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Fadnavis Cracks Down on Project Delays, Orders Faster Completion of Mega Infrastructure Works

Mumbai: Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has directed all government agencies to speed up the completion of infrastructure projects, saying Maharashtra's future prosperity depends on timely development of key public infrastructure. He warned that contractors who fail to complete projects within the agreed timelines should not be awarded any new government work.

Speaking at the Infrastructure War Room meeting held at Sahyadri Guest House, Fadnavis reviewed the progress of several major projects across the state. He stressed that all infrastructure projects must be completed within three to three-and-a-half years under any circumstances. He also instructed departments to include a contractor's past record of timely project completion as a criterion during the tender process.

The Chief Minister said delays in project execution result in losses not only to the state but also to the country. He made it clear that unnecessary delays would not be tolerated. While acknowledging that large projects face multiple challenges, he said

government agencies must overcome obstacles and ensure steady progress.

Reviewing the Dharavi Redevelopment Project, Fadnavis directed officials to examine granting



State GST benefits to businesses operating in Dharavi. He said such a move would strengthen local industries and help transform Dharavi's informal economy into a formal one. He also stated that issues related to tenders under the redevelopment project do not need to be brought back before the Cabinet and should instead be resolved through coordination among

departments.

Regarding the redevelopment of the BDD chawls at N.M. Joshi Marg, Naigaon and Worli, the Chief Minister instructed authorities to take possession

of existing buildings without delay after providing rental accommodation to residents so that redevelopment work can begin quickly.

Fadnavis also reviewed the Thane-Borivali twin tunnel project and directed that it be completed within the prescribed timeline. He asked officials to set targets every three months and ensure steady progress. He further

ordered that the Goregaon-Mulund twin tunnel project be completed by January 2029, saying it would significantly improve connectivity between Mumbai's eastern and western suburbs.

The Chief Minister directed agencies to accelerate work on the Bandra-Versova Sea Link, calling it a highly important project. He also instructed departments to resolve all pending issues and ensure uninterrupted fuel supply for infrastructure projects.

Discussing the Virar-Alibaug Multi-Modal Corridor, Fadnavis asked officials to speed up land acquisition. He noted that land values around the corridor would rise substantially after its completion and suggested that the government should develop a strategy to utilise this increase in land value for public benefit. He also proposed identifying specific zones along the corridor where land could be made available to investors for developing specialised industries.

The Chief Minister directed authorities to provide land required for

the Mula-Mutha River Rejuvenation Project. He also said that Pune's expanding metro network should have an integrated ticketing system to improve commuter convenience.

On the Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar water supply project, Fadnavis instructed the Municipal Corporation and Water Supply Department to work together more effectively, remove bottlenecks and ensure adequate water supply for city residents.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Rajesh Agrawal, Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) Vikas Chandra Rastogi, Additional Chief Secretary (Public Works) Milind Mhaikar, Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue) Vikas Kharage, Principal Secretary (Labour) I.A. Kundan, Principal Secretary (Water Supply and Sanitation) Parag Jain, Principal Secretary (Law and Judiciary) Dilip Ghumare, Environment Secretary Jayshree Bhoj, MMRDA Metropolitan Commissioner Sanjay Mukherjee, and Brihanmumbai Municipal Commissioner Ashwini Bhide, among other senior officials.

Projects Reviewed

During the review meeting, the Chief Minister assessed the progress of several major projects, including Metro Line 2B from D.N. Nagar to Mandale, Metro Line 2 from Kasarvadavali to Wadala, Metro Line 5 connecting Thane, Bhiwandi and Kalyan, Metro Line 6 from Swami Samarth Nagar to Vikhroli, Metro Line 7A from Andheri East to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, Metro Line 9 from Dahisar East to Mira-Bhayandar, the Sewri-Worli Elevated Road, the Virar-Alibaug Multi-Modal Corridor, the Bandra-Versova Sea Link, the Goregaon-Mulund Link Road Project, the Thane-Borivali Twin Tunnel Project, the BDD Chawl Redevelopment Projects at N.M. Joshi Marg, Worli and Naigaon, the Dharavi Redevelopment Project, the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation to Nigdi Phase-1 Metro Line in Pune, the Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar Water Supply Scheme, Pune Metro Line 3 connecting Maan, Hinjewadi and Shivajinagar, the Mula-Mutha River Rejuvenation Project, and the Pune Ring Road Project.

Mahayuti consolidates position as nomination withdrawal concludes; several MLC contests turn unopposed

Mumbai: The ruling Mahayuti alliance in Maharashtra successfully mitigated a significant internal rebellion across several constituencies as the deadline for the withdrawal of nominations for the Legislative Council (MLC) elections concluded today.

The move has streamlined the electoral battlefield, with the coalition ensuring that six out of the 17 seats will now see unopposed results.

The 17 seats, which encompass 16 from local authorities' constituencies and one by-election in Nagpur, are scheduled for polling on June 18. Political

activity had intensified in recent days following a surge in rebel nominations, prompting both the Mahayuti and the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) to exert pressure on disgruntled aspirants to withdraw.

Official sources confirmed that the Mahayuti secured clear paths in Thane, Konkan, Yavatmal, Wardha-Gadchiroli-Chandrapur, Pune, and Ahilyanagar.

In a particularly notable development in Pune, the constituency witnessed a high-profile resolution. Following a reported telephonic exchange between Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar and NCP

(Sharadchandra Pawar) chief Sharad Pawar, the opposition candidate Shrikant Patil withdrew his nomination, facilitating an unopposed victory for the Mahayuti nominee.

In Dharashiv-Latur-Beed, Archana Gangane, wife of Tuljapur BJP Mayor Vinod Gangane, withdrew her rebellion, ensuring a direct contest between the BJP's Basavraj Patil and the Congress' Mahesh Deshmukh.

In Nanded, the rebellion led by Pravin Patil Chikhlikar, son of NCP MLA Pratap Patil Chikhlikar, was resolved following an intervention by senior leader Ashok Chavan. The

seat will now feature a focused fight for the BJP's Amarnath Rajurkar.

In Parbhani-Hingoli, Industries Minister Uday Samant's mediation proved successful, with NCP aspirants Sangram Jamkar and Vijay Jamkar withdrawing their candidacies.

While in Nagpur: The by-election is now a direct contest between Congress candidate Atul Londhe and BJP's Dr. Rajeev Poddar, following the withdrawal of Congress' 'dummy' candidate, Dinesh Dhole.

While the alliance has achieved success in most regions, pockets of friction remain. In

Nashik, while Ganesh Geete has signalled his intent to withdraw, his brother Gokul Geete's persistent refusal to step down continues to pose a hurdle for the Mahayuti's local strategy.

Political observers note that the consolidation of candidacies is a critical step for the ruling alliance, which is aiming to strengthen its legislative strength ahead of future sessions.

With the withdrawal deadline now passed, the focus shifts to the intense campaign phase for the remaining competitive seats, with the final polling scheduled for June 18 and the vote count on June 22.

353rd 'Shivrajyabhishek' ceremony to be held on June 5-6 at Raigad

Raigad: The two-day-long 353rd Shivrajyabhishek Sohala' ceremony will be held with great pomp at

and 6th, the 353rd Shivrajyabhishek ceremony will be held at the historic Raigad fort. Chhatrapati Sambhajaraje appealed to the people to adopt the principle of 'My fort, My responsibility' and ensure that no plastic waste is left behind on the fort.

Earlier, a meeting was organized in the premises of the All India Shri Shivaji Memorial Society in Pune, by the All India Shivarajyabhishek Festival Committee to plan the Shivrajyabhishek. Crown Princess Sanyogitaraje Chhatrapati and Shahajiraje Chhatrapati Pramukh were present.



Durgraj Raigad fort in Raigad district from June 5.

In a press release here today, Yuvraj Sambhaji Raj Chhatrapati, president of the All India Shivrajyabhishek Festival committee, said that with great pomp on June 5th

IMD predicts thunderstorms, rain; Yellow alert issued across parts of Maharashtra

Mumbai: The Regional Meteorological Department on Thursday issued a yellow alert for thunderstorms accompanied by lightning, heavy rainfall, and gusty winds (30-40 kmph) at isolated places.

The districts under the alert include Raigad, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Dhule, Nandurbar, Nashik, Ahilyanagar, Pune, Kolhapur, Satara, Parbhani, Beed, Hingoli, Nanded, Latur, Dharashiv, Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, and Nagpur. Meanwhile, the city woke up to sunny skies on Thursday morning, with the temperature recorded at 31 degrees Celsius, even as the department forecast thunderstorms and light to moderate rainfall for Mumbai, Thane, and Palghar later in the day. According to IMD data,

the maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to hover around 34 degrees Celsius and 24 degrees Celsius, respectively. Humidity stood at 70% at 8:30 am, with southerly winds blowing at 13 kmph.

Weather models indicate a slight chance of rain from 2 pm, increasing to light rainfall by 7 pm with a 43% probability. Cloudy conditions are expected to persist through the evening.

Light to moderate rainfall is also likely in Mumbai and Thane on June 5 and 6, the weather bureau said. The southwest monsoon is expected to make its onset over Kerala on June 4 and gradually advance towards Maharashtra. Air quality remained in the 'moderate' category, with the AQI recorded at 71.

Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Madurai among world's 10 most heat-vulnerable cities: Oxford Study

New Delhi: Ahmedabad, Nagpur, and Madurai in India are among the list of top-ten cities in the world that are most vulnerable to heat, according to a new study published in the journal "Sustainable Cities and Society."

Researchers from the University of Oxford analysed 205 global cities with a population of over 1 million to determine where people are most at risk from rising global temperatures. The study took into account factors beyond temperatures and humidity, expanding the analysis using data on population age, access to air conditioning, tree cover, electricity prices, and poverty.

The analysis indicated that more than 95% of the most-at-risk cities are in South and Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

India, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Ghana host the largest number of cities with high risk scores, with the highest number of Indian cities



figuring in the top ten list, according to an official press statement.

Al Basrah in Iraq emerged as the city most vulnerable to extreme heat, with Ahmedabad in India ranking second. The remaining cities in the top 10 were Bamako (Mali), Nagpur (India), Quezon City (Philippines), Baghdad (Iraq), Madurai (India), Faisalabad

(Pakistan), Lagos (Nigeria) and Hyderabad (Pakistan).

The study further highlighted that cities such as Ahmedabad in India and

Karachi in Pakistan are implementing more heat safety measures, but are also the cities that are still lacking climate adaptation progress and urban heat resilience. "It isn't just exposure to hot temperatures that matters for risk," explained the lead author Nethmi Jayaratne Kariyawasam, a researcher at the Oxford Smith School of Enterprise and the

Environment.

"Our study shows that heat risk planning needs to explicitly address not just exposure to high temperatures, but vulnerability and coping capacity," said Radhika Khosla, co-author and Associate Professor at the University of Oxford.

Warning against the risk of worsening global warming through a vicious cooling cycle, she stressed the need to reduce over-reliance on air conditioning, an energy-intensive form of cooling. "To scale adaptation and thermal comfort for all, we must adopt a nuanced approach to keeping people safe, with passive cooling measures and low-energy technologies such as fans and coolers serving as the first line of intervention," Khosla added.

Heavy rain, gusty winds batter Delhi-NCR; mercury drops sharply

New Delhi: Gusty winds, heavy rain and thunderstorms battered Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) on Thursday, bringing relief from the intense summer heat as temperatures plunged across several areas.

Ayanagar recorded the sharpest drop in temperature, with the mercury falling from 41.7°C at 1 pm to 22.7°C at 3 pm, a decline of 19°C, after the station received 27.6 mm of rainfall in two hours during the afternoon, according to data shared by officials from the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The downpour triggered a temperature drop of nearly 15°C or more in several parts of Delhi-NCR, including Gautam Buddha Nagar (15.7°C), Dadri (15.7°C), Gurgaon (15.5°C), Hindon (15.2°C), Mayur Vihar

(14.9°C) and Pushp Vihar (14.8°C).

According to IMD data, Mayur Vihar and Ridge recorded 24.5 mm and 19 mm of rainfall, respectively, placing them in the moderate rainfall category between 8:30 am and 5:30 pm on Thursday. Palam (10.7 mm), Rajghat (12.8 mm) and Pusa (8 mm) recorded light rainfall during the same period.

Strong winds and rain also led to uprooted trees and waterlogging in parts of Noida, according to visuals shared on social media.

Squally winds of up to 93 kmph were recorded in parts of Delhi-NCR. Surface winds in Gautam Buddha Nagar and Dadri gusted to a maximum of 93 kmph, while stations at Palam and Hindon recorded wind speeds of up to 65 kmph between 1 pm and 3 pm, IMD officials said.



PM Modi to Launch Rs 22, 655-Crore Development Push Across Gujarat, Daman and Lakshadweep

NAMO Hospital to the nation, and unveil projects worth around Rs 2,970 crore. He will also lay the foundation stone for port infrastructure projects worth Rs 885 crore in Lakshadweep.

According to the release, the projects in Surat are aimed at strengthening road connectivity, healthcare services, power infrastructure and industrial development. A key highlight of the programme will be the dedication of Packages VI and VII of the eight-lane access-controlled Vadodara-Mumbai Expressway, which is expected to improve high-speed transportation, logistics efficiency and economic connectivity between Gujarat and Maharashtra.

The Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone for the

four-laning of critical sections of National Highway-56, a project intended to improve connectivity in tribal regions and enhance access to the Statue of Unity, one of the country's major tourist destinations.

Among the healthcare initiatives, Modi will inaugurate a 200-bed Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) Hospital in Surat. The facility will provide secondary healthcare services across multiple specialties and include a central laboratory, emergency and trauma care services, and other supporting infrastructure for workers and residents.

