

Aryan Age

PRGI No. - MHENG/25/A0943 | VOL - 1 | ISSUE 323 | 8 PAGES | ₹ 3.00



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Suvendu Adhikari sworn in as West Bengal's first BJP Chief Minister at historic Brigade ceremony

Kolkata: Seventy-nine years after Independence, Suvendu Adhikari took oath as West Bengal's first chief minister from the BJP on Saturday, bringing an end to the 15-year rule of the Trinamool Congress.

Adhikari, who arrived at the iconic Brigade Parade Ground alongside Narendra Modi and state BJP president Shamik Bhattacharya, was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Governor R N Ravi in Bengali — a symbolic linguistic choice that came on Rabindra Jayanti, marking the birth anniversary of the state's

biggest cultural icon, Rabindranath Tagore.

The ceremony was attended by Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP national president Nitin Nabin, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and the chief ministers of 20 BJP-ruled states.

Adhikari took oath in the name of God.

The ceremony also saw a rare gathering of regional heavyweights, including Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, signifying a unified NDA front.

As Adhikari, dressed in

a traditional white pyjama paired with a saffron kurta, stepped out of his Chinar Park residence in the city's north east fringes in the morning, he was greeted with a rousing reception from hundreds of supporters who had been waiting outside since dawn.

His convoy moved through the city streets amidst a shower of flower petals and the rhythmic blowing of conch shells—a sound deeply rooted in Bengali auspiciousness.

Modi, who arrived on the stage at 11.10 am, began the ceremony by paying tribute to Rabindranath



Tagore, followed by Suvendu Adhikari and Shamik Bhattacharya — lending a distinctly Bengali flavour to the oath-taking ceremony.

Not only Tagore but there were portraits of cultural icons like Syama Prasad Mookerjee and

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar on the massive, multi-tiered stage framing the event as a victory for both the party and Bengal's heritage.

Reliving the untold history of Bengal, the Prime minister greeted Makhan Lal Sarkar — the nonagenarian who was on the last journey of Shayma Prasad Mukherjee in Kashmir — making it obvious the saffron ecosystem is keen to relive the history of Bengal.

The atmosphere at the sprawling venue was nothing short of electric, transformed into a sea of saffron as tens of thousands of supporters gathered from

every corner of the state to witness the transition of power.

Rows of saffron-clad seers and tribal leaders from the Jangalmahal region occupied prominent seats, highlighting the diverse coalition that propelled Adhikari to the state's highest office.

The proceedings commenced at exactly 11:32 AM with a solemnity that contrasted the roaring cheers of the crowd.

As the 55-year-old leader signed the official registry, he became the first Chief Minister in decades to hail from the state's southern

agrarian belt rather than the urban Kolkata elite.

Adhikari then took the blessings of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and all the other dignitaries present on the stage.

When he reached Yogi Adityanath, the UP chief minister took his saffron scarf and gave it to Adhikari symbolically marking the commencement of saffron government in the state.

After Adhikari, five other ministers - Dilip Ghosh, Agnimitra Paul, Ashok Kirtaniya, Khudiram Tudu and Nisith Pramanik took the oath.

ED raids Punjab Cabinet Minister Sanjeev Arora's residence

CM Mann slams BJP

Chandigarh: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday morning conducted a massive search operation at the Sector-2 residence of Punjab Cabinet Minister Sanjeev Arora.

In a high-voltage development, a team of officials in nearly 20 vehicles cordoned off the minister's house to carry out the investigation.

The action triggered a sharp reaction from Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, who took to social media to condemn the raids. CM Mann termed the investigative agency as "BJP's ED," noting that this marks the third time in a year and the second time within a single month that the minister's residence has been targeted.

"I want to tell Modi Ji that Punjab is the land of Gurus; even Aurangzeb could not make us bow. This is the land of Bhagat Singh, who never bowed before the British. Punjab will never yield to Modi's tactics," Mann stated, adding that Punjab would be the one to end the "unethical alliance" between the ED and the BJP. The Chief Minister is scheduled to address a press conference at 10:00 am in Sangrur today to discuss the matter further.

The ED action follows a 40-hour raid at the Western Tower in Kharar, Mohali, which concluded late Friday night. Officials were seen exiting the premises with six bags of evidence. While the raid targeted IT businessman Nitin Gohil, reportedly an associate of Rajbir Ghumman, OSD to the CM, there has been no official confirmation regarding Gohil's arrest.

The central agency's probe centres on a multi-crore



money laundering racket involving fraudulent Change of Land Use (CLU) certificates. According to ED sources, the scam involves the fabrication of consent letters using forged signatures of 15 landowners to illegally obtain CLU permissions from GMADA for the Suntech City project. Investigations reveal that over Rs150 crore was allegedly collected from buyers without valid sale deeds. The investigation has also cast a shadow over Minister Aman Arora. The ED alleges that Gaurav Dhir, a close associate of Aman Arora, facilitated money laundering by attempting to acquire properties at undervalued rates. While Aman Arora acknowledged his friendship with Dhir in a recent press conference, he categorically denied any involvement in his business dealings.

The case further involves allegations against Altus Space Builders for misleading buyers regarding GMADA approvals. The agency is also scrutinising the role of middlemen like Nitin Gohil and Pritpal Singh Dhindsa, who allegedly provided political patronage to the accused. During the Mohali raids, residents reported finding bags of cash containing ₹500 notes allegedly thrown from a ninth-floor balcony, though the source remains unconfirmed. The ED had earlier confirmed the recovery of ₹1 crore in connection with this ongoing investigation.

Vikas Lavande attacked with ink in Pune; Rohit Pawar demands action

Pune: A political controversy erupted in Pune after Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar faction) spokesperson Vikas Lavande alleged that he was attacked with ink and threatened by a group led by Haribhakt Parayan (HBP) Sangram Bhandare in Haveli taluka on Friday night.

According to Lavande, the incident took place at Alandi Matobachi after he concluded a discourse program and was returning around 10 pm. He alleged that Bhandare and 10 to 15 supporters arrived in three

four-wheelers, stopped his vehicle, threw ink on him, pushed him and allegedly displayed a pistol before fleeing the spot.

The alleged assault, which comes amid a heated controversy over Lavande's recent remarks on "infiltration" into the Warkari sect, has triggered sharp political reactions, with NCP MLA Rohit Pawar and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sushma Andhare condemning the incident and demanding strict action against those involved.

Following the incident, Lavande reached Loni

Kalbhor Police Station and lodged a complaint against Sangram Bhandare and others. In a social media post, Lavande claimed today that he would continue a satyagraha at the police station until strict legal action is taken against the accused.

The attack comes amid an ongoing controversy over Lavande's recent remarks regarding "infiltration" into the Warkari sect.

NCP MLA Rohit Pawar strongly condemned the incident and accused "radical elements" of

targeting Lavande for raising questions with evidence about alleged infiltration in the revered Warkari tradition.

In a post on X, Rohit Pawar said the attack had effectively validated Lavande's allegations. He demanded immediate arrests of all those involved and sought police protection for Lavande, alleging that the assault included death threats. Pawar further warned that if any harm comes to Lavande in future, the government would be held responsible.

Reacting to the incident,



Shiv Sena (UBT) deputy leader Sushma Andhare said the attack exposed those who, according to her, have no real connection with the values of the Warkari tradition.

She stated that saints and the Warkari movement stand far away from emotions such as anger, hatred and jealousy, and claimed that the conduct

of the attackers proved that "duplicate elements" had entered the sect. Andhare added that "in a way, Vikas Lavande has won a battle" because the incident had brought the issue into the open.

Police are yet to issue an official statement regarding the allegations and the complaint filed by Lavande.

Maharashtra to build 60 Traffic Gardens to inculcate road safety



Mumbai: To raise awareness about road safety and traffic rules from a young age, the Maharashtra government has taken an ambitious step.

The Transport Department has prepared a proposal to build 60 'Traffic Gardens' across the state. Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik announced that each garden will span approximately one acre, with an estimated development cost of rupees 1 crore per garden.

Minister Sarnaik stated that the primary goal is to educate children through practical experience.

The gardens will feature miniature road networks and Zebra crossings, functional traffic signals and informative road signs. Scale models of small vehicles to provide hands-on lessons in road discipline.

Beyond children's education, these gardens will serve several broader purposes like facilities for driving license training will be available within the premises. While schools will have scheduled entries to manage crowds, the gardens will remain open to the general public to foster wider community awareness.

To promote ecological

awareness, the parks will be planted with rare tree species from across India, accompanied by informational plaques about their environmental importance. Models and information regarding Electric Vehicles (EVs) will be showcased to prepare the next generation for the future of transportation.

By instilling traffic discipline and road safety habits from childhood, we are building a generation of responsible drivers. This initiative is a major step toward making Maharashtra's roads safer, said the minister.

Supriya Sule condemns attack on Vikas Lawande

Pune: Besides Supriya Sule, NCP (Sharad Pawar faction) leader and MLA Rohit Pawar also strongly condemned alleged ink attack on party spokesperson Vikas Lawande and demanded immediate action against all those allegedly involved in the incident.

In a post on social media platform X, he said that Lawande had been consistently raising concerns, along with documentary evidence, regarding the alleged infiltration of "radical elements" into the Warkari Sampradaya over the past several days.

According to Rohit Pawar, the attack was allegedly carried out by 'Kirtankar' Sangram Bhandare and his associates as retaliation against the issues raised by Lawande. He described the incident as a "cowardly attack" intended to suppress voices speaking on sensitive social and cultural matters.



Rohit Pawar further alleged that the incident itself had strengthened the allegations raised by Lawande and claimed that such attacks were not unprecedented in Maharashtra's social history. Drawing historical parallels, the NCP (SP) MLA stated that saints like Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram had also faced harassment from "intolerant tendencies", asserting that his party would not be intimidated by such acts.

He demanded that the Maharashtra government immediately arrest all persons allegedly connected with the attack and claimed that Lawande had also received threats to his life during the incident.

Rohit Pawar therefore sought immediate police protection for the party spokesperson.

In his post, Rohit Pawar warned that if the government failed to act promptly, it

would raise suspicion that the attack had taken place under "political protection". He further stated that if any harm came to Lawande in future, the Maharashtra government would be held fully responsible.

Tagging Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Sunetra Pawar in the post, Rohit Pawar urged the government to treat the matter with seriousness and ensure immediate intervention.

The incident has intensified political exchanges in Maharashtra, with opposition leaders alleging increasing intolerance and attempts to suppress dissenting voices connected to the state's cultural and religious traditions.



Lt Gen NS Raja Subramani appointed next Chief of Defence Staff

conclude on May 30.

According to an official announcement, Lt Gen Raja Subramani will also serve as Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Military Affairs and will assume charge from the date he takes over.

Currently serving as military adviser at the National Security Council Secretariat since September 1, 2025, Lt Gen Raja Subramani brings over four

decades of military experience spanning operational, intelligence and strategic assignments. Before joining the NSCS, he served as Vice Chief of the Army Staff from July 1, 2024 to July 31, 2025. Prior to that, he headed the Army's Central Command as General Officer Commanding-in-Chief from March 2023 till June 2024.

An alumnus of the National Defence Academy and Indian Military Academy, he was

commissioned into the 8th Battalion of the Garhwal Rifles on December 14, 1985. He has also attended the Joint Services Command and Staff College and the National Defence College.

Lt Gen Raja Subramani holds a Master of Arts degree from King's College London and an MPhil in Defence Studies from University of Madras. During his career, he has commanded 16 Garhwal Rifles in

operations in Assam under Operation Rhino, led the 168 Infantry Brigade in Jammu and Kashmir, and commanded the 17 Mountain Division in the Central Sector. He also led the 2 Corps, one of the Indian Army's premier strike formations on the western front. His staff assignments include serving as Defence Attaché in Kazakhstan, Deputy Director General of Military Intelligence, Chief Instructor (Army) at the Defence Services

Staff College, and Chief of Staff at Northern Command. Officials said his extensive operational experience on both India's western and northern borders is expected to be a key asset in his new role as the country's top military officer. For his distinguished service, Lt Gen Raja Subramani has been awarded the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, Sena Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal.

Shiv Sena UBT opposes hike in Mayor Development Funds, questions civic budget cuts and allocation transparency

Mumbai: Objection to the Maharashtra government's decision to increase development funds allocated to municipal mayors was raised by Shiv Sena (UBT), while concern was expressed over alleged cuts in allocations meant for civic infrastructure works.

In a post shared on social media platform X, the increase in the mayoral development fund from Rs 150 crore to Rs 250 crore was highlighted, and allegations were made that funds meant for "road concretisation" and the "solid waste management" department had been diverted.

The move was described by the party as an example of misplaced priorities, and it was alleged that allocations intended for essential public amenities were being redirected for political purposes.

Concern was also expressed that urban infrastructure projects and daily civic services in major cities such as Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur could be adversely affected if such fund reallocations continued.

A demand was raised for immediate reversal of the alleged diversion of funds, while greater transparency in municipal budget allocation and expenditure was also sought. The criticism comes amid continuing political exchanges in Maharashtra over civic administration, infrastructure spending and governance-related issues involving urban local bodies.

The Mahayuti government has been targeted by opposition parties over budgetary priorities and decisions concerning public works and municipal administration in recent weeks.

Shiv Sena UBT questions 'Safe Maharashtra' claim, raises concerns over crime, law & order situation

Mumbai: Expressing concern over increasing crime rates in the state, Shiv Sena (UBT) today raised questions over the BJP-led Mahayuti government's claims of maintaining a "safe Maharashtra".

In a post shared on social media platform X along with a video, Shiv Sena (UBT) today raised questions over the BJP-led Mahayuti government's claims of maintaining a "safe Maharashtra".

order control in the state had weakened under the present administration.

The ruling dispensation was also criticised over alleged political interference and inefficiency in policing, due to which, it was claimed, a sense of insecurity had

developed among common citizens.

The social media post generated considerable discussion online, with reactions and comments being shared by users regarding public safety and crime-related concerns in

different parts of Maharashtra.

The criticism comes amid continuing political exchanges between the opposition and the Mahayuti alliance over governance, policing and administrative performance

in the state.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis-led government has been repeatedly targeted by opposition parties on issues concerning law and order, public security and crime control.

BJP has no positive work to do: Akhilesh Yadav

Lucknow : Samajwadi Party national president Akhilesh Yadav today alleged that the BJP has no positive work to do, and only practices the politics of creating divisions and conflict in society.

Addressing a press conference here on Saturday, Akhilesh Yadav leveled serious allegations against the BJP. He said that the BJP only spreads negativity and instigates conflicts.

He claimed that the opposition alliance will remain strong and all conspiracy by the BJP to break the unity among the opposition parties will fall flat.

