gujarat's badlands

Himanshu Bhatt | TNN

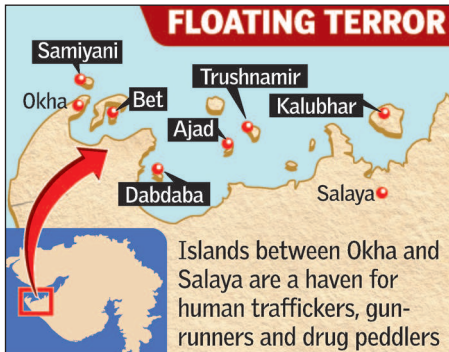
● **Customs caught 140 people from Bet island waiting to sneak into Middle East in 2001**

● **Customs seized charas worth Rs 3 crore from Kalubhar island in 1995**

● **Smugglers set a ship on fire in front of Customs officials in 1990**

Okha (Jamnagar): Tiny coral islands dotting the 28 nautical mile stretch between Okha and Salaya in Gulf of Kutch are known for their rich marine life.

There is darker, lesser-known side to these islets though — some of which don't even find a place on the coastal map. Records suggest these islands have sheltered gold smugglers of the yore, pirates, weapons dealers and drug peddlers in the past. There are reports that ships from Somalia also dump weapons on these islands to be sold to extremist organisations. "Islands like Trishnamir and Ajad were safe havens for smugglers. Until late eighties the department wasn't aware that many of these islands existed," said a Customs official. The situation remains largely unchanged even today. Officials say it's no big deal to ferry arms, drugs



and men to and from these islands.

The reason: Islands are very close to one another and in shallow waters, which allow only tiny boats. Geographically, Dwarka and Okha are entry points to the country from Dubai and Pakistan. "Demographically, these islands are ideal for hiding men and material as they are a little off the route and out of sight," said an official. With the revelation by Ajmal Amir Kasav, the terrorist in police custody, that his gang stayed at an island off Saurashtra, the investigating agencies are doing a check on all the 56 islands dotting Gujarat's coast. Coast Guard and Navy officials say nothing fishy has been reported from this set of islands in recent years.

► **Security cover for Jamnagar's coast, P 7**
► **Fishing boat seized near Jakhau, P 7**

Uninhabited islands under Navy, Coast Guard scanner

Vishwa Mohan | TNN

The government on Friday asked Navy and Coast Guard to scan the 1,200-odd uninhabited islands scattered across the Indian maritime zone amid worries that Pakistan-based terror outfits could base marine jihadis there before pushing them to the mainland. Although the government has taken steps to secure these islands after the home ministry first raised the issue in November 2006, the matter came up for review again at a high-level meeting in New Delhi on Friday. The meeting was attended by nine coastal states besides Navy and Coast Guard. These tiny islands are considered vulnerable as they do not figure in normal patrolling done by security agencies. **P 8**

Teaching city's poor children his business

Bhadresh Gajjar



Students at a school run by Mahesh Desai

Vijaysinh Parmar | TNN

Ahmedabad: Kishan Patni's father is a rickshaw driver. But, he dreams of becoming a lawyer. And, scoring 97 per cent in class VI exams has given his confidence a big boost.

Kishan owes his smiles to friend, philosopher and father-figure Mahesh Desai. Desai, who runs a garment factory, scaled down his business to be able to devote time to teach slum children. And, gave Kishan and hundreds of underprivileged children a ray of hope.

His mission does not end with ensuring informal education or enrolling them in private schools. He is their guardian, assuming the responsibility till they complete their studies and find their feet in life.

He is their friend too. So, when Kishan scored high marks, Desai took him to a movie. Desai, now 50, could have led a relaxed life, having had his own children settled. He chose a different path. It began seven years ago when Desai ventured into a poor neighbourhood in Naranpura. There were over 2,000 people living along the railway track, most of them migrants.

He decided to teach them for free. But, he tread carefully. "I first studied the lifestyle and

More the merrier

Amdavadis have responded in a big way to Teach India campaign which was launched on Wednesday. Nearly 1,000 volunteers had en-rolled for this gigantic task of teaching underprivileged children till Friday noon.