The release said the Prime Minister will also inaugurate major utility and industrial projects, including expansion of Gujarat's transmission network

under the Inter-State Transmission System to enhance power evacuation capacity. Other initiatives include power distribution upgrades in Valsad under the Revamped Reforms-Based Distribution Sector Scheme, effluent treatment and disposal infrastructure in the Dahej Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemical Investment Region and Sarigam GIDC, and utility infrastructure at the Jambusar Bulk Drug Park.

In Daman, Modi will inaugurate and dedicate projects worth around Rs 1,340 crore, including the new terminal building of NAMO Airport and NAMO Hospital. The airport terminal is expected to significantly improve regional air connectivity and support economic activity, while the

district hospital has been designed to serve nearly 1,500 outpatients daily and strengthen access to healthcare services.

The Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone for projects worth around Rs 1,630 crore in the union Territory. These include an iconic bridge, the Daman Convention Centre and a National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) campus. The government said the projects are expected to boost tourism, attract investment, generate employment and improve civic infrastructure.

In addition, Modi will launch major maritime infrastructure projects for Lakshadweep worth around Rs 885 crore. The projects include the development of port facilities

on both the eastern and western sides of Kalpeni Island and Kadmat Island. The planned multipurpose jetties will be capable of accommodating large passenger and cruise vessels of up to 300 metres in length and are expected to improve passenger and cargo handling, fisheries-related services, fuel distribution, ice supply and boat repair facilities.

The government said the port projects would strengthen maritime connectivity, support the livelihoods of local fishing communities, promote tourism and contribute to the socio-economic development of the island territory.

The Prime Minister is also scheduled to address public gatherings in both Surat and Daman during the visit.

Omar Abdullah Signals NC Shift to Assertive Politics on Identity, Rights

Srinagar: The National Conference's decision to hold a protest in New Delhi for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood and constitutional guarantees marks a significant political shift for Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. After nearly two years of adopting a cautious and co-operative approach towards the Centre, Omar now appears to be recalibrating his politics amid growing internal pressure and public dissatisfaction.

The off-site meeting at Dachigam National Park was not merely a routine review of governance. It was, in many ways, a political stocktaking exercise for the National Conference government, which came to power in October 2024 with a strong mandate but has struggled to deliver on its core political promises.

The party's announcement that its MLAs, ministers, and MPs will protest in Delhi on the first day of Parliament's Monsoon Session sends a message that the NC leadership believes silence and accommodation are no longer politically sustainable.

Since assuming office, Omar Abdullah had consciously avoided direct confrontation with New Delhi. His strategy appeared rooted in the belief that engagement with the Centre would eventually yield the restoration of statehood, especially after repeated assurances from the union



government and observations from the Supreme Court that statehood should be restored "at the earliest." However, the prolonged delay, coupled with limited administrative powers enjoyed by the elected government, has increasingly exposed Omar to criticism both within and outside his party.

The frustration among NC legislators reflects a deeper political crisis. Many leaders believe the party has failed to aggressively pursue the issues that formed the backbone of its 2024 election campaign, particularly the restoration of Article 370-related

constitutional protections and full statehood. The perception that the government has little real authority over governance has further damaged the party's image.

This discontent has found its sharpest expression in Srinagar MP Ruhollah Mehdi, who has openly accused the leadership of betraying the mandate. His exclusion from the Dachigam meeting is politically significant, highlighting widening cracks within the party.

The symbolism of the Dachigam meeting is also notable. Holding the meeting in a secluded, no-network

zone reflected the seriousness of the deliberations and perhaps the leadership's desire to avoid distractions while addressing mounting internal anxieties. At the same time, opposition parties quickly used the optics to mock the government, portraying it as isolated and disconnected from public sentiment.

Yet, despite the criticism, the NC's latest move appears to be aimed at salvaging its image and core base. By shifting the focus back to statehood and constitutional guarantees, Omar Abdullah is attempting to reclaim the party's traditional political space and reconnect with an electorate that increasingly questions what has changed politically since the elections.

The planned Delhi protest is therefore not just a demonstration against the Centre; it is also an effort to reassure the party's cadre and supporters that the NC has not abandoned its ideological commitments.

Whether this reset will strengthen Omar Abdullah politically or expose deeper contradictions within his leadership remains to be seen. But one thing is clear: the era of quiet accommodation appears to be ending, and the National Conference seems set to return to confrontational politics centred around identity, autonomy, and democratic rights in Jammu and Kashmir.

One more TMC councillor of KMC arrested for allegedly assaulting woman

Kolkata: A councillor of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), Biswajit Mondal, was arrested on Thursday in connection with allegations of harassment and assault of a woman, police officials said. The arrest marks the latest development in a series of controversies that have recently engulfed the civic body.

Mondal, who represents Ward 114 and is affiliated with the All India Trinamool Congress, was taken into custody following a complaint lodged at the Regent Park Police Station. Police initiated action after examining the allegations made by the complainant.

According to the complaint, the woman alleged that she was harassed and molested by the councillor on two separate occasions. The first incident was said to have occurred in March 2024, while the second allegedly took place on May 9 this year. The complainant further claimed that she had approached the police after the first alleged incident in 2024, but no action was taken on her complaint at that time. The allegation has raised questions regarding the handling of the earlier complaint



and whether proper procedures were followed. Mondal is a three-term councillor and is considered a prominent political figure within the civic administration. He has also been widely reported to be close to Mamata Banerjee, adding political significance to the case. His arrest comes at a time when the Kolkata Municipal Corporation is already facing considerable turbulence due to multiple criminal cases involving elected representatives and a series of resignations by senior office-bearers. With Mondal's arrest, he becomes the fifth KMC councillor to be taken into custody in recent days. The developments have intensified scrutiny of the civic body and raised concerns over governance and internal discipline with

in the ruling establishment.

The recent wave of arrests began with the registration of multiple FIRs that led to the arrest of Ward 123 councillor Sudip Polley on allegations of extortion. The case triggered further investigations and additional police action involving other elected representatives. Subsequently, three more councillors were arrested. These included Sachin Singh, Arijit Das Thakur, and Mahesh Sharma. Most of the cases against them were reportedly linked to extortion-related allegations. The series of arrests has deepened the challenges facing the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, which has been dealing with growing administrative uncertainty over the past several weeks.

Uttar Pradesh on alert after Delhi fire, Yogi orders intensive investigation

Lucknow: A day after the devastating fire claimed several lives in a Delhi hotel, the Uttar Pradesh government has increased vigilance regarding fire safety across the state.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday directed the police, fire department, public works department, and other related departments to conduct comprehensive inspections and safety audits.

The Chief Minister has ordered a thorough inspection of all high-rise buildings, commercial establishments,

government and private offices, hotels, malls, and other public buildings in the state. Wherever deficiencies in fire safety standards are found, immediate corrective action should be taken.

The Chief Minister has specifically ordered a detailed inspection of all hotels and the summoning of their fire safety audit reports.

He said that to prevent recurrence of such fire incidents, safety standards should be strictly followed, and the functioning of emergency exits, fire-fighting equipment, and other safety

systems should also be checked.

The Chief Minister directed officials to take strict action against establishments that ignore safety standards, as per the rules. It should also be ensured that firefighting systems are fully operational at all sensitive and crowded locations. Officials say that by strengthening safety measures in a timely manner, the potential for loss of life and property damage can be significantly reduced. To this end, preparations are underway to launch a special fire safety campaign across the state.

BJD questions BJP's 2-yr track-record in revenue, disaster management sector

Bhubaneswar: Senior BJD leader and former Minister Sudam Marandi on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on the BJP-led government in Odisha, alleging that the Revenue and Disaster Management Department has failed to deliver on its promises during the last two years of governance.

Addressing a press conference, Marandi said the state government has fallen

short in ensuring timely relief and compensation for people affected by natural disasters, while several key issues related to land administration remain unresolved.

He further alleged that the government's handling of revenue and disaster management matters has left farmers, tribals and other vulnerable communities facing continued hardships. The former minister further

claimed that persistent delays in the settlement of land records, inadequate disaster preparedness and ineffective rehabilitation measures have exposed serious administrative deficiencies within the department.

Despite repeated assurances by the government, there remains a significant gap between promises and implementation on the ground, he said. The people

of Odisha are increasingly concerned over what he described as the government's inability to effectively address their grievances.

Notably, the BJP formed its maiden government in Odisha in June 2024, with Mohan Charan Majhi taking oath as the 16th Chief Minister on June 12, 2024, alongside Deputy Chief Ministers Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo and Pravat Parida.

TMC MP Babul Supriyo Says Mamata erred in not acting toughly against corruption

Kolkata: Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha MP Babul Supriyo has said that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had made a "serious mistake" by not taking sufficiently strict action against corruption and the alleged misappropriation of public funds during the early years of her tenure.

However, he clarified that the views expressed in his social media post were entirely personal and did not reflect the official position of the party.

In a lengthy post on social media on Wednesday night, Supriyo first referred to leaders who have left their political parties after being elected on the strength of a party's symbol, leadership and organisation.

He argued that any MP or MLA who quits the party after winning an election should also resign from the elected post.

"You can take a stand against your own party. I have done so in the past. But to honour that stand, one should also step down from the post of MP or MLA," Supriyo wrote, recalling that he had resigned from his Lok Sabha seat after leaving the BJP. The Trinamool MP then turned to the issue of corruption, stating that Banerjee had committed a major error by not acting firmly against those allegedly involved in corruption, embezzlement of public funds and other criminal activities from the very beginning of her government's tenure. "Didi (Mama-

ta Banerjee) certainly made a serious mistake. Those who became involved in corruption, siphoning off public money and various criminal activities from day one of coming to power should have faced strict action immediately," he wrote. According to Supriyo, the failure to do so allowed the situation to become more complicated over time. In another significant remark, he claimed that several controversial figures from that period are now part of a group he referred to as the "60".

While he did not specify whom he meant by the term, the reference has triggered political speculation, particularly amid ongoing turbulence within the Trinamool Congress.

BJP emerging as strong alternative in Telangana; Cong, BRS working together: Ramachander Rao

Hyderabad: Telangana BJP president N Ramachander Rao on Thursday claimed that the Bharatiya Janata Party is rapidly emerging as a formidable political force in Telangana and alleged that the Congress and the BRS are working in tandem to counter the party's growing influence.

Rao also defended Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan over the recent controversy regarding permission for his proposed public meeting in Telangana.

He said granting permission for public gatherings is a democratic right and should not be politicised. He alleged that rival parties were at-

tempting to create unnecessary controversy for political gain, and asserted that Pawan Kalyan had not made any remarks insulting Telangana.

Addressing a "Meet the Press" programme organised by the Press Club at Somajiguda, Ramachander Rao said the BJP had strengthened its organisational structure across Telangana and was expanding steadily in both North and South Telangana. He expressed confidence that the party would emerge as a viable alternative to both the Congress and the BRS in the state.

Referring to the Pawan Kalyan issue, the BJP leader said granting permission for a public meeting is a democratic right and should not be

turned into a political controversy. He alleged that certain parties were attempting to exploit the issue for political



mileage and maintained that Pawan Kalyan had not made any remarks intended to insult Telangana. Ramachander Rao asserted that the BJP would never support anyone who insulted Telangana or its people, but rejected attempts to portray the Jana Sena lead-

er's comments as anti-Telangana.

He accused the Congress and BRS of joining hands on several issues, including opposition to the BJP's initiatives, and alleged that both parties were trying to revive Telangana sentiment because they were unable to counter the BJP politically. According to him, the people of Telangana had already tested both parties and were increasingly looking towards the BJP as an alternative. Ramachander Rao also demanded a comprehensive CBI inquiry into the entire Kaleshwaram project, alleging large-scale corruption during the previous BRS regime. He criticised the Congress government for failing

to order a full-fledged investigation despite promising action before coming to power. The BJP leader reiterated that the party would continue its agitation on farmers' issues, fee reimbursement for students and other public concerns. He said the BJP would fight for people's interests through democratic means and expressed confidence that Telangana would eventually witness a "double-engine government" under the BJP. He also recalled the BJP's support for the Telangana statehood movement, stating that the party had extended unconditional backing to the Telangana Bill in Parliament and played a crucial role in the state's formation.

12 years of Modi govt to be celebrated through mass public participation in UP: Yogi Adityanath

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to ensure that the celebrations marking the completion of 12 years of the Narendra Modi-led Central Government are transformed into a mass public movement, driven by active citizen participation and public awareness across the state.

Reviewing the preparations for the public participation-based programmes, the Chief Minister instructed officials to implement every initiative related to public service, good governance, environmental protection, youth welfare, and social welfare with sensitivity, transparency, and broad public involvement.

On Wednesday evening, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reviewed, through video conferencing, the state's law and order situation, preparations for the upcoming Civil Police Constable Recruitment Examination, and the programmes to be

organised to commemorate 12 years of the Central Government.

The Chief Minister said, "On the completion of 12 years of the Central Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the programmes to be organised from World Environment Day to International Yoga Day should not remain mere formal events but should evolve into a large-scale campaign of public participation and public awareness."

Referring to World Environment Day on June 5, he said, "A minimum of five crore saplings should be planted under the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign. This initiative should become a symbol of environmental conservation, respect for motherhood, and sensitivity towards nature."

He directed officials to ensure the adequate availability of saplings, geo-tagging of plantations, and effective arrangements for their protection.

The Chief Minister further said, "To transform environmental protection into a mass movement, every Gram Panchayat and Urban Local Body should work towards becoming free of single-use plastic, with active participation from every section of society."