He criticised the BJP regarding the controversy surrounding Stalin's photo in Tamil Nadu, saying that the BJP has no positive work to do.

Talking about the BJP government's move to hike the prices of petroleum products, he said, "The burden of oil companies' losses will be passed on to the public. The BJP is promoting capitalism and benefit-



ing big industrialists. No other party can spend more money on elections than the BJP."

On the issue of EVMs, he said that the UK recently held elections

using ballot paper. He questioned whether India is ahead of England.

He stressed that the Samajwadi Party will defeat the BJP only through EVMs. He appealed to par-

ty workers to work together against the "multi-layered election mafia."

He alleged that BJP members were filling Form-7 to cut the Samajwadi Party's votes. He said the Kanpur raids before the 2022 assembly elections were publicized as being linked to the Samajwadi Party and defame the party. Now the party is demanding the return of the seized money, but the government is unwilling to return it.

The SP president said law and order have completely collapsed in the state. Those who used to talk about zero tolerance have themselves reduced law and order to zero. The NCRB data itself bears testimony to the government's failure, he said.

Akhilesh Yadav said that if his government is formed, a two-day holiday will be declared on Maharana Pratap Jayanti. He announced the installation of a statue of Maharana Pratap on the Gomti River Front and the statue's Chetak and spear will be made of gold.

Central forces deployed outside Mamata Banerjee's residence after BJP supporters raise slogans

Kolkata: Central security forces were deployed outside the Kalighat residence of former chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday after BJP supporters gathered near her house and raised "Jai Shri Ram" slogans shortly after the swearing-in ceremony of the new BJP government in West Bengal.

The development came hours after Suwendu Adhikari took oath as the state's ninth chief minister at the Brigade Parade Ground in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several senior BJP leaders.

According to local sources, a group of BJP workers and supporters, many of them riding motorcycles, assembled near Banerjee's residence in Kalighat soon after the oath-taking ceremony concluded. The supporters alleged-



ly raised slogans outside the residence, while some enthusiastic party workers gathered near the main gate. Police personnel, who had already been deployed in the area, attempted to disperse the gathering and prevent supporters from moving closer to the residence.

Subsequently, central forces were deployed in front of the house to ensure the situation did not escalate and to maintain law and order in the locality. Officials said the situation remained under control and

no untoward incident was reported. Central force personnel were seen restricting movement near the residence and preventing supporters from approaching the area. Sources said security arrangements around the former chief minister's residence had been scaled down after the Assembly election results were declared and barricades outside the Kalighat house were removed. However, Banerjee continues to enjoy security cover, entitled to a former chief minister.

Nine insurgents and drug peddlers nabbed in Manipur

Imphal: Security forces and Manipur Police carried out a series of operations across the state on May 7 and 8, leading to the arrest of nine active insurgent cadres, extortionists and drug traffickers, while narcotic substances, arms, cash and vehicles were seized from their possession, police said on Saturday.

In an operation conducted on May 7, security forces arrested an active cadre of KNA (B) from the Zou Veng general area under Churachandpur Police Station. The arrested Kuki militant was identified as Lalthangthang of Khaominthang village in Churachandpur district.

Security personnel recovered one 9 mm Hawg 9 pistol, one pistol magazine, seven live rounds of 9 mm ammunition and one mobile phone from his possession.

In another operation on the same day, security forces arrested a woman

cadre of a militant group from the Wangkhei Konung Mamang area under Porompat Police Station in Imphal East district. On May 8, security forces arrested a militant from Hiyangthang area under Wangoi Police Station in Imphal West district.

Meanwhile, Manipur Police arrested two alleged extortionists on May 8 from Pangmoul village under Gamnom Saparmeina Police Station in Kangpokpi district. The duo was reportedly stopping trucks along the route and extorting money from drivers.

The arrested persons were identified as Thangjamang Haokip of Pangmoul village, Motbung, Kangpokpi district, and Henminlun alias Boilun Misao of Kangchup Ponlien village in Kangpokpi district. In a separate anti-drug operation on May 8, Manipur Police arrested one Nehkhohun Hangshing of K.

Sharonphai village in Churachandpur district from the vicinity of Hiltown under Churachandpur Police Station. Police recovered 118 soap cases containing suspected brown sugar weighing approximately 1.360 kilogram from his possession.

In another major seizure on May 7, security forces intercepted two vehicles at T Khullen Naka Checkpoint under Senapati Police Station in Senapati district and arrested three persons involved in suspected drug trafficking. The arrested individuals were identified as K. Dovile of Laii village in Senapati district, Nenneihling Haokip of Saikul Bazar in Kangpokpi district, and her husband Hengkhomang Haokip. Security forces recovered 99 soap cases containing suspected brown sugar weighing around 1.140 kilograms, two four-wheeler vehicles and cash.

Bengal BJP MLAs stress on governance, women's safety, civic infrastructure

Kolkata: Newly elected Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislators in West Bengal on Saturday outlined their priorities for governance, with women's safety, civic infrastructure and law and order emerging as key themes following the oath-taking ceremony of the state's first BJP government.

These MLAs on the sidelines of the oath-taking ceremony at the Brigade Parade Ground.

Ratna Debnath, the MLA from Panihati, who in 2024 lost her 31-year-old daughter, a postgraduate trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, in a rape and murder case that had triggered nationwide outrage and protests

demanding justice and more protection for women, said her sole focus after her win will be to "ensure safety for women everywhere."

"My entire mandate is ensuring that there is no repeat of the gruesome incident that my daughter had to endure," Debnath said, referring to the RG Kar case that had galvanised protests across the state.

"I intend to form and execute a proper roadmap to ensure women's safety at all levels. Be it a woman walking on the street, or sitting in her office or a cafe, I want to do my best to ensure that she feels safe and protected. I know we have a long way to go, but I will try my best," she said.

Sajal Ghosh, MLA from Baranagar and a long-standing councillor of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), said: "Today is a day that marks a beginning on many fronts in Bengal. We will focus on improving civic infrastructure in the city. Special focus will be placed on roads, drainage and streetlights."

"Illegal land transfers and buildings will also be looked into. However, we have only come to power. We will start tackling things one at a time," Ghosh said.

Debashis Dhar, the MLA from Sonarpur North and a former IPS officer, stressed the need for balanced development alongside strengthening law and

order in the state.

"We have to ensure that overall development is carried out across all constituencies. To begin with, I will start with a focus on my constituency area," Dhar said.

"During my campaign I listened to, and listed out, the worries and needs of the people who live there and will strive to address them to the best of my ability," he added.

Dhar also said restoring confidence in policing and governance would be important for the new government.

"Overall, for the state, I really think that law and order must improve. We will have emphasise on this," he said.

UP received 730pc more rainfall in the first week of May, breaking temperature records in several cities

Lucknow: The weather in Uttar Pradesh took an unexpected turn in the first week of May with unseasonal rain, and between May 1 and 7, the state recorded 730% more rainfall than normal.

According to the Meteorological Department, the state received 27.4 mm of rainfall during this period, compared to the normal 3.3 mm.

Unseasonal rain and persistent cloud cover led to a significant drop in temperatures across the state, and many cities were poised to break the previous May minimum temperature records.

According to IMD data, western Uttar Pradesh recorded 23.5 mm of rainfall, significantly exceeding the normal 2.7 mm. Eastern Uttar Pradesh received 30.1 mm of rainfall, compared to the normal 3.8 mm. Meteorologists say that such heavy rainfall in the first week of May is not considered normal.

The effects of rain and

cold winds were also clearly visible on temperatures.

On May 5, Lucknow recorded a maximum temperature of 28 degrees Celsius, 11.4 degrees below normal.

This was Lucknow's second-lowest maximum temperature in May. Previously, a temperature of 27.8 degrees Celsius was recorded in May 2021.

On the same day, Agra recorded a maximum temperature of 29.4 degrees Celsius. The weather also experienced unusual effects in Purvanchal.

On May 1, Gorakhpur recorded a maximum temperature of 26.4 degrees Celsius, 11.7 degrees below normal. This was the city's third-lowest maximum temperature in May.

In Ballia, the temperature was recorded at 27.5 degrees Celsius, 9.8 degrees below normal, making it the fifth-lowest maximum temperature in May.

According to the Meteorological Department, unseasonal rains have been

continuing in the state since March 1.

Between March 1 and May 7, Uttar Pradesh as a whole received 48.8 mm of rainfall, 168% more than normal, compared to the normal 18.2 mm.

During this period, Western Uttar Pradesh recorded 46.9 mm of rainfall, compared to the normal figure of 19.4 mm. Eastern Uttar Pradesh recorded 50.2 mm of rainfall, compared to the normal 17.4 mm.

According to the IMD forecast, the state is expected to receive below-normal rainfall overall between May 9 and 14, although some areas in Eastern Uttar Pradesh may receive above-normal rainfall.

Maximum temperatures in Western Uttar Pradesh are expected to remain above normal, while temperatures in the rest of the state may remain normal or slightly below normal. No major rain system is forecast for Western Uttar Pradesh between May 15 and 21.

Samajwadi Party IT Cell's controversial remarks on BJP state president Pankaj Chaudhary angers BJP workers

Lucknow: Caste honor, social representation, and political conflict have always been major issues in Uttar Pradesh politics. The recent controversial remarks made by the Samajwadi Party (SP) IT cell regarding senior BJP leader and union Minister Pankaj Chaudhary have sparked a new political controversy.

BJP supporters and various sections of the Kurmi community have described this as not just a personal attack on a single leader, but an attempt to hurt the self-respect and dignity of the entire Kurmi community.

BJP leaders say that the SP's IT cell's continued personal comments indicate that the party has abandoned ideological politics and is now targeting the dignity of social groups. There is significant resentment, particularly among the Kurmi community, over this issue.

BJP leader and state spokesperson Alok Verma said here on Saturday that the

comments made against state president Pankaj Chaudhary are not limited to any particular individual. Using such language against a leader who has represented the region and community for years is tantamount to insulting the entire community.

However, according to political analysts, the Kurmi community is considered a powerful social and political force in Uttar Pradesh. This community wields decisive influence in many districts of the state. Therefore, personal comments against a prominent Kurmi leader can have widespread political repercussions.

Pankaj Chaudhary is a prominent figure in Uttar Pradesh politics. He has been elected to the Parliament seven times in a row and currently holds the position of Minister in the Central Government. Politically, his experience is considered greater than that of many prominent leaders in the

state. His influence in Mahara-ganj politics has persisted for more than three decades. BJP supporters claim that during this period, the Sama-



jwadi Party (SP) was never able to establish a strong political base in the region. Even when the Samajwadi Party (SP) was in power in the state, candidates supported by Pankaj Chaudhary dominated the District Panchayat President position.

Indeed, Pankaj Chaudhary's political career was not limited to winning elections; he also established a strong hold on the organization and social equations. This is why he is considered an important face of the BJP in Purvanchal politics.

His role in the BJP orga-

nization has strengthened in recent times. Within the party, he is seen as a leader capable of balancing both organizational strength and social dynamics.

BJP supporters say that the frequent comments from the Samajwadi Party indicate that the opposition is uneasy with Pankaj Chaudhary's growing influence. An attempt is being made to convey the message among party workers that the Samajwadi Party is now weakening in political competition and is therefore resorting to personal comments. Meanwhile, various social organizations and youth of the Kurmi community are deeply resentful about this issue. Many say that the community has always stood up for the respect of its leaders and will continue to do so in the future. The Kurmi community plays a crucial role in Uttar Pradesh. This community has the potential to influence electoral results in many

seats in the state. The BJP has been successful in establishing a strong foothold among this community in the last few years. In such a situation, the SP's alleged comment could become a political issue for the BJP.

BJP leader Alok Verma says that the SP has always engaged in caste politics, and now that it is facing a political challenge, it is attempting to hurt the dignity of social groups.

On the other hand, the SP has yet to issue any major official statement on this controversy.

Political experts believe that this controversy will not be limited to Mahara-ganj. The BJP may present it as an issue of "honor versus disrespect" across the state. This issue is considered especially important in the context of OBC politics. Experts say that political parties must control the language used on social media and in their IT cells. No leader should make such statements.

Gomti Barrage being modernised under CM Yogi's vision; Lucknow's drinking water supply to become stronger

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh government is giving special focus to modernising infrastructure and water management systems across the state. Under this initiative, the Gomti Barrage in the state capital is being developed as a modern and model barrage system.

On the instructions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Irrigation Department has started work to replace the old and damaged vertical gates of the barrage. This will further strengthen drinking water supply in Lucknow. Along with this, water security, flood control and environmental balance will also become stronger with the help of new technology.

Principal Secretary, Irrigation, Anil Garg said, "The Gomti Barrage, built between 1980 and 1983, has

long been the backbone of the capital's water supply system. The barrage plays an important role in maintaining the fixed water level of 105.6 metres at the Kudia Ghat pumping station, ensuring uninterrupted drinking water supply to lakhs of people. During the rainy season, it also helps regulate the flow of the Gomti River and protects the city from flood-like situations."

He added, over time, due to the quality of river water and with continuous usage, biological and chemical corrosion in the barrage gates had increased, affecting their efficiency.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had directed that the gates be replaced in phases. Under this process, two gates were replaced in 2024, while four more gates were replaced in 2025. Work on con-



structing and installing the remaining four gates is now being carried out rapidly in the final phase.

Chief Engineer (Mechanical) Upendra Singh stated, "The gates were manufactured at the ISO-certified irrigation workshop in

Bareilly. Each gate has been prepared in two sections, with the upper part weighing around 16 tonnes and the lower part around 18 tonnes. All ten gates have a width of 18 metres and a height of 4.95 metres. Built with advanced technology and a

strong structure, the new gates will be capable of delivering better performance for a long time."

He said, the department's biggest challenge was to ensure that Lucknow's drinking water supply was not affected during the gate replacement work. Keeping this in mind, a cofferdam has been constructed on the upstream side of the barrage to maintain the water level during repair and replacement work. This arrangement will ensure adequate water reaches the Kudia Ghat pumping station and residents of the city do not face any water shortage.

The Chief Engineer further informed, "A 45-day shutdown has been scheduled from May 8 to June 15 to smoothly complete the repair and gate replacement work."

No more cut money culture, no more syndicates: Dilip Ghosh

Kolkata: Senior BJP leader Dilip Ghosh, who found a place in the first cabinet of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in West Bengal on Saturday, said the saffron outfit wants to fulfill the expectations of the "people who voted us to power" while keeping in mind Syama Prasad Mookerjee's vision for the state.

Ghosh, who won from the Kharagpur Sadar assembly constituency by over 30,000 votes, told UNI on the sidelines of the swearing-in ceremony of the new BJP ministry, that the party's long political struggle in the state had finally resulted in a change of regime.