Emails, please!

Volunteers filling the application form printed in TOI to apply for Teach India must mention their email ID. Application without emails will be invalid.

socio-economic condition of these families. I would end up breaking dining in their huts. Once, I had their confidence, I told them about the need for education. It was tough as parents wanted the children to work," says Desai.

"No child came when I began a temporary school in one of the huts. I had my first student only six months later and the mission began," he adds. Now, more than 65 children take non-formal education in a temporary school till class III every morning.

Once the children complete class III, Desai convinces parents to enrol them in private schools, offering to pay their fees. Desai has now started a hostel in a posh flat in Naranpura area where five children from tribal and backward communities stay and study.

PC admits to lapses; heads may roll

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai/New Delhi: Home minister P Chidambaram on Friday said that 'lapses' led to Mumbai attacks in a candid confession that raised speculation over the possibility of a top-level shake-up in India's intelligence hierarchy.

"I agree there has been a failure on the part of security forces... undoubtedly there had been some lapses," the home minister said.

Even as he said that the lapses were being looked into and the government would strain every nerve to prevent a repeat of such attacks, his acknowledgement lent credence to the speculation about a likely purge in the security establishment. The remark coincided with a strong and growing feeling in



Chidambaram

Narayanan

FULL COVERAGE P 5, 7, 8, 9 & 10

Congress circles that while political heads had rolled, bureaucrats directly tasked with the job of fighting terror had been spared. An influential section in Congress is lobbying for the removal of national security advisor MK

Narayanan despite indications that PM Manmohan Singh is reluctant to let him go. At a briefing at Maharashtra police headquarters, Chidambaram also tried to clam the nerves of the terror-struck city. "I will try to improve the effectiveness of security systems and address problems concerned."

In what could be a step in that direction, Chidambaram will be attending a meeting on security at PMO on Saturday where Narayanan will be present. Chidambaram's admission of lapses, the first by a senior figure in government, will ensure the spotlight remains trained on intelligence agencies who, faced with charges of failure, have been engaged in a fierce blame game.

► **RAW draws flak, P 8**

Chavan Maha CM, Bhujbal dy

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi/Mumbai: Maharashtra's industry minister Ashok Chavan was on Friday named to replace Vilasrao Deshmukh as chief minister of Maharashtra as a harried Congress rebuffed a revolt from Narayan Rane to give the rudderless state



Chavan

Bhujbal

a semblance of leadership at a time when it is reeling under the impact of last week's terror attack.

The NCP brought back Chhagan Bhujbal, a prominent OBC leader, as the deputy CM in charge of home portfolio.

► **NCP may gain from Cong move, P 8**

Petrol to be cheaper by Rs 5/litre, diesel Rs 2

City	Price*	
	Petrol	Diesel
Ahmedabad	48.61	36.69
Rajkot	48.42	36.80
Surat	48.69	36.79
Vadodara	48.18	36.53

*(Approx prices in Rs per litre)

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The government on Friday reduced fuel prices for the first time in over two years with the aim of freeing some money in people's pockets and widening the scope of Saturday's proposed economic stimulus for spurring demand in a sagging economy.

From Saturday, petrol will be cheaper by Rs 5 a litre and diesel by Rs 2 in line with international crude's fall of over \$100 a barrel from its mid-July peak of \$147. The price of cooking gas refills have been left untouched as state-run oilmarketing companies are still making losses on their sale.

Friday's decision restores petrol to the level prevalent till June 4 when the government had raised fuel prices. Diesel, however, will still cost Re 1 more than that level as its price had been revised by Rs 3 a litre. Cooking gas price was raised by Rs 50 a cylinder and has been left alone.

The decision, taken a day before the central bank is to cut its lending rates, is a calibrated move by the government and fits well in its overall efforts to boost the economy. Lower fuel prices will reduce inflation further and give more headroom to the central bank to keep up consumer demand through lower short-term interest rates.

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