Highlighting the significance of the period between June 5 and June 21, he said, "This is an important opportunity to take the resolve of Viksit Bharat-Viksit Uttar Pradesh to every citizen. Under the guidance of ministers in charge and public representatives, dialogues should be organised with intellectuals, academicians, doctors, engineers, industrialists, advocates, young entrepreneurs, and startup innovators." He said discussions should focus on the positive changes witnessed in the country and the state in recent years, as well as achievements in the areas of good governance, infrastructure development, investment, employment gen-

eration, and public welfare. Suggestions and expectations from different sections of society should also be heard with seriousness.

According to the Chief Minister, such interactions would further strengthen



public participation in the mission of building Viksit Bharat and Viksit Uttar Pradesh.

He also directed that cleanliness drives be conducted as a special public campaign during this period, with officials actively par-

ticipating and encouraging society to join the effort.

The Chief Minister said, "Through public welfare camps and health fairs to be organised at the block level from June 14 to 16, eligible yet deprived beneficiaries

should be connected with government welfare schemes. Alongside this, exhibitions showcasing the unique identity, achievements, and infrastructure development of each district should also be organised." He added, "Through the Viksit

Bharat Sankalp Sammelan, meaningful discussions should be held on the schemes and achievements of both the Central and State Governments by engaging intellectuals and subject experts." He further directed that night chaupals be organised in rural areas to facilitate effective grievance redressal, review government schemes, and resolve public complaints. Designated ministers, public representatives, and senior officials should also stay overnight in villages to gain a closer understanding of local needs and challenges and ensure swift and effective solutions.

During the meeting, the Director General of the Police Recruitment and Promotion Board informed the Chief Minister that the recruitment examination for Civil Police Constable and equivalent posts would be conducted on June 8, 9, and 10 in two shifts each day. Approximately 29 lakh candidates are expected to appear for the examination. De-

tailed information regarding the secure transportation of question papers, security arrangements at examination centres, monitoring mechanisms, and other logistical preparations was presented.

The Chief Minister directed that no compromise should be made with the sanctity, fairness, and confidentiality of the recruitment process at any level.

He said, "Considering the large number of candidates, an effective traffic management plan should be prepared in accordance with local requirements so that the general public does not face unnecessary inconvenience." He instructed officials to ensure that all necessary arrangements are completed well before the commencement of the examination.

The Chief Minister emphasised that the roles of sector magistrates, static magistrates, and centre administrators are crucial and directed all officials to discharge their responsibili-

ties with utmost alertness and accountability.

He also ordered a full rehearsal of examination arrangements on June 6.

The Chief Minister said, "During the examination, some anti-social elements may attempt to spread rumours or circulate misleading and false information through social media. Such activities should be closely monitored, and the strictest action should be taken against those responsible."

Describing the examination as closely linked to the aspirations and future of lakhs of youth, he said every effort should be made to ensure that candidates do not face any unnecessary difficulties. He instructed that no candidate should be forced to stand in the sun and that all basic facilities should be available at examination centres. The Transport Department has also been directed to operate inter-district special buses at concessional fares for the convenience of candidates.

Man Dies After BEST Bus Rams Multiple Vehicles On Mumbai's Western Express Highway

Mumbai : A 50-year-old man died after a Bombay Municipal Corporation-owned BEST bus rammed into multiple vehicles on the Western Express Highway near the Pushpa Park area of Malad East in the city suburb on Thursday morning, triggering a massive traffic snarl during peak hours, officials said.

A man identified as Ramchandra Nirahu Pal (50), a driver by profession, was reportedly standing behind his vehicle on the roadside.

The impact caused the car to lurch forward and crash into another vehicle, damaging its rear-right bumper and body.

Pal sustained severe injuries in the collision. Police personnel rushed to the spot and shifted him to Shatabdi Hospital for treatment. However, doctors declared him dead before admission.

The incident occurred around 6:50 AM when BEST bus, operating on



Route 440 and attached to Wadala Depot, was returning to the depot after completing its scheduled trip, they said.

According to the reports a car, reportedly an Ola cab,

with its front and side portions extensively crushed due to the impact.

Several other vehicles were also believed to be involved in the collision, police said.

Government Cracks Down on Banned Items and Damaged Food Across Maharashtra

Mumbai: The Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration launched a massive safety drive across the state to stop the sale of banned items and low-quality food. Led by the new commissioner, Tukaram Munde, government teams inspected more than 200 businesses in just one week. During these sudden raids, officials arrested 102 people, locked up 86 shops, and took control of illegal goods worth 1.58 crore rupees.

The extensive inspections took place across major areas including Mumbai, Pune, and Nagpur to support the state's safety campaign.

The highest number of arrests and raids happened in the Konkan area, followed closely by Mumbai. The main goal of this sudden action is to ensure that all food

items sold to the public are clean, healthy, and completely safe to eat.

The enforcement machinery responsible for public health and consumer safety in Maharashtra has initiated an aggressive state-wide campaign to eliminate the distribution of prohibited substances and adulterated consumer products from local markets.

The Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration has deployed specialized tactical squads across multiple regions to conduct an unannounced, comprehensive sweep of commercial establishments, storage warehouses, and retail hubs.

This massive regulatory intervention targets supply chains that compromise public health by circulating sub-standard

food items or illicit inventory.

The administrative push represents a decisive shift toward zero tolerance for regu-

latory non-compliance, aiming to restore absolute accountability within the state's commercial food sectors.

Police Search for Woman After Newborn Baby is Left in Hospital Restroom

Mumbai: Police investigators are searching for a mystery woman who was caught on security cameras leaving Rajawadi Hospital in Ghatkopar. The search started after a visitor discovered an abandoned newborn baby boy lying on the floor inside a restroom near one of the medical wards. The visitor immediately alerted a police officer who was on night duty at the hospital.

It has been ten days since the infant was found, and the police are still working hard to find the child's mother and understand why he was left behind. Thankfully, the baby boy was found in time and is currently safe under the care of doctors at the medical facility while the official investigation continues.

The Mumbai Police have launched an intensive investigation to locate a woman who was captured on surveillance cameras exiting the Rajawadi Hospital prem-

ises in Ghatkopar under suspicious circumstances. The search operation was initiated immediately after a hospital visitor discovered an abandoned newborn baby boy left unattended on the floor of a public restroom located near one of the primary medical wards. Upon making the startling discovery, the visitor acted swiftly, exiting the facility to alert a police officer who was deployed on mandatory night security duty at the hospital complex.

The emergency responder immediately secured the infant and alerted the hospital's pediatric department to ensure the child received instant medical evaluation. Medical professionals at Rajawadi Hospital confirmed that the newborn boy was discovered just in time to prevent severe exposure or health complications, and he remains safely admitted under the continuous supervision and care of doctors. The

infant's vitals are currently stable, and the medical staff is ensuring he receives proper nutrition and nursing care while the legal and administrative processes move forward.

A full ten days have transpired since the infant was discovered abandoned, and specialized police squads are working continuously to establish the identity of the child's mother and uncover the underlying circumstances that led to the abandonment. Investigators have painstakingly reviewed hours of closed-circuit television footage from all entry and exit gates of the hospital to map the movements of the unidentified woman seen leaving the area shortly before the discovery. The police have also extended their inquiry to local maternity clinics, healthcare centers, and neighborhood informants across Ghatkopar and adjacent suburbs to cross-reference recent birth records.

City Mayor Directly Checks Monsoon Preparations and Drainage Systems

Panvel: Panvel Mayor Nitin Patil went on a personal inspection tour through local neighborhoods to check the progress of pre-monsoon cleanliness work. The mayor walked through various locations to see if the main drains were being cleared properly to stop water from building up in the streets during the upcoming rainy season.

During his visit, the mayor talked directly with families living in the area to understand their daily civic problems. He ordered the municipal engineers to clear out all heavy mud and blockages from the water channels immediately, emphasizing that low-lying streets must be protected from flooding so that residents face no difficulties during heavy downpours.

The civic administration of Panvel

has significantly amplified its operational focus on disaster management and urban resilience as the region prepares for the arrival of the annual southwest monsoon. In a proactive move to ensure the efficacy of the city's seasonal defenses, Panvel Mayor Nitin Patil spearheaded a comprehensive, firsthand inspection tour across various vulnerable neighborhoods and residential sectors. This executive field assessment was specifically aimed at monitoring the exact progress of the extensive pre-monsoon cleanliness and de-siltation works currently being executed by the Panvel Municipal Corporation. The mayoral intervention underscores the local government's intent to minimize urban disruptions and enhance the baseline safety of its citizens before heavy downpours commence.

Panvel Authorities Clean Village Drains to Stop Rainy Season Flooding

Panvel: The Panvel Municipal Corporation carried out a major drain-cleaning operation in Rohinjan village to prepare for the upcoming monsoon season.

The cleanup drive was started after local village leaders and residents continuously complained about blocked water lines and dirty pools of water gathering near homes and residential buildings.

Civic workers rushed to the area to remove trash and clear out the blocked passages, which successfully made the wastewater flow properly again. Local families expressed great relief over the quick cleanup, noting that it will save their neighborhood from heavy flooding and health risks when the heavy

rains start.

The onset of the monsoon season presents significant logistical and infrastructural challenges for developing urban and rural fringes, making the maintenance of drainage networks a critical priority for local civic bodies.

In a direct response to these seasonal demands, the Panvel Municipal Corporation has executed a comprehensive, high-priority drain-cleaning and de-siltation operation within the geographical boundaries of Rohinjan village.

This localized engineering intervention was strategically designed to restore the maximum carrying capacity of the village's primary storm-water channels and wastewater conduits.

Editorial

Inferno Deals a Severe Blow to Credibility!

When a major tragedy strikes the nation's capital, its repercussions are not confined merely to the domestic political sphere; rather, they inflict a severe blow to India's image and credibility on the global stage. The horrific fire that engulfed the 'Lemon Green' hotel and restaurant in Delhi's Malviya Nagar area on Wednesday morning claiming the lives of 21 innocent citizens who perished in the blaze is not merely an accident or an unfortunate incident; it stands as a stark testament to the negligence of the administrative machinery and the corrupt governance that permeates the system. The gravity and intensity of this tragedy are rendered even more appalling by the fact that, of the 21 citizens who lost their lives in this inferno, a staggering 18 were foreign nationals. Delhi is not merely India's capital city; it is regarded as a pivotal hub that represents the nation on the international stage and serves as a gateway welcoming guests from across the globe. When people from every corner of the world travel to the capital to experience India's culture and progress, the entire responsibility for their lives and safety rests squarely with the nation's government. In a city of such sensitivity, for foreign guests to meet such a fiery end is an utterly shameful and humiliating affair tantamount to a loss of face for the nation on the international stage. As news of this incident spread rapidly across global media outlets, India's tourism sector and its claims regarding safety standards have suffered a massive setback, resulting in immense disrepute for the country.

In the wake of this horrific tragedy, political parties have, true to form, begun engaging in mud-slinging and playing the politics of mutual recrimination. However, rising above this futile political cacophony, the most critical and pivotal question remains: Was even the slightest consideration given to the safety of the patrons and guests visiting this hotel at the time its commercial licenses were being issued? Based on the information revealed by investigative agencies and the media, it is evident that all rules and standards regarding fire safety were blatantly and openly violated at this hotel. In reality, whenever a hotel or restaurant is established, ensuring the safety of its patrons' lives constitutes the primary and legal responsibility of the establishment's operator. From a legal standpoint, granting permission to such establishments before all safety criteria have been fully met is considered an unpardonable offense. Although this hotel was officially granted permission in 2024, the Delhi Fire Service had, prior to that, explicitly refused to issue the requisite safety certification and No-Objection Certificate (NOC). Despite this, the true question one that exposes the very roots of corruption is: who granted this hotel the liberty to commence operations in defiance of the Fire Service's directives? How was such permission granted, and under whose patronage did this hotel continue to operate unhindered until now?

Delving into the root causes of this incident exposes yet another horrifying and repulsive instance of administrative malfeasance. According to the original regulations, the Lemon Green Hotel had been granted an official license to operate only six rooms; however, driven by an insatiable greed for profit, the hotel management was illegally operating a staggering 25 rooms. This clearly demonstrates that the local administration and investigative authorities turned a blind eye to this grave illegality and remained completely inert. When this hotel first commenced operations, the Aam Aadmi Party was in power in Delhi; currently, the Bharatiya Janata Party holds the reins of governance. However, in a democracy regardless of which political party is in power administration remains a continuous and uninterrupted process. Therefore, instead of shirking responsibility and wasting time trading barbs with one another, political parties must accept moral accountability for the deaths of those 21 innocent citizens. The fact that approximately three major fire incidents have occurred in Delhi within just the last five days serves as irrefutable proof of how lethargic and negligent the city's safety mechanisms have become. The lane in which the hotel building stands is extremely narrow and heavily congested.

The most shocking revelation is that this entire multi-storied hotel had only a single narrow doorway serving as both the entrance and the exit; consequently, the moment the fire broke out, the entire building effectively transformed into a death trap. Due to the narrow access routes and administrative delays, fire tenders arrived at the scene only after a significant delay by which time, the lives of innocent people had already vanished into thin air.

For a nation currently racing along the path of significant economic and strategic progress on the global stage, such incidents of negligence occurring within its capital city prove to be utterly detrimental and fatal. The current incident serves as a grim reminder of the tragic catastrophe that occurred in Delhi a few years ago, when a massive fire at a renowned cinema claimed the lives of countless citizens. What remains most astonishing is that, even after such monumental crises, the government machinery and the administration still fail to wake up to reality. These incidents serve as a harsh wake-up call a stinging reality check that exposes the malpractices and failings of the entire system for all to see. It is precisely due to the negligence, corruption, and cavalier attitude toward duty displayed by government officials that 21 individuals have had to pay the ultimate price with their lives.