"We have struggled for a long time. The results have now come, and a regime change has taken place. We will have to work for the fulfilment of the wishes of the

people and the dream of Syama Prasad Mookerjee," Ghosh said. Ghosh was sworn in as a minister at the iconic Brigade Parade Ground in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and BJP's National President Nitin Nabin and other senior BJP functionaries. The ceremony was attended by 20 chief ministers of BJP-ruled states as well. Speaking about the state of affairs in Bengal under the erstwhile Trinamool Congress regime, he said that "change was long overdue in Bengal." "We will be the harbingers of change in the state. This was long overdue. While our neighbouring states have surged ahead in terms of development, Bengal has been allowed to languish and its people exploit-

ed by corrupt Trinamool Congress leaders at every level." "People across every level of society were pained with this but could do little. However, they have given their mandate and have put their faith in us. We will ensure that the cut money culture that had become synonymous in Bengal and the syndicate raj that was prevalent here is demolished and destroyed completely," Ghosh said. He also said the new government would honour BJP workers who died during the party's political movement against what he described as the "misrule" of the Trinamool Congress in the state. The personal assistant of Suwendu Adhikari was gunned down near his residence in Madhyamgram, North 24 Parganas district on May 6 by unknown assailants.

Western And Central Railways To Operate Jumbo, Mega Blocks On May 10

Mumbai : Local train commuters in Mumbai may experience delays and cancellations on Sunday, May 10, as both Western Railway and Central Railway have scheduled maintenance-related jumbo and mega blocks across several suburban sections.

According to Western Railway, a four-hour jumbo block will be carried out on the Up and Down slow lines between Borivali Railway Station and Bhayandar Railway Station from 12.30 am to 4.30 am during the intervening night of May 9 and 10.

Railway officials said the block has been planned to undertake essential maintenance of tracks, signalling systems and overhead electrical equipment.

During the scheduled work, suburban trains running on the Up Slow Line will be diverted to the Up Fast Line between Virar/

Vasai Road and Borivali/Goregaon. Likewise, services operating on the Down Slow Line will be

the overnight jumbo block. Commuters can obtain detailed information about affected services from station

mega block on the Mumbai division on the same day. The railways will operate a block on the Up and Down

Down Trans Harbour Line between Thane Railway Station and Vashi/Nerul from 11.10 am to 4.10 pm.

Railway authorities said the maintenance blocks form part of regular infrastructure upkeep aimed at ensuring safe and reliable suburban rail operations. Passengers have been advised to verify revised schedules before travelling and plan their journeys accordingly to minimise inconvenience.

Railway officials have appealed to passengers to use alternative transport options wherever possible during the block hours and allow extra travel time for their journeys. Announcement systems at stations and digital railway platforms will also provide real-time updates regarding diverted, delayed and cancelled suburban services to help commuters avoid inconvenience.



shifted to the Down Fast Line between Goregaon and Vasai Road/Virar.

Authorities further stated that a number of suburban train services will remain cancelled because of

masters at respective stations. Western Railway also clarified that no daytime jumbo block has been planned on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Central Railway has announced a

Fast Lines between Matunga Railway Station and Mulund Railway Station from 11.05 am to 3.45 pm.

In addition, maintenance work will also be undertaken on the Up and

Illegal Weed Plantation Unearthed In Bhandup; Local Representatives Join Demolition Drive

Mumbai : An alleged illegal weed cultivation site was discovered in the Jamil Nagar area of Bhandup near Water Tank Road, prompting local authorities and residents to launch a drive to remove and destroy the plantation. According to information shared by social media page "mumbai.insights", the operation was carried out in the presence of the corporator from Ward 116, who was seen participating alongside residents and officials during the action. Videos circulating online show people entering the plot and uprooting the plants as part of efforts to completely eliminate the suspected illegal cultivation. The campaign was reportedly aimed at curbing narcotics-related activities and promoting a drug-free environment in the locality. Residents reportedly appreciated the action and welcomed the initiative, praising authorities for acting against the alleged illegal plantation. However, officials have not yet confirmed the total scale of the cultivation or whether any arrests have been made in connection

with the case. In another recent anti-drug operation, the Crime Detection Branch (Unit 4) of the Mira Bhayandar-Vasai Virar Police busted an alleged narcotics trafficking network and seized 6.773 kg of Methedrone (MD) valued at around Rs 13.61 crore in the international market. The operation began on May 4 after police received specific intelligence inputs regarding a suspected stock of drugs at the Chedda Adarsh building in the Naya Nagar locality of Mira Road. Acting on the information, a police team led by Inspector Pramod Badakh raided the premises and recovered 1.324 kg of MD worth nearly Rs 2.66 crore from the residence of a woman identified as Firdos Arbaz Qureshi. Investigators later claimed the seized contraband belonged to her husband, Arbaz Vakil Qureshi, following which both were arrested. During interrogation, police reportedly uncovered details of a broader distribution and supply chain linked to the accused. Subsequent raids carried out in multiple locations led to the detention of

several additional suspects connected to the network. Officials from the Mira Bhayandar-Vasai Virar Police said investigations are ongoing to trace both the source of the drugs and the intended buyers as part of efforts to dismantle the entire syndicate. Police officials said intensified surveillance and intelligence-gathering operations are being carried out across Mumbai Metropolitan Region areas to identify illegal drug cultivation sites and trafficking networks. Authorities have also urged citizens to immediately report suspicious narcotics-related activities to the police to help prevent the spread of drug abuse and organised crime in residential localities. Officials further stated that coordinated action between local police units and specialised crime branches is being strengthened to crack down on such illegal activities at an early stage. Meanwhile, awareness drives are also being planned to educate citizens, especially youth, about the legal consequences and health risks associated with narcotic substances.

Thane Court Confirms Trader's Custody Of Seized Livestock; Orders Higher Care Charges For Gaushala

Thane : A sessions court in Thane has upheld interim custody of 244 goats and sheep to a Rajasthan-based livestock trader in an alleged animal cruelty matter, while directing him to pay increased maintenance charges to the gaushala that had been caring for the animals.

Additional Sessions Judge V.L. Bhosale partly accepted a revision plea filed by Dharmaveer Gaushala against earlier orders issued by the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC), Mira-Bhayandar, which had granted temporary custody of the animals to trader Nibab Khan Nijam Khan.

The matter relates to an FIR lodged at Kashigaon Police Station on April 17 under provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and Maharashtra Motor Vehicles Rules.

According to the complaint, gausha-

la president Dnyaneshwar Dhondiram Patil allegedly intercepted a Tata truck on Ghodbunder Road that was transporting goats and sheep from Rajasthan to Thane in overcrowded conditions, without sufficient food, water or ventilation facilities.

Following the interception, police seized 250 animals and shifted them to the gaushala for care and treatment.

The gaushala later challenged two JMFC rulings dated April 24 and April 30, claiming the orders carried contradictory directions regarding maintenance expenses and incorrectly referred to the seized animals as "cattle". It further argued that several animals were unwell and required continued medical supervision.

The trader, meanwhile, submitted invoices and identification documents

asserting ownership of 264 animals. He contended that prolonged seizure of the livestock was severely affecting his business and livelihood. He also claimed the gaushala had earlier informed the lower court that it did not wish to continue keeping the animals.

During the hearing, references were also made to another FIR registered at Igatpuri Police Station against the gaushala president over allegations of extortion and intimidation connected to livestock vehicle interceptions. The sessions court clarified that the separate case would be investigated independently.

While declining to set aside the custody order, the court observed that Section 503 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita permits courts to release seized property, including animals,

during the pendency of a trial.

The court further stated that although the magistrate's April 30 order had replaced the earlier ruling, the reduction in maintenance charges lacked sufficient justification and was inconsistent with Animal Welfare Board of India norms. Acknowledging the gaushala's expenditure towards feeding and treating the animals — including dozens reported to be ill or critically ill — the court ordered the trader to pay Rs 200 per animal per day from the date of seizure until the livestock is handed over.

The court also directed that an independent veterinary examination and detailed panchnama be conducted before the transfer of custody. It added that severely ill animals should only be handed over once adequate treatment arrangements are verified.

Couple Allegedly Engaging In Obscene Act Near Churchgate Station Sparks Online Outrage

Mumbai : A video allegedly showing a couple engaging in inappropriate sexual activity on a footpath near Churchgate Railway Station has gone viral on social media, sparking widespread criticism over public conduct.

The clip, shared on Instagram by a page called "9rang media," is said to have been recorded late at

night. In the video, a passerby is heard questioning the couple and asking them to stop. The visuals also show people sleeping nearby on the footpath.

The incident has triggered strong reactions online, with users expressing concern over misuse of public spaces and declining civic discipline. Some speculated

about possible intoxication, while others made sarcastic remarks, though no official confirmation exists regarding such claims.

At present, neither Mumbai Police nor the Government Railway Police (GRP) has issued any statement regarding the incident, identification of those involved, or any action taken.

Bandra Youth Allegedly Assaulted, Robbed After Meeting Men Via Dating App

Mumbai : A 20-year-old Bandra resident was allegedly assaulted, robbed and forced to transfer money after meeting two men through the dating app "Walla" on May 5, police said.

According to details, the victim had been interacting with a 19-year-old identified as Mohammad Rizwan Sheikh and later agreed to meet near Bandra Talao around 6 pm. The accused

allegedly took him around several locations in the western suburbs before another man, Mohammad Ali Qureshi, joined them.

Police said the duo later allegedly threatened and assaulted the victim near Carter Road, snatched his phone and forced him to reveal his payment app credentials. Around Rs 18,000 was allegedly transferred at a shop in Dockyard Road using a

QR code. The victim later reported the incident, following which both accused were traced and detained within hours based on CCTV footage and technical inputs. Further investigation is underway to determine whether the accused have been involved in similar offences in the past and to identify any possible wider network operating through dating applications to target and extort victims.

Maharashtra Govt Holds Revenue Camp In Talasari To Deliver Services At Village Level

Palghar : Under the Maharashtra government's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Revenue Settlement Campaign—Phase I, a special camp was conducted at the Talasari Tehsil Office aimed at ensuring government services reach citizens directly at the village level. The programme witnessed strong participation from residents living within the Talasari Municipal Council jurisdiction.

As part of the Single Day Service Delivery programme, several revenue-related facilities were provided immediately to applicants. Officials from the Talasari Municipal Council issued 35 certificates during the drive,

while the Tehsil Office distributed 27 certificates to beneficiaries. The Supply Department also extended assistance to 69 ration card holders.

Among those present at the event were Talasari Municipal Council President Suresh Bhoje, Vice President Subhash

Dumda, corporators Vilas Thakre and Ramila Javalia, Tehsildar Amol Pathak, Taluka Agriculture Officer Raghu Ebhad, Panchayat Samiti Agriculture Officer Gavrit, along with officials and representatives from various government departments.

MMRDA's Orange Gate Tunnel Project Crosses 250-Metre Underground Tunnelling Milestone

Mumbai : The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) has achieved a key milestone in the construction of the Orange Gate underground road tunnel project, with nearly 250 metres of tunnelling work successfully completed using advanced Slurry Shield Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) technology.

Officials said the contractor appointed by Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority has also completed the installation of permanent tunnel lining rings, an important engineering process that converts excavated sections into stable operational infrastructure.

The achievement marks a major transition from initial groundwork to continuous large-scale tunnelling operations beneath



one of the country's most densely populated urban regions.

Dr. Sanjay Mukherjee, IAS, Commissioner of Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority, stated that executing underground infrastructure projects in highly congested city zones demands precise engineering, extensive planning and strict safety measures. He said the progress reflects the disciplined

execution of a project expected to significantly improve Mumbai's transport network.

Authorities noted that with limited opportunities for widening roads in South Mumbai and other island city areas, underground transport infrastructure is becoming increasingly important to expand mobility capacity while minimising disruptions on the surface.

The Orange Gate tunnel is part of MMRDA's

larger vision to create an integrated, multi-layered transportation network for Mumbai that combines metro systems, elevated corridors, coastal roads and underground routes to support the needs of a rapidly growing megacity.

Officials added that the alignment passes through one of Mumbai's most infrastructure-sensitive zones, requiring carefully monitored excavation work beneath existing utilities and heavily built-up neighbourhoods without interrupting day-to-day city activities.

Once completed, the tunnel is expected to improve east-west connectivity, ease congestion on major arterial roads and reduce travel time across key parts of the city through a high-capacity underground corridor.