The pivotal question now is whether the Central Government and other state governments across the country will, at long last, learn a lesson from this horrific episode. Although the immediate impact of this tragedy was felt in Delhi, its message serves as a resounding alarm bell for the hotel and tourism sectors in every state across the nation.

In a healthy democracy, the value of human life must always transcend any political advantage or commercial profit. As long as we fail to ensure 100% strict compliance with fire safety regulations in our public buildings, hotels, and restaurants and as long as we continue to shield corrupt officials such inhumane tragedies will inevitably persist. The fire at the Lemon Green Hotel is not merely a blaze that engulfed a single structure; it represents a moral collapse a stark exposure of the limitations inherent in our country's safety laws and their enforcement. A mere superficial inquiry into this matter will not suffice; instead, the contractor operating illegal rooms, the corrupt officials who granted approvals despite the absence of fire safety clearances, and the management that turned a blind eye to safety protocols must face rigorous legal punishment and be sent to prison. Only then can we hope to curb such tragedies in the future and ensure that every citizen of the country as well as our guests visiting from abroad can live with the assurance of a safe and secure environment.

While trumpeting the nation's development and modernity, strengthening fundamental safety mechanisms must be the true formula for a prosperous India this is the ultimate truth that has emerged from the anguished cries of the innocent victims in Delhi. It is not sufficient to simply shift the entire responsibility for this tragedy onto the hotel management. Along with those who violated the regulations, the officials who provided them protection must also face severe punishment. Safeguarding the life of every citizen is the paramount responsibility of any government.

Germany Proposes Expanded Research Exchange and Dual-Degree Partnerships with India

India and Germany today explored a future-oriented partnership in quantum communication, photonics, quantum satellite communication, space technologies and deep-tech innovation when Mario Voigt, Minister-President of the Free State of Thuringia,



Germany, currently on India visit, called on Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, and Minister of State for PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh. The meeting brought together representatives from government, research institutions and industry from both sides to identify pathways for connecting innovation ecosystems and accelerating collaboration in frontier technologies.

The meeting was attended by Rajesh S. Gokhale, Secretary, Department of Science & Technology, Dr N. Kalaiselvi, Secretary, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and Director General, CSIR, along with senior officials from the Department of Science & Technology, Department of Space, DRDO and other scientific institutions. The German delegation was led by Mario Voigt and included Christiane Kilian, Member of the Executive Board, Foundation for Technology, Innovation and Research Thuringia, besides representatives from government, research organisations, industry and technology institutions.

Welcoming the delega-

tion, Dr Jitendra Singh said India and Germany share a strong partnership rooted in science, technology, innovation and people-to-people ties. Recalling the celebration of 50 years of India-Germany Science and Technology Cooperation in 2024, he said scientific collabora-

tion has emerged as one of the strongest pillars of bilateral engagement and continues to create new opportunities in frontier areas of research, innovation and industrial development.

Recognising Thuringia's emergence as a major European hub for photonics, optics, quantum technologies and advanced manufacturing, both sides explored opportunities for long-term institutional partnerships in frontier technologies. The discussions focused on leveraging the complementary strengths of India and Germany and promoting deeper engagement among governments, scientific institutions, startups and industry to accelerate the translation of research into globally competitive technologies, products and innovation-driven enterprises.

Dr Jitendra Singh highlighted the major initiatives undertaken under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to strengthen India's research and innovation ecosystem. Referring to the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) and other measures aimed at promoting industry-linked research and innovation, he said India is increasingly creating platforms that connect aca-

demia, research institutions, startups and industry, enabling scientific knowledge to be translated into practical solutions and economic value.

The Minister said that India today hosts the world's third-largest startup ecosystem and offers significant

opportunities for international collaboration across biotechnology, healthcare, water technologies, artificial intelligence, clean energy, semiconductors, advanced manufacturing and space technologies. He said India's innovation landscape is increasingly driven by collaboration between public institutions, industry and entrepreneurs, creating new opportunities for global technology partnerships.

A major focus of the meeting was cooperation in quantum technologies and photonics, areas identified by both sides as critical to future technological competitiveness. Particular attention was given to opportunities in quantum communication, quantum satellite communication, optical ground stations, quantum networks and advanced photonics technologies, where India and Thuringia possess complementary strengths and capabilities.

The German side shared details of ongoing European initiatives relating to quantum communication infrastructure and optical communication systems, including developments under the EuroOGS network, which seeks to advance standardisation and interop-

erability in optical ground station technologies. Discussions also covered possibilities for scientific engagement, exchange of expertise and future collaboration involving research institutions, technology organisations and innovation ecosystems from both sides.

The discussions reflected the growing strategic importance being attached globally to quantum technologies and the increasing need for international collaboration in the field. Dr Jitendra Singh shared the progress achieved under India's National Quantum Mission, including advances in secure quantum communication and related technologies. Both sides exchanged perspectives on emerging developments in quantum computing, quantum communication and associated infrastructure and recognised the potential for deeper cooperation in research, standards development, talent exchange and technology partnerships.

Dr Jitendra Singh also highlighted India's expanding portfolio of mission-mode programmes in frontier technologies, including the National Quantum Mis-



sion, IndiaAI Mission, National Green Hydrogen Mission and biotechnology initiatives. He said these programmes are creating new opportunities for collaborative research, innovation-led growth and technology partnerships.

In the context of future technology partnerships, discussions also touched upon opportunities for mission-oriented collaboration in photonics and allied fron-

tier technologies, drawing upon the complementary strengths of India and Germany in optics, photonics, quantum technologies and innovation-driven manufacturing.

The meeting also deliberated on strengthening cooperation in the space sector, building upon the longstanding partnership between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the German Aerospace Centre (DLR). Dr Jitendra Singh highlighted India's growing space capabilities, recent policy reforms encouraging private participation and international collaboration, and the increasing contribution of startups to the country's expanding space economy.

The Minister noted that India has successfully launched eleven German satellites through Indian launch vehicles and reiterated India's commitment to expanding international cooperation in space research, technology development and commercial applications. The two sides discussed potential collaboration in satellite communications, optical communications, human

and private enterprises. The discussions emphasised the importance of translating research outcomes into deployable technologies, scalable products and globally competitive deep-tech enterprises.

Dr Jitendra Singh said India's scientific progress is increasingly being driven by integrated partnerships involving academia, research laboratories, startups and industry. He added that India welcomes collaborations that facilitate the exchange of researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs and doctoral scholars while creating pathways for joint technology development, industrial innovation and commercialisation.

The Minister also highlighted the contribution of the Indo-German Science and Technology Centre (IG-STC) and other bilateral mechanisms that have supported industry-oriented research projects, innovation partnerships and researcher exchange programmes over the years. He said the next phase of India-Germany scientific cooperation offers significant opportunities in quantum technologies, photonics, artificial intelligence,

advanced manufacturing, space technologies and deep-tech entrepreneurship.

The two sides expressed confidence that closer engagement among governments, scientific institutions, industries and startups would further strengthen the India-Germany strategic partnership and create new opportunities for innovation-led growth, technological advancement and solutions to global challenges.

Cabinet approves Scheme for support to NCRPB for replacement of old trucks and buses in Delhi-NCR area

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved a landmark two-year scheme aimed at reducing air pollution in the Delhi-NCR region and promoting cleaner mobility. The scheme will be funded through the National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB) under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and implemented by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG). It will be implemented in collaboration with the participating States and Union Territories of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

With a total financial outlay of Rs.9,585 crore, including Rs.5,041 crore from the Central Government and an estimated Rs.1,601 crore in tax concessions from the participating States, the

scheme seeks to incentivize owners of trucks and buses registered in the Delhi-NCR region that comply with BS-IV or earlier emission norms to replace them with BS-VI or stricter emission-compliant vehicles, or electric vehicles (EVs). By accelerating the transition to cleaner transport technologies, the scheme is expected to significantly reduce vehicular emissions and contribute to improved air quality across the Delhi-NCR region.

Air pollution in the Delhi-NCR remains a severe public health challenge, particularly during winter months. As per the report on "Source Apportionment of Particulate Matter (PM 2.5 and PM 10) in the NCR" prepared by the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), published in August 2018, the transport sector contrib-

utes 14% of PM 2.5, 40% of Carbon Monoxide (CO), and 63% of Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) emissions in the Delhi-NCR. Within the transport sector, trucks and buses account for 36% of PM 2.5 emissions with only 3% of the total fleet. It is estimated that a single Pre-BS heavy-duty vehicle emits as much as 14 BS-VI compliant vehicles. Even a BS-IV vehicle emits 2.7 times more than a BS-VI counterpart. Hence, the newer fleet is expected to reduce the vehicular pollution substantially. The scheme will benefit approximately 2.07 lakh (1.91 lakh trucks and 16,329 buses) owners in Delhi-NCR (comprising Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh). For BS-III or older vehicles, scrapping at Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities is mandatory, while BS-IV vehicles may either be scrapped or sold outside NCR in non-NCAP cities/

towns. Owners must then purchase and register a BS-VI or stricter norms compliant or electric vehicle within NCR. However, in Delhi, Light Goods Vehicles purchased under the scheme must be electric, while buses must be BS-VI CNG or electric only. Government vehicles are excluded from the scheme. The Centre will provide 5% interest subvention on loans for five years, monthly fuel vouchers worth up to Rs.4,800 depending on vehicle category, and lump-sum benefits for EV purchases or Certificate of Deposit trading. State governments will waive registration fees and grant up to 100% motor vehicle tax concessions for new vehicles and 50% for used vehicles for 10 years. State Government will also waive of pending liabilities on the old vehicles participating in the scheme. Participating Auto OEMs will offer 8% discounts on

ex-showroom prices. Implementation will be fully digital through an integrated portal, which will enable real-time eligibility checks, automated interest subvention claims, monthly fuel voucher credits, and monitoring of pollution reduction outcomes. The benefits by central government will continue for 5 years from the date of registration of the new vehicle, ensuring sustained impact beyond the two-year enrolment window. The scheme will be monitored by an Empowered Committee, chaired by Cabinet Secretary with CEO, Niti Ayog, Secretaries of MoHUA, MoRTH & H, MoPNG, DFS, Chief Secretaries of states in Delhi NCR as members, and Member Secretary of NCRPB being the member convenor. At the district level, District Collectors/ District Magistrates will be implementing and monitoring the scheme.

Youth Engagement Across 100 Border Villages

The Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, through its flagship platform Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat), has launched the first phase of the Viksit Vibrant Village Program (VVVP) 2026, a unique youth-led initiative designed to deepen grassroots engagement, strengthen national integration, and promote sustainable development in India's border regions. The programme seeks to connect young citizens with frontier communities while fostering a sense of responsibility and participation in nation-building.

The Viksit Vibrant Village Program 2026 is being implemented in two phases and aims to create meaningful interactions between youth volunteers and residents of strategically important border villages. By facilitating direct exposure to life in remote frontier areas, the initiative seeks to bridge the gap between urban and rural India while highlighting the significance of border communities in the nation's development journey.

A total of 500 MY Bharat volunteers have been selected to participate in the programme

following a nationwide online quiz competition that attracted more than three lakh participants from across the country. The overwhelming response reflects the growing enthusiasm among India's youth to contribute actively to national development and social transformation.

The selected volunteers represent all States and Union Territories, ensuring that the programme embodies the spirit of unity in diversity. Their participation brings together young people from different cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds, creating opportunities for mutual learning and understanding while strengthening the fabric of national integration. Under Phase-I of the initiative, 250 volunteers have been deployed across 43 identified border villages located in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. These volunteers will spend seven days immersed in village life, engaging with local communities and gaining firsthand insights into the realities and challenges faced by residents living in remote frontier areas. The second phase of the programme, scheduled to commence later

this month, will involve the remaining 250 volunteers who will be deployed across 50 additional border villages. Through this two-phase approach, the government aims to ensure wider geographical coverage and maximize the impact of youth participation in border-area development. One of the defining features of the programme is its immersive residential format. Volunteers will stay in the villages and closely interact with local residents, Panchayati Raj Institutions, district officials, and security personnel. This direct engagement is expected to help participants better understand the socio-economic conditions, cultural traditions, and developmental aspirations of border communities. The initiative also offers young participants an opportunity to appreciate the strategic importance of India's frontier regions. Through interactions with security agencies and local administrations, volunteers will gain a deeper understanding of the role border villages play in maintaining national security, preserving cultural heritage, and supporting economic growth in remote areas. The seven-day im-

ersion programme has been carefully designed around several thematic areas, including border awareness, cultural exchange, community living, governance, socio-economic assessment, village development planning, volunteerism, and national integration. These themes aim to provide a holistic learning experience while encouraging youth to become active contributors to community development. As part of their field activities, volunteers will conduct household surveys to gather information about local conditions and developmental needs. The data collected during these surveys is expected to contribute to a better understanding of village-level challenges and opportunities, helping stakeholders formulate more effective development strategies. Participants will also take part in Gram Sabha meetings and engage with local governance structures. Such interactions will provide valuable insights into democratic decision-making processes at the grassroots level and enable volunteers to appreciate the role of community participation in local development planning.

Dilip Walse-Patil dismisses rumours regarding his meeting with Sharad Pawar

Mumbai : Senior Nationalist Congress Party (AP) leader and former minister Dilip Walse-Patil today tried to put to rest widespread speculations surrounding his meeting with veteran leader Sharad Pawar, clarifying that the meeting was confined strictly to agricultural and institutional matters.

Speaking to media at the party's state office, he emphasized that their discussions focused exclusively on the sugar industry, the concerns of onion farmers and the administration of the Rayat Shikshan Sanstha.