Editorial

The Mirror of Democracy

A defining characteristic of Indian democracy is that the final verdict rests not with intellectuals, the media, or political analysts, but with the common voter. This reality has been underscored once again following the declaration of the results of the assembly elections held across four states and one Union Territory. Among these elections, the contest in West Bengal remained the most talked-about—so much so that the elections in the other states seemed to fade into the background. For several months leading up to this, certain self-proclaimed intellectuals, political analysts, and individuals aligned with the opposition ideology had been consistently projecting an image of a Mamata Banerjee victory. Concerted efforts were being made to build up Mamata Banerjee's image as the most formidable national-level challenger to Narendra Modi. Indeed, sections of the media appeared in a rush to even anoint her as the face of future national leadership. However, on the day of the vote count, reality came to light, and numerous political illusions collapsed simultaneously. In West Bengal, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) achieved unprecedented success, bringing to an end the Trinamool Congress's reign of a staggering one and a half decades. The BJP secured victory in 207 out of the 294 seats, while the Trinamool Congress had to settle for a mere 80 seats. Even Mamata Banerjee herself suffered defeat in her own constituency. This outcome was not merely a change of power in a single state; it served as a clear message reflecting a shift in the voters' mindset. Over the past few years, a growing sense of unease had been brewing among the general public in Bengal regarding violence, corruption, the growing arrogance of local leaders, and the politicization of the administration. Allegations of voter intimidation and the targeting of political opponents were being raised consistently across many areas. Against this backdrop, the voters decided to opt for change—and they delivered that verdict with absolute clarity. In a democracy, accepting defeat with grace is just as important as achieving victory. However, following the announcement of the election results, instead of immediately accepting defeat, Mamata Banerjee chose to take the path of questioning the integrity of the electoral process itself. "This is not a defeat for the people, but rather the result of a conspiracy," he claimed. Some opposition leaders attempted to cast doubt upon various institutions—ranging from Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) to the Election Commission itself. However, in a democracy, the habit of dragging the public mandate into a vortex of suspicion can prove dangerous. The mindset that deems the system legitimate when one wins, yet suspicious when one loses, serves only to weaken democracy. Notably, many opposition parties consistently accuse Narendra Modi and the BJP of endangering democracy. Yet, following their own defeat, the Bengal election results clearly exposed just how selective these very parties' commitment to democracy truly is. Instead of engaging in introspection to identify the reasons behind their defeat, they opt for a path of mutual recrimination. Attempts are made to evade reality by claiming that the electorate is misguided, the system is biased, or that a conspiracy was at play. This approach only exacerbates the parties' losses and further erodes public trust. Following these elections, another topic of debate has emerged. Certain intellectuals and opposition leaders are propagating the narrative that the BJP is orchestrating the "destruction" of regional parties. In reality, however, no party in a democracy can destroy another. Whether a party survives or perishes depends entirely on the trust reposed in it by the public. A look at the history of Indian politics reveals that many formidable parties have, over time, lost their strength. The nation has witnessed numerous examples of this—ranging from the Congress party to the Left Front. The decline of these parties was not the result of a conspiracy hatched by any single rival party, but rather a consequence of their own internal errors. Factors such as dynastic politics, corruption, local-level hooliganism, the appeasement of specific social groups, the arrogance of party cadres, and the tendency to take voters for granted gradually cause the public to drift away. As long as a party retains the public's trust, it can remain in power. However, once an excessive sense of complacency born of power sets in, defeat becomes imminent. This is precisely what transpired with the Trinamool Congress in Bengal. Conversely, the BJP acknowledged its own shortcomings following the 2021 elections. By rectifying organizational weaknesses, addressing the dearth of local leadership, and correcting strategic errors, they quietly undertook their preparations. The tangible results of this meticulous effort were clearly evident in the recent elections. An examination of political developments in various states—including Tamil Nadu—clearly illustrates how alliances and political friendships shift and morph in accordance with the shifting probabilities of attaining power. Allies who have stood together for decades part ways overnight, while leaders who were fierce critics just yesterday suddenly transform into political partners. In this scenario, the arithmetic of power takes precedence over ideology and principles. If this is to be hailed as the "success" of democracy, then the very definition of democracy must be fundamentally revised; for true democracy is founded upon values, not merely upon equations of power. Today, the Indian electorate has become far more politically aware than ever before. Thanks to social media, digital platforms, and a constant influx of information, voters no longer place their faith solely in emotionally charged election rhetoric. Instead, they have begun to cast their votes based on substantive criteria such as development, governance, security, and stability. Consequently, winning elections merely by manufacturing a hostile atmosphere against a specific individual has now become difficult. If opposition parties do not prioritize credible leadership, clear policies, and honest dialogue with the public, the challenge facing them will become even more arduous. These elections have once again revealed the true face of Indian democracy. The voter may remain silent, but he observes everything and makes his decision at the opportune moment. Democracy is not safeguarded through mere slogans; it is upheld by respecting the mandate of the people. Parties that learn from defeat and adapt themselves endure, whereas those that deny reality and resort solely to making allegations gradually fade from the public consciousness. The election results in West Bengal have delivered precisely this profound message to the country's politics.

India Post's Transformation into a Future-Ready, Citizen-Centric Service Network



Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Shri. Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, virtually inaugurated the 100th N-Gen Post Office of India Post at North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong, on 6th May, 2026. The upgraded facility has been developed as a modern, youth-centric postal space designed to serve students,

faculty members, and residents of the university campus.

The N-Gen Post Office initiative reflects the Department's focused outreach to the youth. These spaces are being developed within educational institutions to create contemporary, student-friendly environments that align with evolving needs while encouraging deeper engagement with postal services

and with one another.

These post offices integrate modern amenities such as free Wi-Fi, QR-based booking and payment systems, dedicated student service counters, and concessional parcel and mail services, while also reviving the enduring tradition of letter writing and fostering a sense of community. The initiative has been widely embraced by students, whose active participation has not only shaped these spaces but also made it a successful and impactful outreach to the new generation.

Addressing students and faculty during the inauguration, the Union Minister highlighted that India Post is moving along the developmental curve of India, evolving in tandem with the aspirations of a young and dynamic nation. He emphasized that the N-Gen initiative reflects a broader vision of transforming traditional postal spaces into vibrant, youth-centric, and digitally enabled service hubs.

The N-Gen initiative has now covered the entire country, with revamped post offices across IITs, IIMs, NITs, Central and State Universities, including institutions in the North-East.

Reflecting on the journey, the Union Minister stated that what began just 6 months ago with revamping of IIT Hauz Khas Post office in Delhi has now reached a major milestone with the inauguration of the 100th N-Gen Post Office, describing it as a "beautiful journey of transformation and participation."

The Union Minister underscored that the project embodies the spirit of "by the students, of the

students, and for the students," with active student participation in design, artwork, and outreach. At NEHU, students have contributed to the artwork and visual identity of the post office, making it a truly co-created and co-owned space.

Ms. Shayontika Nandi, a fourth-year student, expressed her happiness at being part of the design team along with her classmates, noting that they were able to revamp the post office with a next-generation theme. She added that the concept resonates strongly with Shillong's vibrant music scene, often regarded as the rock capital of India and described the experience as an exciting and meaningful initiative to be associated with. Ms.

Highlighting the unique features of the NEHU facility, the Union Minister noted that it is an all-women-led post office, reflecting the strength of Matrushakti and reinforcing the role of women in driving the vision of Viksit Bharat. The post office integrates locally sourced, indigenous materials such as bamboo and straw, resulting in a beautifully curated space that is both sustainable and rooted in the cultural ethos of Meghalaya.

Shri Scindia thanked Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for his visionary leadership and sustained focus on modernization, digital inclusion, and citizen-centric governance, under which India Post is evolving into a modern ser-



Sneha Das, a first-year student of the Department of Architecture, said that the newly transformed space has made the post office a vibrant and engaging place, adding that she is enjoying the games, music, and time spent there with her friends.

vice and logistics network. With this milestone, the Department reaffirms its commitment to expanding N-Gen reforms across the country, ensuring postal services remain accessible, relevant, and aligned with the aspirations of India's youth.

Cabinet approves Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme 5.0

In view of the financial stress faced by airlines due to the sharp increase in ATF prices, compounded by air-space closures and reduced operations, particularly on international routes, leading to lower aircraft utilisation and liquidity constraints, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the ECLGS 5.0 scheme to provide targeted credit support to Indian airlines.

The scheme aims to provide credit guarantee coverage of 100% for MSMEs and 90% for non-MSMEs as well as airline sector, to Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) by National Credit Guarantee

Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) for the amount in default under the additional credit facility extended to the eligible borrowers to tide over any short-term liquidity mismatches, against the backdrop of ongoing West Asia situation.

For the aviation sector, the scheme has specifically earmarked ₹5,000 crore for airlines. The scheme provides structured financial relief with a maximum loan limit of ₹1,000 crore per borrower, and an additional ₹500 crore subject to equivalent equity infusion by the borrower. The loans will have a tenure of up to 7 years, including a 2-year moratorium on repayment, thereby easing short-term

liquidity pressures.

The introduction of ECLGS 5.0 aims to provide additional credit support to MSMEs and airlines during the current challenging period. The longer 7-year loan tenure, along with the option to convert up to 50% of interest into a Funded Interest Term Loan (FITL), is expected to ease immediate repayment pressure and improve cash flows and liquidity.

On this announcement, Hon'ble Minister Ram Mohan Naidu said, "Under the decisive leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji, India's aviation growth story today stands out globally as a success story built on the found-

ation of reforms, resilience and resurgence. And in the present scenario of unpredictable and unprecedented times, when airlines across the world are struggling with operations, Indian airlines have remained steady, supported by timely measures, be it capping of ATF prices amidst global surge, reduction in airport landing and parking charges and now a bold decision has been taken by the Government. By approving the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) 5.0, airlines will be enabled to navigate short-term liquidity challenges and maintain seamless operations amid global disruptions. It will provide

strong financial backing to safeguard jobs, sustain connectivity and ensure resilience across the aviation ecosystem, while also supporting MSMEs".

The Scheme will provide additional credit up to 20% of peak working capital utilised during Q4 FY 26, capped at Rs.100 crore. For airlines up to 100%, capped at Rs.1,500 crore per borrower, subject to satisfying certain specific conditions.

Maximum period of guarantee cover shall be co-terminus with the tenure of the loan. The Scheme would be applicable to all loans sanctioned during the period from the date of issue of these guidelines by NC-

GTC upto 31.03.2027.

The scheme will also help mitigate the impact of rising Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) prices, exchange rate volatility and operational disruptions, which continue to affect the financial health of airlines. By enabling access to credit backed by sovereign guarantee, it will enhance lender confidence, improve credit flow to the sector and support operational stability. It is also expected to sustain employment, preserve sectoral capacity and help minimise the pass-through of increased costs to passengers, thereby supporting the continued growth and resilience of India's aviation sector.

Dharmendra Pradhan launches School Management Committee (SMC) Guidelines in New Delhi

Union Minister for Education, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, launched School Management Committee (SMC) Guidelines today at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. Shri Ashish Sood, Education Minister, Government of NCT of Delhi; Shri Gajender Yadav, Minister of School Education, Government of Chhattisgarh; Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSEL); Secretary, Drinking Water and Sanitation, Shri Ashok Kumar Meena and Smt. Archana S. Awasthi, Additional Secretary, DoSEL, along with other senior officials, were present during the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan said that the School Management Committee (SMC) Guidelines-2026 will play a pivotal role in translating the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 into action across the country's nearly 15 lakh schools. He said the Guidelines envision SMCs as a vital bridge between students, teachers, parents, and communities to ensure holistic development of children through stronger community participation and shared responsibility in education.

Shri Pradhan emphasised that while the government is committed to ensuring education, health, well-being, mental health, and support for Children With Special Needs (CWSN), the SMC Guidelines also recognise the importance of handholding, mentoring, and community ownership in



strengthening schools. He said the Guidelines aim to develop SMCs into a sustainable culture and a people's movement for improving educational outcomes. Highlighting the role of initiatives like Vidyanjali in encouraging greater public participation, he noted that India's education system has historically thrived under community leadership, and the new SMC Guidelines seek to revive that spirit by placing schools once again at the centre of societal engagement. Shri Ashish Sood, while addressing, stated that this

programme is not merely about issuing new guidelines, but represents a deep and transformative shift taking place in India's education system. He emphasized that if India is to achieve the goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047, the path must pass through its classrooms. Shri Sood described the newly launched SMC Guidelines 2026 as a crucial link in this transformative journey. He explained that the earlier SMC framework, introduced after the Right to Education Act, was largely limited to grant monitoring, in-

frastructure supervision, and administrative processes. However, today's challenges and expectations have significantly evolved. He pointed out that issues such as child safety, mental health, Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), digital transparency, learning outcomes, and community participation have become critically important. The new SMC Guidelines have been designed keeping these priorities in mind. The Minister emphasized that these guidelines transform SMCs from mere monitoring bod-

ies into true "school community governing institutions." SMCs will now actively contribute to holistic child development, academic quality, student welfare, safety, inclusivity, digital governance, and transparency. Concluding his address, Shri Sood expressed confidence that the SMC Guidelines 2026 will strengthen community participation, transparency, and quality education, and play a vital role in building a developed India.

Shri Gajendra Yadav, in his address, said that an active society's involvement is essential for improving children's learning outcomes. He said that the School Management Committee (SMC) Guidelines introduced under the leadership of Union Education Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan would help bridge the gap between parents and schools by ensuring greater participation of local guardians in school management and functioning.

The meeting was virtually attended by several State Education Ministers, including Shri Mahipal Dhanda, School, Higher and Technical Education Minister, Haryana; Shri Dadaji Bhuse, School Education and Marathi Language Minister, Maharashtra; Dr. Vanlalhlana, Minister for School Education, Higher and Technical Education, Mizoram; Shri Kishor Barman, Higher Education Minister, Government of Tripura; Shri Dhan Singh Rawat, Education Minister, Uttarakhand; and Shri Temjen Imna Along, Higher Education Minister, Nagaland.

MAHARASHTRA

Aryan Age | 05

Shinde highlights 11 years of PM Jan Suraksha Schemes, emphasises wider social security coverage & public participation

Mumbai: The impact of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Suraksha Schemes on expanding social security coverage across the country was highlighted by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde as the flagship welfare initiatives completed 11 years of implementation. In a post shared on social media platform X, Shinde drew attention to the role played by the schemes in extending social protection benefits to economically weaker and vulnerable sections of society, particularly those who previously had limited access to insurance and pension facilities.

The Deputy Chief Minister emphasised that the welfare programmes have significantly strengthened the country's social security framework by providing affordable financial protection to crores of citizens across urban and rural areas. Among the initiatives specifically highlighted were the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and Atal Pension Yojana. According to the remarks shared by Shinde, these schemes have enabled citizens to access



affordable life insurance, accident insurance and pension coverage, thereby improving financial security for families belonging to lower-income and unorganised sectors. The Deputy Chief Minister noted that the initiatives were designed to ensure that social protection benefits reach ordinary citizens at minimal cost, particularly those who remain outside formal financial and insurance systems.

Credit for the successful implementation of the welfare schemes was attributed to the vision and leadership of Prime Min-

ister Narendra Modi. The schemes were described as "people-centric" initiatives aimed at strengthening inclusive governance and social welfare.

Shinde stated that the programmes have emerged as important instruments in improving the financial resilience of citizens by providing security against unforeseen circumstances such as accidents, death and old-age vulnerabilities.

He also appealed for greater public participation in Maharashtra so that more eligible citizens could enrol under the schemes and avail themselves of the benefits

offered through the various insurance and pension programmes.

The Deputy Chief Minister stressed the need to create wider awareness about the schemes, especially among rural populations, labourers, economically weaker groups and workers in the unorganised sector.

According to the statement, the Maharashtra government would continue efforts to maximise awareness and expand the reach of these welfare programmes across the state through administrative outreach and public engage-

ment initiatives.

Officials and policy-makers have often described the Jan Suraksha Schemes as important steps towards financial inclusion, as they combine banking access with low-cost insurance and pension coverage for citizens.

Since their launch, the schemes have reportedly witnessed large-scale enrolment across the country, with millions of beneficiaries joining through banks and financial institutions under simplified procedures and affordable premium structures.

The remarks by Eknath Shinde come at a time when welfare programmes, social protection initiatives and governance-related achievements are being actively highlighted by the Mahayuti government in Maharashtra as part of its broader administrative and public outreach efforts.

The state government has increasingly focused on showcasing welfare-oriented initiatives aimed at improving financial inclusion, social security and public service delivery, particularly among vulnerable and economically disadvantaged sections of society.

MC urged to prevent flooding & waterlogging in Mumbai

Mumbai: The issue of pre-monsoon nullah cleaning and desilting work across areas under the jurisdiction of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation was highlighted by BJP leader and former corporator Navnath Ban, who called for urgent civic action ahead of the upcoming monsoon season.

In a post shared on social media platform X, Ban stressed that nullah cleaning work in Mumbai should be carried out "speedily" before the arrival of heavy rains to avoid flooding and waterlogging in vulnerable parts of the city.