Walse-Patil explained that the meeting was professional, stemming from their shared leadership roles in several state institutions.

"Sharad Pawar is the Chairman of the Vasantdada Sugar Institute, and I



serve as its Vice-Chairman. There were specific institutional issues that required discussion, for which I had sought an appointment," he explained while providing context to the meeting.

He further noted that as both leaders are long-standing stakeholders in the Rayat Shikshan Sanstha,

they deliberated on necessary updates concerning the organization. Walse-Patil highlighted that Sharad Pawar's decades of leadership on farmers' issues made him an essential voice, particularly regarding the current volatility in onion prices and the preparations for the upcoming sugarcane crushing season.

President, to New Delhi, when union Cooperation Minister Amit Shah assured a resolution on the issues concerning farmers and stakeholders within 10 days.

"We expect a decision by June 10, and the Centre has already initiated swift action," Walse-Patil informed. The veteran leader also reminisced about the collaborative past, noting that he and the late Ajit Pawar often collectively navigated the complexities of the cooperative movement and agricultural policy. "I simply asked Sharad Pawar if he wished to offer any further suggestions on these matters. That was the extent of our conversation. No other subject was discussed," Walse-Patil clarified, firmly dismissing rumours of any political realignment.

Mumbai Metro Train Molestation Case: Accused Arrested from Express Train

Mumbai: The accused individual at the center of this heinous crime has been formally identified by investigators as Doni Sarkar, a 44-year-old male. Following the commission of the alleged offense, Sarkar made a desperate attempt to flee the jurisdiction of the Maharashtra police to escape the immediate legal consequences of his actions. He immediately left the city, hoping to blend in with the massive crowds of transit passengers traveling across state lines and assume a new anonymity. Sarkar's strategy relied on putting as much distance between himself and Mumbai as possible before the police could establish his identity. He managed to book passage on an outstation train, intending to use the vast network of the Indian Railways to cross multiple state borders in a short period. His ultimate destination was his native region, where he believed he could comfortably



hide from urban law enforcement tracking. However, his run from the law was cut short due to the seamless inter-state coordination displayed by the Indian police networks. A senior officer attached to the Kandivali police station revealed that Sarkar was tracked down and apprehended from the Gitanjali Express train. This particular long-distance service connects western India directly to the eastern region, heading toward Howrah in West Bengal. The dramatic

arrest was executed precisely when the locomotive made a scheduled transit halt at the busy Raipur Junction railway station, located in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh. Alerted by the Mumbai police, local railway authorities and security personnel boarded the train to isolate the suspect. This successful operation proved that geographic boundaries would not hinder the police's pursuit of individuals accused of grave offenses against minors.

Angel One appoints Ajit Narayanan as Chief Technology Officer

Mumbai: Angel One Limited has announced the appointment of Ajit Narayanan as its new Chief Technology Officer (CTO), strengthening the company's technology leadership as it accelerates investments in artificial intelligence, platform scalability, and digital innovation.

In his new role, Narayanan will lead the company's engineering function and oversee the development of technology infrastructure that supports Angel One's growing customer base. His responsibilities will include shaping platform architecture, improving performance and scalability, and driving faster execution across engineering teams.

The appointment comes

at a time when financial services companies are increasingly leveraging artificial intelligence, automation, and advanced digital platforms to enhance customer experience and operational efficiency. Angel One is positioning itself to capitalize on these technological shifts through strategic leadership and infrastructure investments.

According to the company, Narayanan will focus on strengthening Angel One's core technology foundations while integrating AI-driven intelligence into critical systems. He will also be responsible for building resilient and high-performance platforms capable of supporting future growth and innovation. The company believes that a strong technology

backbone will be crucial in delivering seamless financial services to a rapidly expanding user base. As digital adoption continues to rise across India, scalable and reliable systems have become a key competitive differentiator in the fintech and brokerage sectors.

Commenting on the appointment, Ambarish Kenghe said the financial services industry is entering a transformative phase where technology and artificial intelligence are redefining how products and services are delivered to consumers.

He noted that Angel One is investing proactively in systems, capabilities, and innovation to remain ahead of emerging trends and serve the evolving needs of Indian investors.

BJP hits out at Sanjay Raut, says Legislative Council Polls belong to grassroots workers

Mumbai : BJP Maharashtra chief spokesperson Navnath Ban on Thursday hit out at Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut, asserting that Legislative Council elections are fought and won by dedicated grassroots workers, not by leaders who remain confined to their homes.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP office, Ban dismissed Raut's claim that Legislative Council elections are no longer driven by party workers. He said that if the Shiv Sena (UBT) no longer has an active cadre base, it cannot claim that such elections have ceased to be worker-centric.

He accused the opposition of abandoning grassroots workers during mu-

nicipal and district council elections, while crediting the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance for nurturing and empowering its cadre.

Ban also took aim at Raut's remarks on political "troubleshooters", saying the opposition faction had become politically irrelevant and therefore had little reason to fear either political crises or those who resolve them. He claimed that the UBT camp had steadily lost its influence across Maharashtra.

The BJP leader further accused former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Raut of repeatedly giving election tickets to industrialists, citing past nominations to the Legislative Council and the Rajya Sabha. He



said Maharashtra had witnessed how business figures were accommodated by the Shiv Sena (UBT) leadership. Looking ahead to national politics, Ban expressed confidence that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would lead the BJP into the 2029 Lok Sabha elections and secure

another term in office. He also speculated that Raut could eventually seek entry into the Congress party in pursuit of a Rajya Sabha berth, claiming that opportunities within the UBT camp may be limited.

Commenting on the ongoing protest led by Yugen-

dra Pawar in Baramati, Ban said the agitation was less about inflation and more about an internal contest for political succession between Yugendra Pawar and Rohit Pawar.

According to him, the dispute reflects a struggle over who will emerge as the political heir within the Pawar family.

Ban also addressed recent political developments in West Bengal, rejecting allegations that the BJP engineered defections from the camp of Mamata Banerjee. He claimed that legislators chose to distance themselves from her leadership independently and asserted that political conditions in the state were changing as a result.

NEET aspirant dies by suicide in Nagpur ahead of re-exam; family blames paper leak controversy

Nagpur: The family of a 20-year-old NEET aspirant who died by suicide in Nagpur nearly two weeks ago has alleged that the controversy surrounding the NEET examination, including reports of a paper leak and the subsequent decision to conduct a re-examination, pushed the young student into severe emotional distress and ultimately led her to take the extreme step.

The allegation is based on a handwritten suicide note that the family claims was discovered after her death. According to relatives, the note was found inside one of her books after the family returned to their native village in Mauganj district of Madhya Pradesh

following her last rites.

The student had been living in Nagpur with her family while preparing for the highly competitive National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), the entrance examination for admission to medical courses across India.

Her father, who works as a cook in Nagpur, said the family had invested significant resources and effort into supporting her dream of becoming a doctor. According to him, she was academically bright and deeply committed to her studies.

Family members said the note reflected her anxiety over the possibility of having to appear for the examination again. They claimed

she had been confident about her performance in the original test and feared that a re-examination could affect her chances of securing a good score.

According to the family, the note stated: "I had high hopes of scoring good marks in the NEET exam, but now there is no guarantee that I will perform just as well if I have to take the paper again. I'm sorry, Mom and Dad. I've ruined everything."

Relatives alleged that the uncertainty created by the examination controversy had a profound impact on her mental state. They said she became increasingly withdrawn and distressed after reports regarding the paper leak and cancellation

emerged.

The family claimed that while they noticed she was upset by the developments, they did not initially realize the extent of the emotional burden she was carrying. According to them, her deteriorating mental condition became apparent only after her death.

Her father said his daughter had always dreamed of pursuing a career in medicine and had worked tirelessly toward that goal. Despite the family's modest financial circumstances, he said they had taken substantial loans to support her education and coaching. "My daughter was brilliant in studies and always dreamt of becoming a doctor.

Maha regional panel recommends withdrawal of 733 cases against Maratha quota agitators

Kolhapur: A regional committee appointed by the Maharashtra government has recommended the withdrawal of 733 cases out of a total of 961 criminal cases registered against participants in the Maratha reservation agitations, potentially providing significant relief to hundreds of protesters across the state.

The recommendation follows a detailed review of cases filed during various phases of the Maratha quota movement, which witnessed widespread protests demanding reservation for the Maratha community in education and government employment.

According to official figures, police had registered 961 cases against protesters during the course of the agitation. Of these, seven cases remain under investigation, while chargesheets have already been filed before courts in 857 cases. After examining the records, the regional committee concluded that

733 of the 961 cases could be considered for withdrawal. The recommendation has now been forwarded to the government for further action.

The development assumes significance as the state Home Department has already begun collecting detailed information regarding the cases from police authorities across Maharashtra. On Monday, the department sought reports from all Superintendents of Police and Police Commissioners regarding the status of the registered cases.

Officials believe the move indicates that the government is actively considering the committee's recommendations and may take a decision on the matter in the near future.

Among the cases under review are 40 registered in Kolhapur district. Authorities said chargesheets have already been filed in 37 of those cases, while the remaining matters are at various stages of legal proceedings.

The demand for withdrawal of cases has been a longstanding issue for the Maratha community, particularly because many of the accused are young people whose educational and employment prospects could be affected by pending criminal cases. Community leaders have repeatedly argued that participation in a social movement should not permanently damage the careers of young protesters. They have urged the government to adopt a sympathetic approach toward those involved in the agitation. The issue gained renewed prominence during the recent protest led by Manoj Jarange-Patil. While concluding his latest agitation, Jarange-Patil made the withdrawal of cases against protesters one of his key conditions. His demand was seen as a major factor behind the government's decision to expedite the review process and seek updated information from police departments throughout the state.

Independent candidates allege 'poll fixing' by two competing panels in Marathi film body

Pune: With elections to the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Chitrapat Mahamandal scheduled for June 7, independent candidate Sharad Lonkar has accused the two principal panels in the contest of being effectively aligned despite publicly presenting themselves as rivals.

Addressing a press conference on Thursday, Lonkar alleged that the apparent competition between the two major groups was merely a façade and that both sides were working in coordination behind the scenes. He claimed that the election lacked genuine political contestation and instead reflected an arrangement between entrenched interests within the organization.

Lonkar argued that leaders who have been involved in the administration of the Mahamandal over the last decade had failed to address several pressing concerns affecting the Marathi film industry. According to him, organizational politics and internal rivalries received greater attention than the welfare of artists, techni-

cians, and other stakeholders.

The independent candidate stated that eight candidates have joined hands to form a common front aimed at challenging the dominance of established factions. He said the collective seeks to promote transparency, accountability, and welfare-oriented governance within the organization.

Several independent candidates and supporters attended the press conference, including director Amol Bhawe, producer Mahadev Shirokar, Mansing Kadam, and art director Ulhas Landge. Actress-producer Bhagyashree Desai also extended support to the independent group.

The panel further claimed that it had received backing from actress Smita Gondkar, folk artist Shahir Sambhaji Bhagat, and several other members of the Marathi entertainment fraternity.

Lonkar alleged that evidence of cooperation between the rival panels could be seen in the manner some

candidates had reportedly been elected unopposed with support from competing groups. He described the situation as one of "collusion" rather than genuine electoral competition.

He also challenged claims that the election process was free from political influence. According to Lonkar, the connections between certain candidates and political leaders are widely known within industry circles, and political interference continues to affect the functioning of the Mahamandal.

Contesting from the Distribution and Publicity category, Lonkar criticized what he described as exploitative practices in the fields of film publicity and distribution. He maintained that he had spent four decades serving the industry through publicity-related work without seeking personal benefits.

Calling for a change in leadership, Lonkar urged members of the organization to reject factional politics and support candidates who, in his view, possess integrity

and a genuine commitment to the welfare of the industry. He expressed confidence that higher voter participation from Pune, Mumbai, and other parts of Maharashtra could lead to meaningful reform.

Director Amol Bhawe also voiced criticism of the Mahamandal's functioning over the past decade. He alleged that the concerns of artists, technicians, and ordinary members had been overlooked while organizational priorities shifted elsewhere. Bhawe specifically referred to land reportedly donated by the late veteran actor Vikram Gokhale for the purpose of providing housing for needy artists and establishing an old-age home. According to him, the land has not been utilized for the objectives originally envisioned.

He further claimed that while resources were spent on office infrastructure and administrative facilities, welfare initiatives intended to benefit artists and industry workers remained largely neglected.

Producer Mahadev Shirokar raised questions regarding amendments to the organization's constitution, financial management practices, and decisions related to property creation. He alleged that members were not adequately informed about important developments affecting the institution.

Shirokar also expressed concern about expenditure on office premises, arguing that alternatives may have been available through assistance from the Pune Municipal Corporation at a significantly lower cost.

Highlighting issues related to the electoral process, Bhagyashree Desai alleged irregularities in the voters' list. She claimed that nearly 40,000 potential voters had been deprived of their voting rights and questioned the accuracy of the electoral rolls.

According to Desai, names of deceased members allegedly remained on the voters' list, while individuals with little or no connection to the Marathi film industry had reportedly been included.

Punit Balan takes charge as acting President of Maharashtra Kabaddi Body

Pune: Young entrepreneur and Chairman of the Punit Balan Group, Punit Balan, has been appointed as the acting President of the Amateur Kabaddi Foundation of Maharashtra.

The appointment was unanimously approved during a special executive meeting of the foundation.

The annual meeting of the Amateur Kabaddi Foundation of Maharashtra was held in Alandi, Pune district, under the chairmanship of Sapna Waghmode and in the presence of Bharati Jagtap. Office-bearers of the organization and distinguished personalities from the sports fraternity attended the meeting.

During the session, detailed discussions were held regarding the future roadmap of the organization. Several measures were proposed to make the foundation more efficient, dynamic, and transparent. Considering his experience, leadership skills, and contribution to sports development, Punit Balan was entrusted with the responsibility of Acting President, said release today.



Balan has been actively involved in promoting sports across Maharashtra through various tournaments, leagues, and youth-focused initiatives. His extensive experience in sports management is expected to strengthen the foundation's efforts in developing and promoting kabaddi at both state and national levels. Members of the executive body expressed confidence that under Balan's leadership, the sport of kabaddi in Maharashtra would receive a more organized, transparent, and professional direction. Expectations were also raised regarding the adoption of modern technology,

enhanced opportunities for players, better tournament management, and increased credibility of the organization. The resolution proposing Balan's appointment was moved by Dnyanesh Kale from Satara and seconded by Gokul Tandale from Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar. The meeting also resolved that the foundation would play a more active role in organizing state and national-level kabaddi tournaments in the future. "I sincerely thank all office-bearers and members of the Amateur Kabaddi Foundation of Maharashtra for placing their trust in me by appointing me as Acting President.

NFDC-NFAI restores eight iconic films of Ritwik Ghatak in 4K format for global audiences

Mumbai: In a major milestone for film preservation, the National Film Development Corporation-National Film Archive of India (NFDC-NFAI) has completed the restoration of the feature films of celebrated filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak in pristine 4K quality, ensuring that some of Indian cinema's most influential works can be experienced by future generations in their finest form.

To commemorate the birth centenary of Ghatak, NFDC-NFAI, in partnership with the British Film Institute (BFI), is organizing a landmark exhibition at the prestigious BFI Southbank in London, starting in June 2026. This comprehensive exhibition will provide an international audience with the opportunity to experience his revolutionary storytelling style and profound aesthetic vision in its best, purest visual form.

The project to restore Ritwik Ghatak's films is one of the most commendable works of the National Film Heritage.

Expressing his views on the institutional significance of this international collaboration, Prakash Magdum, Managing Director, National Film Heritage Council (NFHC), said that India has one of the world's most vibrant cinematic heritages, and the NFDC-NFAI, under the National Film Heritage Council (NFHM), is entrusted with the responsibility of restoring and preserving these heritages to the highest global standards.



He said that on the occasion of Ritwik Ghatak's birth centenary, we are delighted to collaborate with the BFI for this retrospective exhibition in London. It provides an excellent platform for the global film community to experience Ritwik Ghatak's genius and witness firsthand the excellence of India's archival achievements.

Achieved under the National Film Heritage Mission (NFHM), this extensive archival achievement is a flagship initiative of the MIB, dedicated to preserving the nation's audiovisual heritage. The meticulous 4K restoration utilised various original film elements preserved over decades by the NFDC-NFAI and the in-

valuable resources of the West Bengal State Film Archives.

To ensure visual authenticity and strict adherence to the legendary director's original cinematic vision, the color grading process was directly supervised by National Award-winning Indian cinematographer Avik Mukhopadhyay.

Praising the NFHM restoration project, he expressed his genuine pride and excitement in being a part of restoring Ritwik Ghatak's films, as he is considered one of the most original filmmakers both nationally and internationally. As a cinematographer, it provided him with the opportunity to witness Ritwik Ghatak's beautiful art up close. He expressed his profound

gratitude to the entire team for this tireless yet remarkable effort.

The London Retrospective will provide an opportunity to engage with Ritwik Ghatak's creative work spanning multiple periods of his illustrious career. The extensive program includes newly restored 4K presentations of eight of his seminal narrative features, including "Nagarik", "Ajantrik", "Bari Theke", "Meghe Dhaka Tara", "Komal Gandhar", "Subarnarekha", "Titas Ekti Nadir Naam" and "Jukti Takko Aar Gappo".

Complementing these masterpieces, the showcase will also feature his historically significant small-format works, documentaries, and rare unfinished works, including Bihar Ke Scenic Sthal, Musafir, Dar, Rendezvous, Nagrik Sanrakshan, Kal Ke Vaigyanik, Ye Kyun, My Lenin, Puriyay Chhau, Darbar Gati Padma, Hirer Prajapati, Chinnamul, Ramkinkar Baij, Raunjer Golam, and Baglar Bang Darshan.

This partnership between NFDC-NFAI and the BFI reinforces India's continued commitment to restoring its cinematic heritage to world-class standards. By supporting such comprehensive restoration and promotion initiatives under the National Film Heritage Mission, the Government of India ensures that these masterpieces continue to inspire global audiences for decades to come, transcending geographical boundaries, a statement said.

"Thukra Ke Mera Pyaar" Season 2 trailer promises high-voltage political drama

Mumbai: The trailer of Thukra Ke Mera Pyaar has been unveiled, offering viewers a glimpse into a gripping new chapter filled with political intrigue, power struggles, revenge, and unresolved emotions. The much-awaited second season is set to premiere on June 19 on JioHotstar.

Building on the success of its debut season, the new installment promises a larger and more intense narrative, blending personal conflicts with a broader political backdrop. The story returns to the fictional town of Sitaarpur, where ambition, loyalty, betrayal, and love continue to shape the lives of its central characters.

Actor Dhaval Thakur reprises his role as Kuldeep Kumar, a character still haunted by the consequences of his past decisions. As the new season unfolds, Kuldeep finds himself navigating an increasingly complex political landscape while struggling with guilt, obsession, and unresolved emotional wounds.

According to the makers, Kuldeep's journey in Season 2 is marked by difficult choices and mounting pressures. His personal conflicts become deeply intertwined



with political developments, forcing him to confront both his past and his future.

Sanchita Basu also returns as Shanvika Chauhan, whose character undergoes significant growth in the upcoming season. Shanvika is portrayed as stronger, more determined, and increasingly influential as she navigates the corridors of power while facing personal and political challenges.

The makers suggest that Shanvika's evolution will be one of the central themes of the season. As she rises in influence, she is compelled to balance her ambitions with complicated relationships and emotional dilemmas that continue to shape her decisions.

The trailer indicates that the story delves deeper into the fictional world of Sitaarpur, where competing ambi-

tions and hidden agendas create an atmosphere of constant tension. Political rivalries and personal vendettas appear set to drive much of the narrative.

Viewers can expect intense confrontations as Kuldeep and Shanvika find themselves on opposing sides of a high-stakes struggle. Their complicated relationship remains at the heart of the story, even as external forces push them further apart.

Reflecting on her character's journey, Sanchita Basu said Shanvika enters a much more layered and unpredictable phase in the second season.

She explained that the character has become more guarded and thoughtful while questioning the meaning of love in a world shaped by power and betrayal.

Varun Dhawan brings comedy to life: Pooja Hegde

Mumbai: Actress Pooja Hegde has showed praise on her co-star Varun Dhawan, describing him as an entertainer who brings unmatched energy, spontaneity, and natural charm to every scene. The two actors will be seen sharing screen space for the first time in the upcoming comedy entertainer Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai, directed by David Dhawan.

Speaking about her experience of working with Varun Dhawan, Hegde said the actor's enthusiasm and vibrant personality had a noticeable impact on the atmosphere on set. According to her, his energy remained consistently high throughout the filming process, helping maintain a lively and positive environment for the entire cast and crew.

Hegde revealed that Dhawan rarely stayed idle between takes and was constantly engaged in entertaining those around him. Whether it was dancing, cracking jokes, experimenting with scenes, or trying out different approaches to a performance, he was always looking for ways to keep the creative momentum going.

She noted that his infectious enthusiasm extended beyond his own performance and contributed significantly to the overall mood on set. His ability to keep everyone energized and involved created a collaborative atmosphere that benefited the entire production.

According to the actress, one of Dhawan's greatest strengths is his ability to make scenes feel natural and spontaneous rather than overly rehearsed. She said this quality is particularly

valuable in comedy, a genre where performances can sometimes appear forced or artificial if not executed with the right balance of timing and authenticity.

Hegde explained that many of the funniest moments in the film emerged organically through improvisation rather than strict adherence to the script. She credited Dhawan's willingness to experiment and think on his feet for creating several memorable scenes that ultimately became highlights of the production.

She said the actor frequently introduced fresh ideas during rehearsals and filming, which often led to unexpected and entertaining outcomes. This approach encouraged fellow actors to remain alert and responsive, resulting in more dynamic and engaging performances.

The actress added that the relaxed atmosphere on set made it easier for the cast to explore different interpretations of scenes. Whether during dance rehearsals or comic sequences, there was a sense of openness that allowed creativity to flourish.



Shefali Shah and Fardeen Khan join hands for 'Koke'

Mumbai: After the acclaimed success of the Emmy Award-winning crime series Delhi Crime, actress Shefali Shah is set to headline a new streaming project, teaming up with Fardeen Khan for the first time in the upcoming period drama series Koke.

The series marks a significant collaboration between the two actors and is expected to be one of Netflix India's notable original productions in the coming years. While the makers have kept key details under wraps, the project has already generated interest due to its cast and genre.

For Fardeen Khan, Koke represents his second major for-

ay into the period-drama space and another collaboration with Netflix following his appearance in Heeramandi, directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. His performance in the lavish period saga marked an important chapter in his acting comeback. According to reports, the storyline and character details of Koke are being kept strictly confidential.

However, industry sources suggest that the project is being envisioned as a large-scale ensemble drama with a rich historical backdrop and multiple interconnected narratives.

The series is expected to feature a diverse cast drawn from both the film and television industries. The ensemble format is likely to allow the creators to explore multiple storylines and character arcs within a larger historical setting. Production on the show is currently underway, with filming progressing at various locations. The makers are reportedly aiming to create an expansive visual experience that matches the scale and ambition associated with premium streaming productions. Koke is slated to premiere on Netflix in early 2027. Although an exact release date has not yet been announced,

the project is already being viewed as one of the platform's major upcoming Indian originals. The series is being directed by Nupur Asthana, who is widely known for her work on the popular comedy-drama series Four More Shots Please!. Asthana has earned recognition for creating character-driven narratives that resonate with modern audiences. Interestingly, reports suggest that Asthana stepped away from the second season of The Royals, starring Ishaan Khatter, in order to focus on directing Koke. The move underscores the scale and importance of the new project. The director's transition from contemporary comedy-drama to a period ensemble series is expected to bring a fresh perspective to the genre. Industry observers are keen to see how she adapts her storytelling style to a historical setting. For Shefali Shah, the project adds another prestigious title to an already impressive body of work. The actress has earned widespread acclaim for her performances across film and streaming platforms, particularly for her portrayal of senior police officer Vartika Chaturvedi in Delhi Crime.

Ali Fazal reveals he and wife Richa Chadha have always prioritised compelling characters

Mumbai: Actor Ali Fazal has opened up about the striking similarity he shares with wife and fellow actor Richa Chadha, saying that both of them have always prioritised compelling characters over conventional career paths or screen images.

Both Fazal and Chadha have played many memorable characters in their respective careers, which have been loved by the audience. Be it Chadha's role of Bholi Punjaban in the "Fukrey" franchise or Fazal's Guddu Pandit in "Mirzapur," both actors have always been drawn to characters that create a dis-



tinct identity.

Talking about this, Fazal said, "Richa and I have always been actors who look

for good roles first. It has never been important for us to fit into a particular image or follow the traditional

path. We have always been looking for roles that challenge us and resonate with the audience. I think we both consider ourselves very lucky in this regard."

The 39-year-old actor elaborated, "When you look at characters like Bholi Punjaban from Fukrey or Guddu Pandit from Mirzapur, you feel that they are not just limited to the screen, but have become a part of pop culture. What can be a greater joy for an actor than to have the audience embrace your character so deeply?"

He added, "We both understand each other very well about our work and the choices we make. We re-

spect the process and uncertainties of this profession. Sometimes you have to take risks, sometimes you have to be patient, but at the end of the day, the most important thing is to tell an honest story."

He said, "I think we both have been fortunate to have been a part of stories and characters that people still remember, repeat their dialogues, and watch again and again.

Every artiste wants not just success, but an identity that endures over time. If we can continue to be a part of stories that leave a deep impact on people, that is our goal."

Ram Charan suffered real injuries for 'Peddi', completed shooting amidst pain

Mumbai: Actor Ram Charan is said to have endured several real-life injuries while filming physically demanding wrestling sequences for his upcoming period action drama Peddi, highlighting his dedication to bringing authenticity and realism to the screen.

According to reports, the actor suffered multiple injuries during the production of the film, including a serious cartilage tear in his wrist and a cut above his left eye. The injuries reportedly occurred while shooting high-intensity wrestling scenes that form a significant part of the narrative.

The film is being directed by Buchi Babu Sana and is one of the most anticipated projects in Ram Charan's upcoming slate. The production has attracted considerable attention for its ambitious scale, rural setting, and emotionally charged storyline.

Known for immersing himself deeply in his characters, Ram Charan reportedly chose to perform many of the wrestling sequences with real wrestlers rather than relying heavily on stunt doubles or choreographed substitutes. The decision was aimed at ensuring that the action looked as natural and convincing as possible.

However, working with trained

wrestlers came with its own set of challenges. Reports suggest that many of the athletes found it difficult to completely suppress their competitive instincts during filming, resulting in several unexpectedly forceful impacts during action sequences.

As the wrestlers were accustomed to genuine physical competition, their movements often carried a level of intensity that translated into highly realistic on-screen confrontations.

While this enhanced the authenticity of the scenes, it also increased the risk of accidental injuries.

The aggressive grappling se-

quences reportedly involved repeated body collisions, throws, and physical engagements that placed significant strain on the actor. During several takes, the action became so intense that Charan sustained bruises and injuries while continuing to perform his scenes.