The former corporator urged the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation to take "strict steps" to ensure that residents are not forced to face flood-like situations during intense monsoon rainfall, a recurring problem that has affected several localities in Mumbai over the years. Concern was raised regarding the annual challenges faced by Mumbai residents during the rainy season, including severe waterlogging, traffic disruptions, overflowing drains and delays in transportation services caused by inadequate drainage management.



Ban emphasised the importance of accelerating desilting operations and drainage-related civic works across the city to ensure smoother water flow through stormwater drains and nullahs before the onset of monsoon showers.

The demand assumes significance as pre-monsoon preparedness measures undertaken by civic authorities continue to remain under public scrutiny, particularly in flood-prone zones that frequently witness disruptions during heavy rainfall. Several parts of Mumbai have historically experienced flooding during the monsoon due to blocked drains, inadequate desilting and high-intensity rainfall, making nullah cleaning a major civic priority every year. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has

already initiated pre-monsoon works across different wards, including desilting of major and minor drains, inspection of pumping stations and removal of debris from stormwater channels.

However, residents and civic activists have continued to demand greater transparency, timely completion of work and stricter monitoring of contractors involved in desilting and drainage maintenance activities. Local citizens have often expressed concern that delays or incomplete execution of such works contribute significantly to water accumulation, traffic congestion and inconvenience during peak rainfall periods. Simultaneously, Navnath Ban also paid tributes to Maharana Pratap on the occasion of his birth anniversary through another post shared on social media.

Maratha quota leader Jarange-Patil to announce date of agitation on May 16

Mumbai: Maratha reservation leader Manoj Jarange-Patil today stated that he will announce the date of a fresh Maratha agitation on May 16.

It may be recalled that Maratha quota activist Jarange-Patil was allowed to protest at Azad Maidan on Friday, August 29, in 2025, but his protest went on for days, before the Devendra Fadnavis government gave him an assurance that Marathas would get government job reservation quotas, and convinced him to call off the agitation, which had disrupted civic life in Mumbai, after lakhs of Marathas camped at Azad Maidan in South Mumbai.

However, later Jarange-Patil complained on several occasions that the Fadnavis government had not kept its promises and warned about another Maratha "movement".

Speaking to media persons, he said, "Onion farmers are in despair because they are not getting the minimum price for their onions. The only option for this is unity. No matter how much you tell this government with

love and affection, it will never wipe the tears from your eyes. You cannot be merciful to the government. Only then can justice be served."

"Are the beneficiaries of the Anna



Saheb Economic Development Corporation's scheme getting regular loan interest refunds? Complaints from the youth of the Maratha community are increasing.

We will hold a press conference on May 16 and announce the direction of our next movement. We will organise a very big movement in this state of Maharashtra," Jarange-Patil said.

"I don't know the inside story, but the government is entirely responsible for what is going on at the AnnaSa-

heb Economic Development Corporation," he said.

"The government has given all authority to the President and the MD of the Annasaheb Economic Development Corporation.

It seems the government itself does not want any work to be done. The government wants to defame the president and also defame the MD. We should recognise these tactics," Jarange-Patil said.

"All this is affecting the Maratha community. The socio-economic status of Marathas is deteriorating. They are getting into debt and the root cause of all this is the government. Hence, there will be a huge mass movement in the state," he said.

"From the Sarathi scheme to Annasaheb Patil Vikas Mahamandal, Kunbi certificates are not being distributed. The government is deliberately not providing Kunbi certificates and their validity. There will be a big agitation in the state on all these issues. We will announce the date on May 16," Jarange-Patil added.

Nida Khan Arrested, Sanjay Shirsat Levels Serious Allegations Against Imtiaz Jaleel

Mumbai: Police have arrested absconding accused Nida Khan from Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar after an extensive search operation, an officer said on Friday.

Following the arrest, Maharashtra Social Justice Minister and Shiv Sena (Shinde faction) leader Sanjay Shirsat made serious allegations against AIMIM and former MP Imtiaz Jaleel.

According to officials, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) is currently probing nine cases registered in connection with allegations of exploitation of women employees, attempts at forced religious conversion, outraging religious sentiments, molestation, and mental harassment.

Nida Khan was taken into custody from a flat in Kaiser Colony in the Naregaon area of Chhatra-

pati Sambhajanagar by a joint team of Nashik Crime Branch and Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar Police.

Speaking to reporters,



Shirsat claimed that Nida Khan had been hiding in Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar for nearly two months after the incident surfaced in March. He alleged that she was sheltered in a slum locality known for illegal activities and was accompanied by her mother and aunt.

Shirsat further alleged that AIMIM leaders had extended support to Khan. Re-

ferring to statements made earlier by former MP Imtiaz Jaleel, he claimed that Jaleel had openly defended her and indirectly backed the

alleged.

He also demanded a deeper SIT probe to identify the "masterminds" behind the alleged conspiracy and said he would raise the matter with the Chief Minister.

Shirsat further called for an inquiry into the role of Imtiaz Jaleel, questioning why he had publicly supported Nida Khan and addressed press conferences in her favour.

The minister also made controversial remarks linking Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar to past extremist activities, alleging that the city has previously witnessed suspicious and anti-national movements.

Meanwhile, police investigation in the case are ongoing, and officials have not yet issued any statement regarding the allegations made by Shirsat against AIMIM leader.

Step-father gets 20 years in jail for sexually assaulting minor girl

Kolhapur: A special POCSCO court here today awarded 20 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 3,000 to a man for repeatedly sexually abusing his step-daughter for five consecutive years since 2013 at Katyani in Karveer tehsil of the district.

According to Public Prosecutor Ms Pratibha Jadhav, accused Dattatreya Bandu Gore (53), the step-father of the girl, sexually assaulted his step-daughter frequently for five years from 2013 to 2017 taking advantage of her ignorance and also threatened to kill

her. Finally, the girl registered a complaint against accused.

Ms Jadhav said that after examining total 14 witnesses, Sessions Judge Ms Kavita Agrawal convicted accused under sections 376(3), 504 of Indian Penal Code and under sections 4, 6, 12 of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and sentenced him to 20 years rigorous imprisonment.

The court also slapped a fine of Rs 3,000 on the accused, she added.

Major accident caused by tyre burst: 8-Year-old dies, 20 laborers injured

Dhule: A major road accident occurred on Friday afternoon at Laling Ghat on the Mumbai-Agra Highway, when a pickup truck carrying labourers overturned after a sudden tyre burst, leaving one child dead and 20 people injured.

According to reports, the pickup vehicle was transporting labourers from Alephata in Pune towards Shirpur when the rear tyre of

the speeding vehicle reportedly burst. The driver lost control, causing the vehicle to overturn violently on the ghat section of the highway.

The tragic incident resulted in the death of an eight-year-old boy identified as Dinesh Jagdish Arya, who suffered severe head and facial injuries and died on the spot.

Out of the 20 labourers travelling in the vehi-

cle, three are reported to be in critical condition, while others sustained varying degrees of injuries. The injured include both men and women who were returning home after completing seasonal agricultural work.

The labourers had travelled earlier from Madhya Pradesh and Shirpur region to Alegaon Phata in Pune district a few days ago to work in onion harvesting

fields, highlighting the seasonal migration of workers for agricultural labour.

Following the accident, panic spread in the area and traffic movement on the highway was severely affected, leading to long queues of vehicles on both sides of the road.

Local residents immediately rushed to the spot after hearing the crash and, along with police personnel,

helped in rescue and relief operations. The injured were quickly shifted to Bhausaheb Hire Medical College and Hospital for medical treatment, where they are currently undergoing care.

Officials from Mohadi Police reached the site soon after the incident and took charge of the situation, ensuring that emergency assistance was provided to the victims.

BJP slams Raut's X post about Trump's congratulatory message to PM Modi

Mumbai: Hours after Sanjay Raut criticised US President Donald Trump over his congratulatory message to Prime Minister Narendra Modi regarding the BJP's victory in the West Bengal Assembly elections, Maharashtra BJP chief spokesperson Navnath Ban strongly attacked Raut's remarks during a press conference held in Mumbai.

Earlier in the day, Shiv Sena (UBT) Raja Sabha MP and party spokesperson Sanjay Raut had objected to Donald Trump's congratulatory message to Prime Minister Modi, calling the remarks "premature and misplaced" in the context of India's democratic and electoral processes.

Raut stated that state assembly elections are an internal matter of India's federal democratic system and argued that comments or endorsements from foreign leaders regarding such elections should be made

with caution and sensitivity. In his post on social media platform X, Raut also tagged the official X account of the US President and urged Trump to adopt what he described as a "more informed and balanced view" regarding the recently concluded West Bengal Assembly elections.

Reacting sharply to Raut's comments, Navnath Ban accused the Shiv Sena (UBT) leader of hypocrisy and political frustration, while defending Prime Minister Modi and the BJP's electoral performance. Addressing reporters, Ban said, "Sanjay Raut is raising questions after US President Donald Trump congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the BJP's victory in West Bengal. Trump should have congratulated Sanjay Raut and Uddhav Thackeray for getting the biggest win in all the elections and for not being able to manage his MLAs."



He further mocked the condition of the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) leadership and claimed that the party had weakened politically after severing ties with the BJP. "Think about what has happened to your party leadership and then raise questions to Trump. India's democracy is not breathing its last, but the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena is certainly taking its last breath after the people made your party sit at home," Ban said during the press conference. Continuing his criticism, the

BJP spokesperson also targeted the alliance between the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena and the Indian National Congress, alleging that the party had suffered politically since aligning with Congress. "When you were with the BJP, you used to get respect. What has become of Uddhav Thackeray's party today after going with the Congress? The Uddhav Sena has already rotted away in the seven years since it went with the Congress," Ban claimed. He further alleged that Congress was politically benefiting at the expense of the Uddhav

Thackeray-led Shiv Sena during local body elections, including Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Assembly elections across Maharashtra. Meanwhile, in his detailed social media statement, Sanjay Raut had written, "As a Member of Parliament from India, I write in response to reports of your congratulations to PM Narendra Modi on the West Bengal Assembly election results. These are state-level elections — an internal matter of India's federal democracy." Raut also expressed concern over the manner in which the West Bengal Assembly elections were conducted, alleging that the electoral atmosphere was marked by fear, violence and systemic pressure. He claimed there were widespread perceptions regarding the functioning of the Election Commission of India and alleged that the institution had not acted impartially during the election process.

Rohit Pawar demands special Assembly session to pass 'Shakti Act'

Mumbai: Rohit Pawar on Friday launched a sharp attack on the Maharashtra government over the recent rise in crimes against women and minor girls in the state, expressing serious concern regarding what he described as the deteriorating law and order situation. The NCP legislator alleged that criminals no longer fear the law or the state administration, and urged the government to immediately convene a one-day special session of the Maharashtra Assembly to pass the proposed Shakti Act. Pawar argued that stricter legal provisions and faster judicial processes are urgently needed to deal with crimes involving sexual assault and atrocities against women and children. According to the MLA, legal technicalities should not become an obstacle in ensuring punishment for those accused of committing heinous crimes against women and minors. He warned that if existing laws are proving inadequate or ineffective in punishing "these mon-

sters," then the laws themselves must be amended or strengthened without delay. Pawar further cautioned that if citizens continue to lose faith in the criminal justice system, public anger could intensify to dangerous levels, potentially leading people to take matters into their own hands. The legislator cited two recent incidents from Maharashtra to highlight what he described as the alarming rise in crimes against children and the urgent need for stronger state intervention. Referring to an incident in Pune's Ganesh Peth area, Pawar stated that a 10-year-old girl was allegedly molested by a local shopkeeper, triggering outrage and concern among residents and political leader. He also referred to another disturbing case reported from Wadner in Wardha district, where an 11-year-old girl was allegedly subjected to a brutal assault. In connection with the Wardha incident, Pawar raised serious concerns regarding the conduct of a private hospital and al-

leged attempts to suppress the matter instead of reporting it to authorities. According to Pawar, the doctor who initially examined the victim allegedly attempted to conceal the case rather than ensuring proper legal and medical procedures were followed. He described the alleged conduct as "infuriating and shameful." The opposition leader claimed that such incidents reflect a growing lack of fear among offenders regarding the police and administrative machinery in Maharashtra, and argued that stronger deterrent measures are urgently required. Among his key demands, Pawar called for the immediate passage of the Shakti Act to ensure stricter punishment for offenders and faster trials in cases involving crimes against women and children. He also demanded strict legal action against individuals, including professionals such as doctors or others, who allegedly attempt to hide, dilute or suppress serious criminal offences instead of assisting victims.

Anant V. Joshi to play Anand Mishra in 'Gullak 5'

Mumbai : The 15th edition of the Delhi International Film Festival concluded with a grand closing ceremony organised in association with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, bringing together filmmakers, artists, cinema enthusiasts and international delegates to celebrate the spirit of global cinema and cultural exchange. The concluding event reflected the festival's growing stature as an important international platform for cinematic dialogue and artistic collaboration.

Renowned actress Rituparna Sengupta attended the ceremony as the chief guest and added glamour to the closing celebrations. Diplomats and cultural representatives from several countries were also present, underlining the festival's international outreach and its commitment to promoting cross-cultural engagement through cinema.

The closing ceremony featured the presentation of awards to outstanding films selected in the competition section of the festival. The awards were presented by Rituparna Sengupta, who appreciated the efforts of filmmakers for bringing meaningful and socially relevant stories to audiences through diverse cinematic styles and narratives. Among the films that drew special attention during the festival was "A New Postbox: Tales from Partition," directed by Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi. The film received special recognition for its sensitive and

poignant portrayal of the human tragedy associated with the Partition of India and the emotional memories carried across generations.

Set against the historical backdrop of Partition, the film touched audiences and critics alike with its emotional depth and nuanced storytelling. By highlighting the pain, displacement and emotional scars left behind by one of the most defining events in Indian history, the film emerged as one of the memorable highlights of the festival. The festival this year witnessed remarkable international participation, further strengthening its identity as a truly global cinematic event. A total of 177 films from 51 countries and 21 Indian states were screened during the multi-day festival, showcasing a wide range of genres, themes and artistic approaches from across the world.

The films presented at the festival reflected diverse languages, cultures and social realities. Through stories dealing with human relationships, identity, social justice, conflict, heritage and modern-day challenges, filmmakers offered audiences an opportunity to engage with varied cinematic traditions and contemporary global concerns. A major attraction of this year's edition was the inclusion of Russia, China and African nations as "Focus Countries." Their participation brought a unique cultural dimension to the festival through specially curated film screenings, cultural pre-

sentations and interactive discussions aimed at encouraging international cinematic cooperation.

The focus country segment enabled audiences and delegates to gain deeper insight into the storytelling traditions, artistic styles and socio-cultural narratives emerging from these regions. The initiative was widely appreciated for broadening cultural dialogue and fostering stronger artistic ties between India and participating nations.

Apart from screenings, the festival organised several discussions, interactive sessions and panel conversations that explored important aspects of filmmaking and the changing landscape of the global film industry. These sessions provided filmmakers, students and researchers with opportunities to engage directly with experienced professionals from cinema and theatre. One of the most talked-about sessions was the special panel discussion titled "Making Films is Easy, Selling Them is War," organised by IGCA. The discussion attracted filmmakers, cinema students, scholars and industry professionals interested in understanding the practical challenges associated with film distribution and audience outreach. The panel discussion focused on the difficulties filmmakers face in production, marketing, distribution and ensuring visibility for independent cinema in an increasingly competitive entertainment environment.

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15th Delhi International Film Festival concludes; 'A New Postbox: Tales From Partition' honoured

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The discussion featured prominent personalities including Chittaranjan Tripathi, Director of the National School of Drama; Salim Arif; noted theatre personality Arvind Gaur; and Joginder Mahajan. Their observations highlighted the need for stronger support systems for filmmakers and better avenues for independent cinema. The session was conducted by senior journalist Reema Gautam, who moderated the interaction and guided discussions on the rapidly changing dynamics of filmmaking and content consumption in India and abroad. Speakers at the closing ceremony observed that the Delhi International Film Festival has evolved into much more than a platform for screening films. They noted that the festival now serves as a vibrant global forum celebrating diverse cultures, artistic sensibilities and creative expression, while also strengthening dialogue, collaboration and cultural exchange between Indian cinema and the international film community.

Vidya Balan remembers 25-year-old film 'The Last Tenant', calls Irrfan Khan 'the most natural actor'

Mumbai : Actress Vidya Balan has revisited an emotional and long-forgotten chapter of her early acting journey as her short film 'The Last Tenant', co-starring the late Irrfan Khan, has finally been released on YouTube after nearly 25 years. Originally shot during the initial phase of Vidya Balan's career, the film never received a release at the time and gradually faded into obscurity. Its recent digital premiere has now brought back memories from a difficult and uncertain period in the actress's professional life. After watching the film again following such a long gap, Vidya Balan shared an emotional note with her fans and followers, reflecting on the struggles, disappointments and setbacks she experienced during the early years of her acting career.

The actress revealed that the period during which "The Last Tenant" was shot was emotionally challenging for her, as several projects she had worked on either failed to materialise or were shelved before release. Balan recalled that her first Malayalam film, 'Chakram', was shelved, an event that deeply affected her confidence and career prospects at the time. Following that setback, she was reportedly replaced in nearly a dozen films over the next three years. Because of those repeated disappointments, "The Last Tenant" became one of many unfinished memories she chose to put behind her.

The actress admitted that she deliberately distanced herself from projects associated with that difficult chapter of her life. In her emotional social media post, the

47-year-old actress explained how unexpected it felt to revisit the film after so many years and how it reopened memories she had consciously buried over time. Vidya Balan wrote, "Watched 'The Last Tenant' for the first time last night, since I shot for it 25 years ago. I shot for it and then, for some reason, it didn't see the light of day. This happened at a time when nothing I touched seemed to materialize." She further shared, "My first Malayalam film, 'Chakram', was shelved, following which I was replaced in almost a dozen films over a period of three years. To cut a long story short, like all the other things that didn't work out at the time, I wanted to forget about it... so I did." The actress added that she had "diligently shoved it under the carpet" until she unexpectedly received a message from director Sarthak Dasgupta informing her that the short film had finally been released on YouTube. The rediscovery of "The Last Tenant" has become even more emotional for Vidya Balan because the film also features Irrfan Khan, one of Indian cinema's most respected performers, who passed away in 2020 after a battle with illness. Remembering her co-star fondly, Balan praised Irrfan Khan's acting talent and described him as "the most natural actor." She also affectionately referred to him as her "fellow Capricorn" while reflecting on their association during the film. The re-emergence of the film has offered audiences a rare glimpse into the early careers of both actors, long before they be-

came celebrated names in Indian cinema through their powerful performances and distinctive screen presence. For fans of Vidya Balan and Irrfan Khan, the release of "The Last Tenant" serves not only as a nostalgic cinematic moment but also as a reminder of the struggles and uncertainties that often shape the journeys of successful artists. Over the years, Vidya Balan has established herself as one of the

most acclaimed actresses in Indian cinema, known for performances in films that challenged stereotypes and highlighted strong, unconventional female characters. The unexpected release of this forgotten short film after 25 years has now added another emotional layer to her journey, reconnecting both the actress and audiences with a phase of her life marked by rejection, perseverance and eventual triumph.



Jackie Shroff starrer 'The Great Grand Superhero' to release on May 29

Mumbai : Bollywood star Jackie Shroff is all set to entertain audiences with his upcoming film 'The Great Grand Superhero', which is scheduled for a theatrical release on May 29. The film promises to present a fresh and emotional take on the Indian superhero genre by blending fantasy, family emotions and mystery-driven storytelling.

Presented by Zee Studios and Amandav Films, the film aims to create a unique cinematic experience that appeals to both children and families. The makers have positioned the movie as a heartwarming fantasy drama with elements of adventure and imagination.

Unlike conventional superhero films that focus primarily on action and spectacle, "The Great Grand Superhero" explores themes of innocence, emotional bonding and childhood dreams. The film introduces audiences to a magical world where fantasy and mystery intertwine with everyday family relationships.

The teaser of the film offers glimpses into a child's imaginative universe, where the bond between a grandfather and grandson gradually transforms into an extraordinary superhero journey. The narrative combines emotional storytelling with fantastical elements, creating a sense of wonder and excitement.

The teaser also hints at mysterious events and



alien-related developments that add suspense and intrigue to the story. These fantasy-driven elements are expected to give the film a distinctive identity within the Indian family entertainment space.

At the centre of the narrative is Jackie Shroff, who will be seen portraying a character described as warm, affectionate and significantly different from many of his earlier screen roles. The actor's portrayal is expected to bring emotional depth and charm to the story.

Speaking about the film, the 69-year-old actor said that "The Great Grand Superhero" seeks to fulfil the dreams and imagination of children while also carrying an emotional message about staying young at heart.

Jackie Shroff said, "With 'The Great Grand Superhero', we are fulfilling every child's dream. If your soul remains young and your spine remains strong till the age of 90, that is the real superhero. Children's dreams should always come first."

His statement reflects the emotional core of the film, which appears to celebrate positivity, resilience, imagination and the importance of nurturing a child's dreams and curiosity.

The film is directed by Manish Saini, a National Award-winning filmmaker known for his distinctive storytelling style and emotionally layered narratives. His involvement has generated considerable interest among cinema lovers and critics alike.

Sony unveils teaser featuring Rohit Sharma for upcoming entertainment debut

Mumbai : Sony Pictures Networks India (SPNI) on Friday unveiled a high-impact teaser featuring cricket icon Rohit Sharma as he gears up for what the network describes as this year's biggest entertainment debut. By bringing one of India's most influential sporting personalities to Sony Entertainment Television and Sony LIV, SPNI aims to create a major entertainment and brand-building moment that extends beyond the traditional boundaries of live sports programming. The newly launched teaser has already generated significant curiosity among viewers and fans, with the presence of Rohit Sharma adding star power and mass appeal to the upcoming project. While the

network has not yet disclosed complete details about the entertainment venture, the teaser hints at a large-scale



launch planned across television and digital platforms. Industry observers believe the collaboration reflects the increasing convergence of sports, entertainment and digital streaming, where leading athletes are emerging

as influential cultural figures capable of driving engagement beyond their sporting achievements. With Rohit

Sharma's immense popularity across demographics, the initiative is expected to offer advertisers and brands an opportunity to connect with audiences through a high-visibility, cross-platform entertainment property. Sony

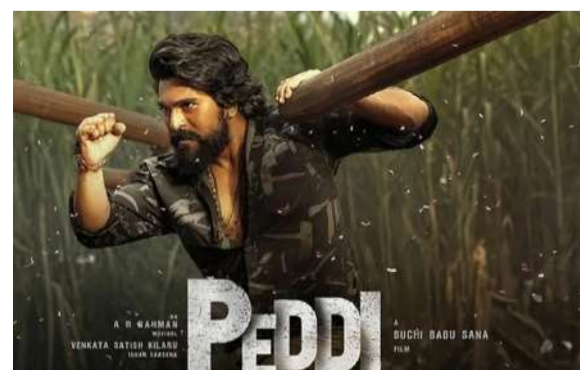
Pictures Networks India stated that by associating one of the country's biggest cricketing personalities with its entertainment ecosystem, it seeks to create stronger audience engagement while delivering scale and cultural relevance to partner brands. The network highlighted that the campaign provides advertisers with an integrated platform spanning broadcast television, digital streaming and social media, thereby expanding visibility and audience reach. The teaser has been launched simultaneously across SPNI's television, digital and social media platforms, ensuring widespread exposure and building anticipation ahead of the official announcement related to the project.

Ram Charan's 'Peddi' scripts historic North American pre-sales surge ahead of global release

Mumbai : South Indian megastar Ram Charan's upcoming film "Peddi" has already made headlines overseas, registering remarkable pre-sales in North America well ahead of its global release.

One of the biggest blockbusters in Indian cinema, penned and directed by Buchi Babu Sana, has created history with its pre-sales in North America ahead of its worldwide release on June 4, 2026.

The makers of 'Peddi' have officially confirmed that the film's final edit has been locked, marking a major milestone ahead of its highly anticipated global release. The announcement has further heightened excitement among fans and industry circles as the film gears up for its



international rollout. The film is scheduled for its grand worldwide premiere on June 3, 2026, followed by a worldwide theatrical release on June 4. With anticipation continuing to build, "Peddi" is already emerging as one of the most talked-about Indian films of the year. Even before its official

premiere, the film has generated massive buzz through its exceptional advance booking performance in overseas markets. According to reports, "Peddi" witnessed a record-breaking response immediately after ticket sales opened in North America.

The film crossed the \$100,000 mark in advance

ticket sales within just four hours of bookings opening, setting a new benchmark for pre-sales achieved by an Indian film in such a short span of time. The impressive response reflects the strong anticipation surrounding the project among international audiences.

The achievement was officially shared by Pratyangira Cinemas, which is handling the film's distribution in North America. The distributor highlighted the overwhelming response from moviegoers and fans eager to watch the film on the big screen. "Peddi" is expected to have a wide international release across multiple territories, including North America, Sri Lanka, Australia, Singapore and several other overseas markets.

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RCB aim for top-two push as MI seek revival in Raipur clash

Raipur: In what promises to be a compelling contest of ambition against pride, Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) take on Mumbai Indians (MI) in Match 54 of the Indian Premier League 2026 at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Cricket Stadium here on Sunday, with the former eyeing a crucial step towards playoff qualification while the latter play largely for pride and reputation in an underwhelming campaign.

RCB, sitting comfortably in the upper tier of the points table at third place, have combined fearless top-order batting with largely disciplined bowling spells to remain strong contenders for a top-two finish. However, successive defeats in recent outings have injected a sense of urgency into their campaign.

With the business end of the tournament approaching, the equation is straightforward for the Bengaluru side: win consistently or risk slipping in a tightly packed race for play-off positioning.

Mumbai Indians, in contrast, find themselves languishing in the lower



half of the table with only three wins from ten matches.

While their mathematical chances of progression remain slim, the focus has shifted decisively towards salvaging pride and finishing the season on a competitive note. Despite their inconsistent run, MI remain a dangerous unit on their day, boasting experienced match-winners capable of altering the course of a game in a matter of overs.

The Raipur surface adds an additional layer of intrigue to the contest. Relatively unfamiliar in recent IPL seasons, the pitch is ex-

pected to provide balanced conditions with moderate scoring opportunities. Historically, the venue has not been a high-scoring ground, often rewarding patience, partnerships and intelligent use of variations, particularly through the middle overs. RCB's batting unit, spearheaded by Virat Kohli and supported by Phil Salt and Rajat Patidar, has been among the more productive line-ups this season, especially in the powerplay phase. However, concerns remain around their death bowling, which has been susceptible to leakage in pressure situations. This

could provide Mumbai Indians with an opening if their top order fires early.

MI's batting revolves around the proven trio of Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak Varma, all capable of shifting gears swiftly once settled. Their primary concern, however, has been inconsistency in the bowling department, particularly in defending totals under pressure. While Jasprit Bumrah continues to be their spearhead, the lack of sustained support in the middle and death overs has repeatedly undermined their efforts this season.

Toss is expected to play

a significant role, with prevailing trends in the tournament favouring teams chasing under lights due to dew and improved batting conditions in the second innings. Both captains are likely to opt for bowling first if given the opportunity, in line with the broader tactical approach seen across venues this season.

Head-to-head records slightly favour RCB in recent encounters, offering them a psychological edge heading into the contest. However, Mumbai Indians, known for their unpredictability and explosive batting potential, remain capable of springing a surprise, particularly in high-pressure situations.

As the league stage moves towards its conclusion, RCB will look at this fixture as a vital opportunity to consolidate their position and push for a top-two finish, while MI will aim to disrupt their rhythm and end a disappointing campaign on a more positive and competitive note.

In essence, it is a contest where urgency meets pride, and where every over could carry significant implications for both sides.

Young Tigresses' goalscorers reflect on quarter-final qualification

Suzhou: India's historic qualification to the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup China 2026 quarter-finals was powered by attacking intent, belief, and four goals against Lebanon on Friday. After the final whistle at the Suzhou Taihu Football Sports Centre Pitch 8, goalscorers Pritika Barman, Alva Devi Senjam and Joya reflected on a day that secured India's first-ever knockout-stage appearance at the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup.

Pritika Barman, who opened and closed the scoring in the 4-0 victory, revealed that she had visualised scoring the night before stepping onto the pitch. "It feels really good. I scored two goals, and I played really well. We had to win this match, so everyone gave their absolute best. Because we gave our best, we played very well and scored goals," said the 16-year-old, who hails from West Bengal.

India knew before kick-off that only a victory would keep their hopes alive of progressing as one of the two best third-placed teams. The Young Tigresses responded with a supreme attacking performance, scoring their first goals at the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup since 2005.

Pritika opened the scor-



ing inside seven minutes with a brilliant individual effort before adding India's fourth goal late in the second half.

"We have team meetings every night, and last night I had already made up my mind that I was going to score the first goal," she said. "And I did score the first goal. It felt really good. After that, I thought to myself that I should score even more goals, and that is how I scored again," Pritika added.