Sources indicate that after many of these physically demanding takes, the wrestlers would apologise to the actor after realizing that some of their movements had unintentionally caused discomfort or injury. Despite the setbacks, Charan reportedly continued filming to maintain the continuity of the production schedule.

Hindi film industry has a much higher female workforce compared to South industry: Kajal Aggarwal

Mumbai: Actress Kajal Aggarwal has highlighted the persistent gender disparity in the Indian film industry, noting that while women form a significant part of the workforce in Hindi cinema, their representation in the southern film industries remains comparatively lower. Speaking about the evolving landscape of the entertainment industry, Aggarwal acknowledged that meaningful changes are taking place, particularly with regard to women's participation and opportunities. However, she stressed that there is still considerable ground to cover before achieving true parity. The actress expressed optimism about the future, saying that the trend is gradually moving in the right direction. According to her, the participation of women in various aspects of filmmaking is steadily increasing, and the industry is witnessing a noticeable shift. "But the numbers are changing. The graph is tilting. It's just a matter of time before there will be a complete shift," Aggarwal said, expressing confidence that the industry will eventually become more balanced and inclusive. Despite her optimism, the actress voiced concerns about one area where inequality continues to persist—remuneration. She pointed out that although the Hindi film industry has become more inclusive and professional over the years, a substantial gap remains between the earnings of male and female actors. Aggarwal noted that the increasing corporatisation of the entertainment sector has contributed to improvements in workplace practices and professional standards. She believes that the entry of corporate structures has helped create a more organised ecosystem for artists and filmmakers. At the same time, she argued that these changes have not yet translated into equal pay. According to the actress, the disparity in compensation between male and female stars remains significant, reflecting a broader challenge faced by women in the industry. "Things are changing

slowly. People are working toward it. It has become a lot more corporate, which has changed the game. And yet there is no comparison. The difference between male and female actors' remuneration is massive," she said. The issue of pay parity and workplace conditions for women in cinema has become a major topic of discussion in recent weeks. Industry observers and stakeholders have increasingly focused on questions surrounding fair compensation, work-life balance, and professional expectations for female performers. The conversation gained renewed momentum following reports of Deepika Padukone exiting the film Spirit, directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga. The development sparked widespread debate across the industry regarding working conditions and contractual expectations.



India await fitness call on Rohit, Kohli ahead of Afghanistan ODIs

New Delhi: India assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate has said the fitness of senior batters Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will be monitored over the next few days before a final decision is taken on their availability for the upcoming three-match ODI series against Afghanistan.

Rohit's participation remains uncertain after he suffered a hamstring injury during IPL 2026, while Kohli is also under a cloud after picking up a hamstring strain while scoring an unbeaten 75 in Royal Challengers Bengaluru's title-winning IPL final in Ahmedabad on June 1.

The Indian team management is also keeping a close watch on Hardik Pandya's fitness. The all-rounder missed a few matches for Mumbai Indians in IPL 2026 due to back spasms, and his readiness for the ODI series is yet to be confirmed.

Addressing the media ahead of India's one-off Test against Afghanistan, starting



in New Chandigarh from Saturday, ten Doeschate said the medical team would take the final call before any announcement is made.

"Official communication will come on that. It's obviously big news when it's someone like Virat or Rohit (is ruled out), but the same protocols will be in place. We'll assess the fitness of

those guys, and we've got a few days now to decide whether they're fit enough to play and be part of the squad and make adjustments accordingly.

"But I'm sure some official communication will come through as soon as the medical team has made a decision on that," said ten Doeschate.

The assistant coach also spoke about the challenge of balancing player workloads between international cricket and the IPL, especially when centrally contracted players are carrying injuries into the closing stages of the tournament.

"I think it's a very individualistic thing. With the Indian hat on, we want the

players to be at their absolute best when they're on international duty, and that's a case of managing it case by case. So I appreciate that it's a big time of year for those players.

"The IPL is a showpiece domestic competition, so it's striking a balance between those two things. I think with the workload guys had going into that last IPL, or certainly a large proportion of the contracted players, I think we've done fairly well out of it, and injuries happen."

He added that protecting players does not necessarily mean keeping them away from cricket but ensuring they are at their peak when international commitments demand it.

"You can't protect guys by not playing them, but we certainly need to identify the key parts of the international schedule and make sure our best players are uninjured but also physically at their peak when we need them the most," he added.

Indian U-18 Men's & Women's teams gear up for semi-final clashes at Asia Cup

Kakamigahara (Japan): The Indian U-18 Women's and Men's Hockey Teams are set to compete in the Semi-Finals of the Under-18 Asia Cup 2026 on Friday after impressive performances in the pool stages here.

The Indian U-18 Women's Hockey Team finished at the top of Pool A after winning all three of their matches in dominant fashion. The team scored an incredible 30 goals while conceding only two throughout the Pool stage.

Preview: India began their campaign with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Malaysia before registering a convincing 3-1 win against Korea. They then produced a fantastic performance in their final pool match, defeating Singapore 25-0 to seal top spot in the standings.

Nousheen Naz has been India's leading scorer with 10 goals so far in the tournament, while Geethasri Nammi has netted five goals. Captain Sweetey Kujur has scored four goals, while Priyanka Minz has added three goals to India's tally.

India will now face China, who finished second in Pool B with two wins and a draw, in the Semi-Final on June 5 at 9:30 AM IST.

Speaking ahead of the crucial encounter, Indian U-18 Women's Team coach

attacking hockey, and convert our chances," she said.

"The girls are very fit and coordinate well amongst themselves. They will fight hard for every ball, play to our strengths, capitalise on counter-attacks, and give



Rani said, "The journey so far has been fantastic. This is the first time these girls are playing in an international tournament, and they have stepped up to the occasion and performed brilliantly."

"We have approached this tournament one match at a time, and now our complete focus is on the Semi-Final against China. It does not matter what the opposition does, our priority is to play to our standards, play

their best to secure a place in the final," she added.

Meanwhile, the Indian U-18 Men's Hockey Team finished second in Pool A with three wins and one defeat. India scored 32 goals and conceded only six during their campaign so far.

The men's team opened their tournament with a commanding 13-0 victory against Kazakhstan before suffering a 2-4 defeat against hosts Japan.

England all-rounder Nat Sciver-Brunt fit for opener, but only to bat

London: All-rounder Nat Sciver-Brunt, 33, has missed all of England's international summer so far because of a calf injury, but says she expects to be fit for the tournament opener against Sri Lanka at Edgbaston.

She will also play in England's two warm-up matches against India and Australia in Cardiff next week, but says she will not be bowling in those and will likely play as a specialist batter for most of the tournament.

"Maybe further down the line in the tournament, I might need to get a few overs in," she said.

"But we've got a bowling line-up that covers all bases, so I might not be needed but we will make a call on that further down the line.

"Batting feels really good [in the nets], thankfully that is something that I have been

able to do consistently so I'm really happy with where I'm at."

England ended their pre-World Cup summer with an eye-catching win against India on Tuesday, chasing 181 at Taunton to win the series, having previously beaten defending champions New Zealand, according to BBC Sport.

After the game, head coach Charlotte Edwards confirmed Sciver-Brunt would be slotting back in at number three. Her inability to bowl suggests all-rounders Dani Gibson and Freya Kemp will retain their places, while Alice Capsey almost certainly confirmed her spot with her stunning 81 in the chase.

Given Capsey's performances and Heather Knight's return to form, opener Sophia Dunkley looks most vulnerable to make way for Sciver-Brunt.

Major records that may be broken at Women's T20 World Cup

Dubai: As the attention turns to the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 in England and Wales, the world's finest T20I sides are gearing up to leave their mark.

The 10th edition of the tournament is already bound to be the biggest-ever with the most number of participating teams ever (12) to go with a record-prize money pool up for grabs.

While the tournament is expected to be the most closely-contested T20 World

Cup ever, a host of records that can be broken at the big stage adds to the anticipation.

Major milestones that can be crossed at the upcoming marquee event:

Australia's superstar all-rounder Ellyse Perry has the most appearances in the tournament history (47) and is on the verge of a historic T20 World Cup record, according to ICC.

Perry is three games away from becoming the

first-ever player across men's and women's cricket to play 50 games in the tournament history.

Perry will walk into the event as the most successful player having been part of six title-winning Australian squads. The 35-year-old is among the seven players at the upcoming tournament, who have featured in all nine previous editions.

Other than Perry, Harmanpreet Kaur (India), Chamari Athapaththu (Sri

Lanka), Marizanne Kapp (South Africa), Stafanie Taylor (West Indies), Sophie Devine and Suzie Bates (New Zealand) will also mark their 10th tour in as many editions of the tournament.

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur is four matches short of becoming the first-ever player with 200 appearances in T20I history (men and women).

Kaur, who has played 196 games for India, coinci-

dentally made her T20I debut for India at the Women's T20 World Cup in 2009, which was also played in England.

Australia's experienced pacer Megan Schutt needs only two wickets to reach the 50-mark at the Women's T20 World Cup. Schutt, who has played in five editions of the tournament, holds a staggering record of 48 scalps from 29 outings, averaging 11.72 and boasting an economy of 5.65.

Matteo Berrettini tired of retiring as injury strikes again

Paris: Matteo Berrettini said he is "tired of retiring" from matches as injury ended his hopes of a maiden Grand Slam title at the French Open. The 30-year-old had lost the first set of his quarter-final to fellow Italian Matteo Arnaldi and trailed 5-2 in the second when a hip problem forced him to end the contest early. He had already spent time off court for a medical timeout early in the second set and, having pulled up sharply chasing a ball in what proved to be the final game of the match, sat disconsolate in his chair with a rueful look on his face for several seconds before embracing his opponent at the net. Berrettini lost to Novak Djokovic in the 2021 Wimbledon final but his career



since then has been plagued by numerous injury setbacks - a huge factor in him being yet to add to that sole appearance in a Grand Slam showpiece, according to BBC Sport. "It was really hard to retire because I thought that wasn't the right thing, mostly because I

have done it many times and I'm tired of retiring," said Berrettini. "I didn't want the tournament to end like this." Berrettini's only previous retirement from a Grand Slam match was at the 2023 US Open. He also made an early exit from the 2021 ATP Tour Finals because of an abdominal injury, while last season he had to pull out midway through matches in Madrid and Rome in the run-up to the French Open. But the former world number six, who had missed the previous four French Opens because of injury problems, is determined to take the positives from reaching a seventh Grand Slam quarter-final in his first outing at Roland Garros since 2021.

Perez to hire Mourinho if he wins Real Madrid election

Madrid: Florentino Perez has announced that Jose Mourinho will return as Real Madrid head coach if he is re-elected club president in Sunday's elections.

Mourinho's commitment to return to the club he coached between 2010 and 2013 has been an open secret for weeks, especially after Fulham confirmed on Tuesday that Marco Silva will not continue at the club.

Silva, who has the same agent Jorge Mendes as Mourinho, is expected to

take over at Benfica from Mourinho.

Perez's announcement came after his election rival Enrique Riquelme announced earlier in the day that former Real Madrid and Spain defender Fernando Hierro will be his pick to take charge of the club's youth system.

Hierro would work alongside club legend Raul Gonzalez, whom Riquelme plans to appoint as Real Madrid's Director of Football should he be elected by the

club's approximately 95,000 members, according to Xinhua.

Mourinho's three years at Real Madrid saw the club win one La Liga title, one Copa del Rey and one Spanish Super Cup during a period where the club was slightly overshadowed by Pep Guardiola's FC Barcelona.

The period was also marked by increasingly difficult relations between the two clubs and their respective players, widely considered a factor in Spain's early

exit from the 2014 World Cup.

Perez's pledge to bring back Mourinho now puts pressure on Riquelme to name his own preferred head coach.

Both candidates are also expected to outline potential transfer targets in the run-up to the vote, with Inter Milan right-back Denzel Dumfries and Liverpool defender Ibrahima Konate among those reported to be on Real Madrid's radar this summer.

FIFA World Cup Group C preview: Brazil enters group under scrutiny

Mexico City: Brazil headlines Group C as it seeks a sixth World Cup title, with Morocco aiming to build on its historic run in Qatar and Scotland and Haiti making long-awaited returns.

The group will be played entirely in the United States, with Brazil carrying the weight of expectation and its three rivals looking to seize a rare opportunity on the global stage.

Brazil team: Brazil enters the World Cup after an unconvincing qualifying campaign and a change of manager. The South American giant remains the most successful team in World Cup history, but its last title came in 2002 and recent tournaments have been marked by disappointment.

The team's route to North America was unusually turbulent. Concern reached a tipping point following a 4-1 loss to Argentina in Buenos Aires in March 2025, which led to the dismissal of head coach Dorival Junior.

Carlo Ancelotti, who has won five UEFA Champions League trophies in a decorated managerial career at club level, was brought in to steady the situation and guide Brazil through qualification. Results improved enough for Brazil to secure

its place at the finals, although a fifth-place finish in South American qualifying underlined the scale of the challenge facing Ancelotti.

Since taking charge, Ancelotti has favored an attack-minded 4-2-4 system. The approach is designed to maximize the pace and skill available in the forward line, while asking the midfield pair to provide protection for the defense.

Injuries have complicated those plans. Absentees include Real Madrid forward Rodrygo, who was ruled out of the tournament with a knee injury, and Chelsea winger Estevao, who has a torn hamstring.

Questions over Neymar's role dominated the buildup to squad selection. The 34-year-old has not represented his country since suffering a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament in October 2023.

The former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain forward earned a place in the squad after showing encouraging form for Santos, but a calf injury has cast doubt over how much he will feature.