Alva Devi Senjam, who doubled India's lead before half-time, spoke about the belief within the squad and the trust shown in her by head coach Pamela Conti.

"I felt very excited today because the coaches were shouting encouragement from outside the pitch throughout the game," said

Alva. "I didn't start very well in the first half an hour, had some mistouches, but still believed that I would score at least one goal today, and that belief helped me find the net."

The 15-year-old winger's rise over the last few months has been rapid. Earlier this year, the SAFF U19 Women's Championship in Nepal was her first international tournament for India. Since then, she has become a regular starter under Conti and featured in every starting eleven named by the Italian coach. "It feels special because the coach trusts me a lot," Alva had said earlier in the tournament, and against Lebanon, she repaid that faith with a composed finish after driving into the box from Redima Devi Chingkhayum's pass.

Pamela Conti eyes bigger prize after milestone quarter-final qualification

Suzhou (China): The final whistle had barely faded when Pamela Conti found herself surrounded by her players. One after another, the Young Tigresses rushed towards their head coach, hugging her, chanting around her, and even trying to lift her into the air in celebration after India scripted history by reaching the quarter-finals of the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup for the first time ever.

In that moment, as the emotions of months of hard work and belief came pouring out from the group around her, tears filled the Italian's eyes.

For a team that had continuously spent more than three months training together, often twice a day, the 4-0 victory against Lebanon was more than just three points. It placed India among the top eight teams in Asia and moved the Young Tigresses to within one match of a place in the FIFA U17 Women's World Cup Morocco 2026. No Indian women's team has ever been one win away from qualifying for a FIFA World Cup on merit.

"It is an incredible achievement," Conti told the-aiff.com after the historic result. "Nobody believed it was possible, but from the very first moment, I believed that if we trained differently, we could achieve what we have done."

"I am very happy. There are hardly enough words to describe it. I am only grateful to these players, who from day one have always followed everything we asked of them."

India's qualification came after a

commanding performance against Lebanon, where the Young Tigresses attacked with confidence and clarity from the opening whistle. Pritika Barman scored twice, while Alva Devi Senjam and Joya added the other goals in a dominant display.

Conti was particularly pleased with the intent her side showed throughout the contest.

"We played an incredible match. Honestly, 4-0 is even a narrow result because we could have scored more goals. What I really liked was the team's desire to press high, to keep looking for goals, and the very important tactical organisation we showed."

"But the most important thing was qualifying for the knockout stage, and I am extremely happy about that." The achievement also represented the reward for months of demanding preparation under the Italian coach, who took charge in January and immediately set high standards within the camp.

"From the first day I arrived, I told the players that we had to work, work, and work," Conti said. "I do not know any other path to success apart from hard work."

"Nobody complained, nobody got tired of it. We trained for almost three and a half months, twice a day, to achieve this." India entered the tournament after a 21-year absence from the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup and were drawn alongside Australia, Japan and Lebanon in a difficult Group B. While defeats against the former two left their

qualification hopes hanging in the balance, the Young Tigresses responded emphatically in the decisive final group game.

"For me, the most important thing is that we have given happiness to India, a country that welcomed me so warmly from the beginning. Now we can say that we are among the top eight teams in Asia. If someone had told me this a few months ago, I would not have believed it," Conti said.

India will now face hosts China in the quarter-final on Monday, with a place in the FIFA U17 Women's World Cup at stake. China finished Group A as toppers, scoring 15 goals against Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand, and conceding none.

"China are a very strong team," Conti said. "They have many technically gifted players, they are good tactically, and they have the advantage of playing at home with a lot of crowd support."

At the same time, the Young Tigresses head coach made it clear that India will approach the occasion with the same belief that has defined their campaign so far.

"Now we know we will face China, who are a very strong team. We will try to achieve qualification for the World Cup, knowing how difficult it will be," said Conti. "But I already said before the tournament that we would play against every team with dignity, and that is exactly what this team is doing. Playing with dignity gives you something extra, not only in football, but also in life."

Pukhraj Gill holds nerve to win maiden ADT title in Kuala Lumpur

Kuala Lumpur: Pukhraj Singh Gill, who held at least a share of the lead since the end of the first round, ultimately won the ADT Players Championship presented by The R&A, but only after a tense three-way play-off. A courageous Gill overcame a two-shot deficit over the last two holes and then finished off the job in extra holes at Saujana's Palm Course. Gill (72), who plays for the team, Honer Homes Gurugram, on the IGPL, totalling 13-under as did Thanavwin Lee (68) and Sean Ramos (68). It took Gill two extra holes to secure the title and a cheque of \$ 19,250 at the Saujana Golf and Country Club.

The win puts Gill in a good position to make a bid for ADT Order of Merit and next he will play at the AM Green IGPL Morocco Rising Stars event at the Mazagan Beach Golf Resort. After four events on the schedule Gill is third on the Order of Merit.

Another Indian, Kartik Singh, who played on the IGPL in 2025, shot the day's lowest round of 65 and finished T-30 and Khalin Joshi (77) was T-46.

Pukhraj Singh Gill sealed his win with a six-foot putt in the second play-off hole. Even as the ball disappeared into the cup, he threw his hands up and let out roar of relief.

He was immediately besieged by his fellow Indian players including Aman Raj and Aryan Roopa Anand, who were also playing this week. Gill said, "It took a long time coming. This feels surreal. I think it's going to take a while to sink in, but I'm just so pumped right now. It's been a great week in Malaysia. I was very happy with the course design, playing it for the first time—it just really suits my eye, I am glad I could play the game I did."

"I made it a lot more 'interesting' than I would have liked to towards the end. It went into a play-off. And to have won after that I feel I am on Cloud 9. It is going to take some time to sink in. But it is only onwards and upwards from here. A big thank you to all the people back in India, I am so grateful for all your messages and support. I can't wait to get back to party and celebrate."

"I wish to thank IGPL for providing us a great Tour back home and to my team Honer Homes Gurugram for whom I play on the IGPL." It was Gill's first international title, and it came within months of his maiden pro title on the 2025 IGPL Tour. Gill had a share of the lead after the first round and was sole leader by two after two rounds and held a one-shot advantage after the third round.

Taking a one-shot lead over Ramos into the final round, Gill started hot with three birdies over his first four holes to extend his advantage to five shots.

However, dropped shots on the sixth and the ninth and some great play by Ramos and Lee saw his advantage cut back to one.

The tense affair continued into the final stretch. Lee took the lead with a four-foot birdie at the par-three 12th hole, while Gill responded with his own birdie at the par-five 13th after finding the green in two. The Indian player made three straight bogeys from Hole 14, but neither Lee nor Ramos managed to pull away.

Gill made use of his length again at the dogleg left par-four 17th, hitting a

monster drive over the green and almost chipping in. The three players reached the par-five 18th with Lee holding a one-stroke lead on 14-under-par.

Lee looked like he had the title in the bag when his third shot rolled just off the green, but hit a poor chip and missed a 10-foot par-saver, carding a closing 68. Both Gill (72) and Ramos (71) made par to draw level and force extra time.

The playoff, contested at the 18th, saw Gill and Ramos nail birdies from 10 and three feet respectively on the first extra hole, while Lee dropped out after finding a bunker with his third shot.

The Indian then sealed victory with a superb birdie on the second sudden-death decider, hitting his third shot from a greenside bunker to six feet and sinking the putt. Ramos missed a long par putt after driving into the left rough and pushing his second shot right, behind two palm trees.

Gill is the second IGPL player to find success on the Asian Development Tour. The earlier one was Karandeep Kochhar who won an ADT event in Egypt.

24th Kumar Surendra Singh Memorial Shooting Championship: Anish Bhanwala wins 25m Rapid Fire Pistol gold

New Delhi: Olympian Anish Bhanwala representing Railways clinched the gold medal in the 25m Rapid Fire Pistol Men event at the 24th Kumar Surendra Singh Memorial Shooting Championship, being held here at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range.

Anish shot 31 in the final to secure the top spot on the podium. Madhya Pradesh's Suraj Sharma claimed the silver medal with 28, while Punjab's Vi-

jayveer Sidhu took bronze with 25 after a shoot-off. Uttarakhand's Ankur Goel finished fourth with 20, followed by Rajasthan's Bhavesh Shekhawat in fifth with 17, Navy's Omkar Singh in sixth with 11, Haryana's Gourav Gupta in seventh with 7, and Delhi's Harsh Gupta in eighth with 6.

In qualification, Ankur Goel topped the field with 583-23x, narrowly ahead of Suraj Sharma, who also

shot 583, but with 14 inner tens. Anish qualified third with 582, while Harsh Gupta was fourth with 581. Vijayveer Sidhu secured fifth with 580, Omkar Singh was sixth with 578, Bhavesh Shekhawat finished seventh with 577, and Gourav Gupta took the eighth and final qualification spot, also with 577.

25m Rapid Fire Pistol Junior Men Madhya Pradesh's Suraj Sharma emerged victorious in the

25m Rapid Fire Pistol Junior Men final, clinching gold with a score of 28. Haryana's Sameer Gulia secured the silver medal with 27, while Chandigarh's Unish Holinder claimed bronze with 20. Rajasthan's Abhinav Choudhary finished fourth with 17, followed by West Bengal's Sagnik Banerjee in fifth with 11, Andhra Pradesh's Mukesh Nelavalli in sixth with 7, BSF's Chandra Raj in seventh with 6, and Del-

hi's Aditya Verma in eighth with 4.

In qualification, Suraj Sharma topped the junior field with 583-14x. Abhinav Choudhary qualified second with 580, while Mukesh Nelavalli was third with 574. Sameer secured fourth with 569, followed by Sagnik Banerjee and Chandra Raj, both on 567. Unish Holinder qualified seventh with 566, while Aditya Verma took the final qualification spot with 565.

Stokes set for competitive return after recovering from injuries

London: England skipper Ben Stokes is set to return to competitive cricket during Durham's County Championship match against Worcestershire. Stokes has not played since the Ashes series in Australia earlier this year, which was part of the ongoing ICC World Test Championship cycle.

Stokes later suffered another setback in February when he fractured his cheekbone during a training session. The 34-year-old has now returned to full training and is expected to play as an all-rounder in Durham's



four-day match in Worcester.

Durham coach Ryan Campbell confirmed that Stokes will bowl in the game and could even take the new ball. "He'll be bowling for us, 100 percent," Campbell declared.

Stokes is preparing for a busy international schedule in the coming months, with England set to play a couple of three-match Test series against New Zealand and Pakistan.

England are currently seventh in the World Test Championship standings after losing the Ashes series 1-4 in Australia.

They will need strong results in the upcoming series to stay in contention for next year's World Test Championship final at Lord's.

Campbell said Durham's main focus is helping Stokes settle back

into cricket, while England can think about his international return later. "We've made it very clear, Stokes is here as a member of our team to help win a game of cricket for Durham, not to get ready for England," Campbell told the Press Association.

"I'm sure every England fan is delighted to see him back but we're just happy to see one of our mates again."

He holds himself to such high standards. He'll be the first into fielding drills, throwing balls at people and hitting plenty himself.

Five time winner CSK keen to sustain the winning momentum as they face bottom place LSG today

Chennai: Having come back to the winning ways after a forgettable to this season, five time champions (CSK) will be keen to sustain the momentum to take yet another forward step for a place in play offs, when they take on bottom placed (LSG) in an IPL match at the M A Chidambaram Stadium here on Sunday. Weather seems to hold the key for tomorrow's day match, as the city, in the midst of peak summer, has been receiving incessant, but sharp showers, since early this morning with the Met office predicting the trend to continue for the next couple of days. With ten points from as many matches (5 wins, 5 losses), CSK, banking on the home advantage, would once again be relying heavily on the top order, where Sanju Samson has been in hot form. Having hit two centuries in this edition so far for the team—equalling the record of Aussie Shane Watson—Sanju has changed his batting approach in tune with the conditions. While chasing low and tricky targets, he was more content in rotating the strike, before opening up in the middle overs, which not only helped CSK keep its wickets intact—a case in point was his unbeaten 87 against DC that formed the fulcrum of the chase, but



gives more breathing space while batting at the death. Skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad could have struck two half centuries, but still appears to be struggling. In the last match he fell cheaply, and with the tournament having crossed the halfway stage and reached the business end, he needs to get back his form, which would be crucial in CSK's play off fortunes. Urvil Patel showed some promise, while Kartik Sharma rose to the occasion when it mattered most, by guiding the tricky chase in the company of senior partner Sanju to fashion an emphatic eight wicket win against Delhi Capitals in the last match. The CSK has good depth in the batting line Sarfraz Khan, Shivam Dube, Dewald Brevis bolstering

the middle order and bowling unit has stuck to a good combination, with the skipper marshalling his resources well. Medium pacers Anshul Kamboj, who was so far the leading wicket taker and was vying for the purple cap, and Mukesh Choudhry came up with early breakthroughs. Leftarm seamer Gurjapneet Singh and all rounder Jamie Overton provided the much needed support in the middle overs, while leftarm spinners Akeel Hossain and Noor Ahmed rising to the occasion by applying the brakes and picking wickets. CSK, which was lying in the sixth position, was unlikely to tinker with the winning combination, as a victory here on the morrow, would further enhance its chances of qualifying for the playoffs.

PHDCCI welcomes Rs 5,000 cr ECLGS package for airlines amid West Asia crisis

New Delhi: The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) welcomed the government's decision to approve a Rs 5,000 crore emergency credit support scheme for airlines under ECLGS 5.0 to address the financial and operational stress arising from the ongoing West Asia crisis.

"The Government's swift intervention through the Rs 5,000 crore emergency credit scheme demonstrates strong policy responsiveness towards one of the most critical pillars of India's services economy," Rajeev Juneja, President of PHDCCI, said.

Juneja noted that aviation is the backbone of tourism, trade and business mobility and supporting airline stability at this juncture will have a cascading positive impact across the broader economy, including hospitality, travel services and employment generation.

PHDCCI said that the announcement closely aligns with key recommendations made in the re-



cently released report "Impact of the West Asia Conflict on India's Tourism, Aviation & Hospitality Sectors."

It highlighted the urgent need for targeted financial and policy support measures to stabilise India's aviation and tourism ecosystem amid geopolitical disruptions.

The ECLGS 5.0 scheme will provide targeted credit support to

Indian airlines facing financial stress due to rising fuel costs, operational disruptions, and global air-space challenges.

The scheme aimed to improve liquidity, ensure operational stability, and support the aviation sector with government-backed credit guarantees. Anil Parashar, Chair of Tourism & Hospitality Committee, PHDCCI, said, "The recommenda-

tions outlined in the PHDCCI Tourism & Hospitality Resilience Report specifically emphasised the importance of financial resilience mechanisms and liquidity support for aviation and tourism stakeholders during periods of geopolitical uncertainty." He noted that it is a positive step towards safeguarding connectivity, sustaining tourism flows and maintaining economic stability. Ranjeet Mehta, CEO and Secretary General of PHDCCI, said, "The current geopolitical situation has highlighted the deep interdependence between aviation connectivity and tourism growth."

"Timely financial support measures such as this will help airlines maintain operational continuity, preserve consumer confidence, and minimise disruptions across the travel ecosystem. Going forward, continued collaboration between government and industry will be essential to strengthen long-term resilience and competitiveness," Mehta added.

Dr. Reddy's-Nestlé Health Science JV launches Celevida GLP for patients on obesity, diabetes therapies

Hyderabad: Dr. Reddy's Laboratories and Nestlé India on Friday announced the launch of 'Celevida GLP', a specialised nutritional product designed to support muscle mass maintenance and nutritional needs of people undergoing GLP-1/GIP therapy for management of type 2 diabetes and obesity in India. The product has been launched by Dr. Reddy's and Nestlé Health Science Limited, a joint venture between the two companies, as the adoption of GLP-1/GIP-based therapies continues to rise in the country.

According to the companies, there is an increasing need for integrated patient care beyond medicines, including nutrition support, clinical monitoring and long-term lifestyle management to ensure sustainable outcomes for people with diabetes and obesity.

Speaking on the launch, M.V. Ramana, CEO, Global

Generics at Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Limited and Director, Dr. Reddy's and Nestlé Health Science Limited, said GLP-1 therapies represented a major advancement in diabetes and obesity management but highlighted the need to address nutritional gaps and muscle health during treatment.

"As patients experience changes in body composition, ensuring adequate nutrient intake and maintaining lean body mass become critical to sustaining long-term outcomes," he said. The companies cited studies indicating that nearly 25-40 per cent of total weight loss associated with GLP-1 and dual GLP-1/GIP therapies may come from lean body mass loss. They noted that this concern could be more significant among Indians due to relatively lower baseline skeletal muscle mass, higher body fat composition and low average protein in-

take. Clinical recommendations suggest increasing protein intake to 1.2-1.5 grams per kilogram per day during such therapies to help preserve muscle mass. Celevida GLP has been scientifically designed and co-created with endocrinologists and diabetologists to help address protein gaps and support muscle preservation in individuals undergoing GLP-1/GIP therapy. The formulation contains fast-absorbing whey protein isolate, branched-chain amino acids (BCAAs) and 27 essential nutrients, including vitamins A, D and calcium. The product provides 48 grams of protein per 100 grams along with 100 per cent recommended daily allowance of BCAAs, according to the company. The joint venture already markets Celevida Diabetes Nutrition, a product aimed at supporting blood glucose management in people with diabetes.

FlixBus partners with Green Drive Mobility to launch Electric Intercity Bus Services in AP

Visakhapatnam: FlixBus India today said it has partnered with Green Drive Mobility to launch electric intercity bus services between Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam, marking a major step towards electrification of long-distance bus travel in India.

The companies announced that four electric buses would be introduced in the first phase on the Vijayawada-Visakhapatnam corridor, one of Andhra Pradesh's busiest intercity travel routes.

According to the companies, the initiative aims to provide passengers with a comfortable and technology-enabled travel experience while improving environmental sustainability compared to conventional diesel-operated coaches.

The collaboration combines FlixBus' global travel-technology platform, digital ticketing systems and demand-generation network with Green Drive Mobility's electric fleet operations and mobility infrastructure.

The companies said the project aligns with India's broader push towards cleaner mobility and public transport electrification while contributing to lower emissions in the intercity transport segment. Passengers travelling on the route will have access to zero-emission electric bus travel on a tank-to-



wheel basis, digitally enabled ticket booking through the FlixBus platform and modern long-distance travel amenities.

Speaking on the partnership, Hari Krishna, Founder and CEO, Green Drive Mobility, said the initiative represented a significant milestone in expanding electric intercity mobility in India. "Deploying EV buses on the Vijayawada-Vizag corridor allows us to provide a sustainable travel option while reducing carbon emissions and enhancing passenger comfort," he said. Surya Khurana, Managing Director, FlixBus India, said India remained one of the world's most dynamic intercity travel markets and highlighted the po-

tential for technology-enabled and environmentally sustainable transportation solutions.

He said the partnership with Green Drive Mobility would help improve access to reliable, affordable and cleaner intercity travel while supporting the Government of India's transport electrification goals. The Vijayawada-Visakhapatnam corridor connects two major economic and cultural hubs of Andhra Pradesh and witnesses strong passenger demand throughout the year. The companies said the deployment of electric buses is expected to reduce carbon emissions while improving the quality and reliability of regional intercity connectivity.

Not Buying Kandla Transmission, Says Reliance Industries Ltd

Mumbai: Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) has informed the stock exchange through a regulatory filing that it is no longer in the race to buy a 100% stake in Kandla GHA Transmission Limited (KGTL) from PFC Consulting Limited.

Reliance informed the stock exchange that even after receiving approval for the pre-acquisition bidding process, PFC Consulting Limited sent a letter to RIL, cancelling the bidding process.

"The company has received a letter from PFC dated May 6, 2026, informing it of the cancellation of the ongoing bidding process. Therefore, the company will not acquire any stake in KGTL," Reliance said in an exchange filing. In an earlier stock exchange filing last year on April 25, Reliance had announced that its Board of Directors had approved the acquisition of

Kandla GHA Transmission Limited (KGTL) from PFC Consulting Limited.

According to the Reliance board decision, the to-



tal consideration for purchasing Kandla GHA Transmission Limited (KGTL) from PFC Consulting Limited, was not to exceed Rs 20 crore. Kandla GHA Transmission Limited (KGTL) is a special purpose vehicle (SPV) established to develop infrastructure to supply power to green hydrogen and ammonia manu-

facturing facilities in Kandla, located in Gujarat. The project focuses on the transmission of 3 GW of renewable energy, designed to sup-

port large-scale green energy projects and reduce carbon emissions. Reliance wanted to buy Kandla GHA Transmission since RIL is in the process of setting up a huge ecosystem in Gujarat to produce green hydrogen, green ammonia as well as green chemicals. Reliance plans to indigenise all critical technologies of the green

energy transition, namely solar, battery energy storage systems as well as electrolyzers, under a 'Make-in-India' framework.

Recently, RIL announced a binding long-term Supply and Purchase Agreement (SPA) with Samsung C&T Corporation of South Korea to supply green ammonia over a 15-year period commencing in the second half of FY2029.

The SPA, valued at more than US\$3 billion, is one of the largest binding long-term Green Ammonia off-take agreements globally.

The SPA sets a new benchmark in the global energy landscape, with India emerging as an exporter of green fuels produced through an end-to-end value chain anchored in the country, including the domestic manufacturing of critical clean-energy equipment, aligned with India's National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM).

Indigenous capability key to India's security, says former DRDO chairman

Hyderabad: Former DRDO Chairman and Member of the National Security Advisory Board G. Sathesh Reddy on Friday said India's indigenous defence capabilities have become crucial for national security amid rapidly changing global geopolitical and warfare scenarios.

Speaking at the MSME SPARK 3.0 Aerospace and Defence Manufacturing programme organised by the Federation of Telangana Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FTCCI) in association with the Telangana Industries Department here, Reddy said the event coincided with the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor, which demonstrated to the world the strength of India's indigenously developed defence systems, weapons, ammunition and advanced technologies.

Referring to recent global conflicts, including the Russia-Ukraine war and tensions involving Iran, Israel and the United States, Dr Reddy said nations across the world were increasingly recognising the importance of self-reliance in defence production.

"Everybody has become aware that it is our indigenous capability which will protect our nation," he said, stressing the need for India to continue developing domestic weapons systems and defence technologies.

He observed that the nature of warfare had changed significantly, with drones, cyber warfare, unmanned systems and airborne weapons now dominating modern conflicts.

India has consequently witnessed the emergence of nearly 600 to 800 startups and industries in the drone

sector, he said.

Dr Reddy noted that in recent months, the Indian military had floated multiple tenders for drone-based surveillance, weapon delivery systems, kamikaze



drones and unmanned aerial vehicles, reflecting the growing role of unmanned warfare technologies.

He said defence acquisition proposals worth around ₹3.5 lakh crore had recently been approved under the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) framework, one of the largest military modernisation approvals in India's history.

Defence orders worth nearly ₹2 lakh crore have already been placed, he added.

Highlighting India's indigenous aerospace programmes, Dr Reddy said around 220 Tejas Light Combat Aircraft had been ordered, making it one of the country's biggest indigenous aviation programmes with an estimated value exceeding ₹1 lakh crore.

He added that the LCA Mark-2 project had already been sanctioned and was expected to roll out next year, while the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) project was also progressing steadily.

He further said DRDO had recently tested several advanced weapon systems, including anti-ship missiles, hypersonic missile systems and guidance kits capable of converting conventional bombs into preci-

sion-guided weapons.

Calling for large-scale development of conventional ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and advanced surveillance systems, Dr Reddy said airborne, UAV-borne, drone-based and space-based surveillance technologies would play a decisive role in future warfare.

On defence exports, he said India exported defence products worth ₹23,666 crore during 2024-25 and projected exports for 2025-26 were nearing ₹39,000 crore, representing a nearly 60 per cent jump within a year.

He expressed confidence that the Ministry of Defence's target of achieving ₹50,000 crore in defence exports by 2026-27 would be achieved.

Dr Reddy also highlighted the rapid growth of startups in the defence and aerospace sectors, citing examples of Indian companies developing advanced satellite technologies and securing international orders from countries including Japan, France and the United States.

He said Hyderabad had emerged as a major hub attracting global industries across sectors, particularly in defence and aerospace manufacturing, while indigenous production in India had reached nearly ₹1.53 lakh crore during the last financial year.

He stated that the conference was being held at a significant time coinciding with the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor which demonstrated to the world the strength of India's indigenously developed defence systems, arms, ammunition and advanced technologies.

Samsung launches fifth edition of 'Solve for Today', doubles incubation grants to Rs 2 cr

New Delhi: South Korean giant Samsung on Friday launched the fifth edition of its innovation and education programme 'Samsung Solve for Tomorrow', increasing incubation grants for the winning teams to Rs 2 crore and expanding the initiative's outreach across the country, the company said in a statement here.

The programme, aimed at students aged 14 to 22 years, invites young innovators to develop technology-driven solutions for societal challenges in areas such as AI-led living, health and education, environmental sustainability, and sports technology.

Applications for the six-month

programme will remain open from May 7-July 3.

As part of the expanded edition, the top four winning teams will receive incubation support worth Rs 2 crore at IIT Delhi to help scale their ideas into viable startups.

The top 20 teams will receive grants of Rs 20 lakh each, while the top 40 teams will be awarded Rs 8 lakh along with Samsung devices and mentorship support.

JB Park, President and CEO of Samsung Southwest Asia, said the initiative reflects the company's commitment to strengthening India's innovation ecosystem and supporting the vision of Digital India.

"We are taking innovation deeper into Bharat by more than doubling our outreach to schools and expanding access for young changemakers. The programme reflects our sustained commitment to India's innovation journey through skilling, design thinking, industry exposure and start-up support," he said.

The company said the programme would include over 100 design-thinking workshops in schools and colleges, mentorship by industry experts, prototyping support, investor interactions and exposure visits to Samsung's research and development centres in Bengaluru, Noida and Delhi.

Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India Ajay Kumar Sood said such initiatives help nurture early-stage ideas into scalable innovations and strengthen India's pipeline of future entrepreneurs.

IIT Delhi Director Rangan Banerjee said the collaboration between academia and industry would provide students access to deep-tech mentorship, interdisciplinary research and prototyping support.

According to Samsung, the programme was first launched in the United States in 2010 and is currently operational in 68 countries, having engaged over three million young people globally.

ICC World Tech Convention 2026 spotlights India's Deep-Tech, Manufacturing Ambitions

Mumbai: The (ICC) today inaugurated the ICC World Technology Convention 2026 at the Jio World Convention Centre here, bringing together policymakers, industry leaders, researchers, technology firms and global delegates to deliberate on India's evolving technology and innovation ecosystem. The inaugural session saw ICC signing a bilateral MoU with the Chungcheongnam-do Economic Promotion Agency (CEPA), South Korea, to strengthen business engagement and trade ties between the two countries. ICC also entered into an MoU with IIT Bombay to promote industry-academia collaboration in research, innovation, technology development and entrepreneurship. Addressing the gathering, Atal Innovation Mission Director Deepak Bagla said India's innovation movement has shifted decisively and is now being shaped by students in government schools, rural class-



rooms, and small-town tinkering labs who are building solutions to problems they face daily. "The real story is not the growing count of startups. It is the spread of the instinct to innovate, reaching students and communities that were never part of this conversation before. The next globally significant breakthrough may well come from a district-level classroom," Bagla said, calling for coordinated efforts from industry, academia, government, and investors to support young innovators. IIT Bombay Deputy Director Professor Milind Atray

said research in India cannot remain confined to laboratories. "Academic institutions must work more closely with industry to convert research into products, startups and technologies that solve real problems. Our collaboration with ICC will help create stronger engagement between academia, industry and emerging technology ecosystems," he said. Maharashtra Industries Department Principal Secretary Dr P. Anbalagan said the state is building a business environment that supports manufacturing, technology and long-term investments.

Vietjet signs strategic agreements with Indian firms to boost India-Vietnam connectivity

Hyderabad: Vietjet Air today announced it has signed strategic cooperation agreements with GMR Airports Limited and Bird Group to strengthen aviation, infrastructure, technology and tourism connectivity between India and Vietnam.

The agreements were signed during the India-Vietnam Business Forum held as part of the state visit of Vietnamese General Secretary and President To Lam to India, the airlines said in a release. According to the companies, the partnerships are aimed at enhancing cooperation between India and Vietnam in aviation infrastructure, technology, logistics, tourism and trade, while strengthening economic and people-to-people connectivity between the two countries. Under the agreement with GMR Airports Limited, Vietjet will explore opportunities for cooperation in air connectivity, airport infrastructure, logistics, aviation

services, smart airport development and long-term investments. The partnership with Bird Group will focus on ground handling services, aviation training, travel technology, hospitality and passenger service enhancement.

Speaking on the occasion, Dinh Viet Phuong, First Vice Chairman of Vietjet, said India and Vietnam were entering a new phase of strategic cooperation and economic growth. "We believe Vietjet's partnerships with leading Indian enterprises will help create new connectivity corridors across aviation, trade, technology and investment, contributing to the dynamic growth of the Asia-Pacific region," he said. Vietjet has emerged as one of the major carriers connecting India and Vietnam and currently operates an extensive network linking Vietnam with Indian cities including New Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Bengaluru.