Brazil's attacking options remain its greatest strength. The team showed in recent friendlies that it is likely to rely heavily on

speed in transition and direct counterattacks. That strategy mirrors the approach Ancelotti used successfully at Real Madrid. Defensive concerns remain.

The country that once produced a seemingly endless stream of elite full-backs - Cafu, Roberto Carlos and Marcelo, just to name a few - no longer appears as secure in those positions. As a result, maintaining balance between attack and defense could be decisive.

Despite the doubts, Brazil arrives with the weight of history behind it and an expectation to compete for the ultimate prize.

Star player: Vinicius Junior will carry much of Brazil's attacking hopes. The Real Madrid forward has established himself among the world's leading players at club level with his pace, vision and vastly improved finishing. Yet with just nine goals in 48 international appearances, the former Flamengo prodigy has unfinished business in national team colors. If Brazil is to challenge for the title, Vinicius will be expected to provide the inspiration.

Player to watch: Endrick may not begin the tournament as a regular starter, but the 19-year-old could become one of Brazil's most

influential players before it ends. The Real Madrid forward revived his fortunes after a loan move to Lyon in January with 16 goal contributions in 21 games for the French club.

With opponents likely to focus heavily on Vinicius and Brazil's established stars, Endrick could emerge as an important alternative attacking threat, according



to Xinhua.

Morocco team: Morocco arrives with lofty expectations after becoming the first African team to reach a World Cup semifinal in Qatar. Preparation for this tournament, though, has not been entirely smooth.

Walid Regragui left his role as manager in March following a controversial end to Morocco's Africa Cup of Nations campaign. Mo-

hamed Ouahbi has since taken charge.

The former under-20 coach arrives with a strong reputation after leading Morocco's youth side to world title. His preferred system gives significant freedom to attack, particularly down the right flank. The challenge will be helping his players deal with pressure to perform given the team is no

longer considered an outsider. Star player: Achraf Hakimi remains the face of Moroccan football.

The full-back has built an elite career with clubs including Real Madrid, Borussia Dortmund, Inter Milan and Paris Saint-Germain.

His success has made him one of the country's most recognizable football figures. The 27-year-old's ability to contribute at both

ends of the pitch will be central to his team's fortunes.

Player to watch: Midfielder Neil El Aynaoui has quickly become an important part of Morocco's plans. Strong in possession and effective at recovering the ball, he combines defensive discipline with attacking flair.

After establishing himself at Lens, he continued his development with Roma. The 24-year-old's versatility and energy could prove vital if Morocco is to replicate its achievements from four years ago.

Haiti team: Haiti's return to the World Cup represents one of the tournament's most remarkable stories. The Caribbean team will make its first appearance since 1974 after overcoming considerable obstacles during qualification. Because of the country's security crisis, Haiti was forced to play its qualifying matches away from home. It earned its ticket to football's biggest stage with a 2-0 win over Nicaragua last November as it clinched top spot in its group. Head coach Sebastien Migne has built a disciplined side that combines defensive organization with attacking intensity, making it a constant counter-attacking threat. The team enters the tournament as one of the lowest-ranked partici-

pants and will be considered an underdog in every group match. Even so, qualification alone has generated enormous pride.

Star player: Duckens Nazon is the symbol of Haiti's ambitions. The experienced striker finished among the leading scorers in qualifying and remains the team's primary attacking threat. His influence extends beyond goals, providing leadership and belief within the squad.

For Haiti to challenge more established opponents, Nazon will need to deliver at the biggest moments.

Player to watch: Ruben Providence could become one of the tournament's surprise performers. The winger is known for his speed, direct dribbling and willingness to take on defenders.

Having passed through the youth academies of Roma and Paris Saint-Germain, the 24-year-old possesses the technical quality that can unsettle any defense.

Scotland team: Scotland returns to the World Cup for the first time since 1998 after securing qualification with a dramatic victory over Denmark. Steve Clarke has transformed the team since taking charge in 2019.

Under his leadership, Scotland has qualified regu-

BSE Sensex		Nifty 50		Nifty 500		Nifty Next 50		Nifty 100		Nifty Bank		Nifty Midcap 100	
Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change
74,360.01	0.019%	23,416.55	0.047%	22,497.70	0.20%	70,010.95	0.22%	24,427.70	0.08%	54,307.85	0.22%	60,966.65	0.46%
Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open
74,346.17	73,935.83	23,405.60	23,282.45	22,451.85	22,362.40	69,856.40	69,672.70	24,408.30	24,291.90	54,185.95	53,918.85	60,687.20	60,568.70
High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
74,544.24	73,807.30	23,465.30	23,247.30	22,559.85	22,328.35	70,425.55	69,530.15	24,486.80	24,255.40	54,461.00	53,829.40	61,273.95	60,379.60

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Titan Company	4,231.00	3.48
Eternal	254.35	2.98
Coal India	481.65	1.98
Cipla	1,398.70	1.71
Adani Enterpris	2,972.80	1.61

Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
Infosys	1,201.30	-1.74
Bajaj Finserv	1,709.80	-1.42
Hindalco	1,125.60	-1.17
SBI Life Insura	1,764.90	-1.08
UltraTechCement	10,997.00	-0.94

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Jun 05	156,000.00	1,668.00 1.08
Silver Jul 03	266,826.00	3,868.00 1.47
Crudeoil Jun 18	8,885.00	-355.00 -3.84
Naturalgas Jun 25	317.60	7.70 2.48

TMUS Launches Global Technology Centre in Hyderabad; Expands India GCC Footprint

Hyderabad: TMUS Global Solutions (T-Mobile USA) today inaugurated its Global Technology Centre in Hyderabad, marking a major expansion of the company's international technology footprint and reinforcing India's role in global capability delivery.

The 2.5 lakh sq. ft. facility was inaugurated by Telangana IT, Electronics, Communications, Industries & Commerce Minister D. Sridhar Babu, who described the investment as validation of Hyderabad's ability to deliver high-quality technology talent at scale. The Hyderabad centre will function as a strategic innovation hub for TMUS Global Solutions, supporting capabilities across software engineering, DevOps, product development, data analytics, cybersecurity and next-generation digital solutions. The company plans to scale operations to nearly 1,000 employees by 2027.

During the inauguration, state officials held discussions with company leadership on long-term expansion plans and Telangana's

growing role as a global hub for telecom technology and digital engineering.

TMUS Global Solutions Vice President for IT Operations Chandra Gupta said the Hyderabad facility aligns with the company's long-term engineering and digital transformation priorities, citing the city's talent ecosystem and innovation capabilities as key drivers for expansion. T-Mobile USA, one of the largest wireless operators in the United States serving over 140 million customers, said the new centre will strengthen its global technology delivery network. Sridhar Babu said Hyderabad, which hosts more than 450 global capability centres employing over 3,00,000 professionals, continues to attract multinational companies across sectors including telecom, life sciences, BFSI, retail and FMCG. The addition of TMUS Global Solutions further strengthens Telangana's positioning as a preferred destination for global technology and innovation hubs, the Minister added.

Stock Markets ends with little change, investors remain cautious ahead of RBI policy decision

Mumbai: Indian equity benchmark indices ended Thursday's trading session largely unchanged as investors largely adopted a cautious approach ahead of the Reserve Bank of India's upcoming monetary policy announcement. Market participants preferred to stay on the sidelines, leading to range-bound trading throughout the day.

The 30-share BSE Sensex closed marginally higher by 13.84 points, or 0.02 per cent, at 74,360.01. The broader Nifty 50 also ended in positive territory, gaining 10.95 points, or 0.05 per cent, to settle at 23,416.55. Despite the subdued movement in frontline indices, broader markets outperformed. The Nifty Midcap 100 and Nifty Smallcap 100 advanced around 0.5 per cent each, indicating continued investor interest in mid-sized and smaller companies. Sector-wise, buying interest was visible in con-

sumer durables, capital goods, media, pharmaceutical, oil and gas, banking, and energy stocks. These sectors provided support to the mar-

ket and helped benchmark indices maintain their gains through the session. However, weakness in information technology and metal counters limited the market's upside.



Selling pressure in these sectors offset gains elsewhere and prevented the indices from posting stronger advances. Among the top performers on the Nifty, Ti-

tan Company, Eternal, Coal India, Cipla, and Adani Enterprises emerged as the leading gainers. On the losing side, Infosys, Bajaj Finserv, Hindalco Industries, SBI Life Insurance, and UltraTech Cement were among the major laggards. Market breadth remained positive, with more than 120 stocks touching their 52-week highs on the BSE. Notable names included Nippon Life India Asset Management, Jindal Saw, HFCL, Syrma SGS Technology, Laurus Labs, Polycab India, Voda-

fone Idea, Federal Bank, IFCI, Jammu & Kashmir Bank, Welspun Corp, and RBL Bank. At the same time, nearly 56 stocks fell to their 52-week lows. Among them were ITC, Praveg, Patanjali Foods, and Go Digit General Insurance. In individual stock action, Meesho continued to remain under pressure, extending its decline for an eighth consecutive session. The stock fell another 5.7 per cent, reflecting persistent selling interest. Meanwhile, Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) dropped 4.2 per cent during the session, emerging as one of the notable losers among large-cap stocks. Energy-related counters witnessed healthy buying. Hitachi Energy India, CG Power and Industrial Solutions, and Suzlon Energy gained between 2 and 4 per cent, supported by positive sentiment in the power and infrastructure space.

Govt examining policy frameworks to accelerate affordable adoption of flex-fuel vehicles: Puri

New Delhi: The Centre is actively exploring supportive policy measures, including fuel price support and targeted fiscal incentives, to accelerate the adoption of flex-fuel vehicles across the country, Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said. The move is aimed at reducing India's dependence on imported crude oil while promoting cleaner and more sustainable transportation solutions. Speaking about India's evolving mobility landscape, Puri said the country's future transportation ecosystem will be shaped by a combination of electric vehicles, biofuels, hydrogen, and renewable energy technologies.

Among these, he described flex-fuel vehicles as a practical and immediately deployable solution capable of delivering significant economic and environmental benefits. The minister emphasized that flex-fuel vehicles offer India an effective

pathway to lower crude oil imports, strengthen energy security, and support the government's broader climate commitments. By enabling vehicles to run on higher blends of ethanol, the technology can help reduce the country's reliance on fossil fuels while promoting the use of domestically produced biofuels. Puri noted that increased ethanol consumption would also provide a major boost to the rural economy. Greater demand for ethanol, which is largely produced from agricultural feedstocks, can create new revenue streams for farmers and strengthen the agricultural value chain across the country. Highlighting the enormous scale of the opportunity, he said the country has one of the largest two-wheeler ecosystems in the world, with an active fleet of more than 300 million vehicles, making it an ideal platform for large-scale adoption of flex-fuel technology. According to

Puri, the transition toward flex-fuel mobility has the potential to transform the transportation sector on an unprecedented scale. If adopted widely, flex-fuel vehicles could substantially reduce fuel import bills, create stronger market demand for ethanol, and lower operating costs for consumers. He said a significant shift towards flex-fuel vehicles would deliver multiple benefits simultaneously. Besides cutting crude oil imports, it would improve energy self-reliance, generate additional income for farmers, and make vehicle ownership more affordable by providing alternative fuel options.

The minister described recent developments in the automobile sector as marking India's entry into large-scale flex-fuel mobility. He said the government's policy push, combined with growing industry participation, is creating the foundation for wider adoption of ethanol-compatible vehicles.

India recognised as world's fastest-growing economy and will remain it for over two decades: Piyush Goyal

New Delhi: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said that India is recognised as the world's fastest-growing economy and expressed confidence that the country will maintain this position for over two decades in the future.

Addressing the Citi India Conference 2026 virtually in Mumbai, the minister noted that India has consistently converted crises into opportunities by reorienting processes and business strategies to suit changing geopolitical and economic circumstances.

Goyal highlighted the recent engagements of business leaders in Canada and the United States as strong global confidence in India's economic landscape. The minister also noted a positive response to the India-Canada Free Trade Agreement (FTA). "Discussions with lead-

ing investment firms and around 50 companies in New York reinforced the perception of India as the only credible alternative manufacturing hub, a trusted partner and a safe investment destination backed by democracy, rule of law, decisive leadership, technological capabilities and a vast consumer market of 1.4 billion people," the Minister said.

Referring to the interactions with leading investors in New York and Toronto, he said, "Every discussion reinforced confidence in India's future growth trajectory."

He remarked that the question for investors is not whether to invest in India, but how quickly they recognize and participate in the India growth story.

Goyal highlighted India's expanding trade engagements with the world and noted that the country has signed nine free trade agreements (FTAs) in the



last three and half years covering 38 developed economies.

Pointing towards the recently concluded India-Oman FTA, the Minister informed that at least two to three additional substantive FTAs are expected to come into effect within six months.

"India is likely to execute another three to four significant trade agreements in the coming year and operationalize all nine recently

concluded agreements over the next nine to ten months," he said.

Shedding light on some reforms, the Minister said the Jan Vishwas Act will decriminalise nearly one thousand offences across multiple central laws where there was no intention to cheat and no threat to public safety or public health.

The Minister also highlighted the recently announced Bhavya Scheme for

the development of 100 industrial parks across the country with an outlay of nearly USD 3.5 billion.

Highlighting the country's response to recent geopolitical challenges, the Minister said, "The country successfully navigated the international energy crisis despite concerns arising from developments in West Asia and disruptions affecting energy supplies from the Gulf region."

The Minister noted that India's prior efforts to diversify energy sources ensure uninterrupted availability of petrol, diesel, aviation fuel, LNG, and PNG while maintaining relatively moderate prices.

In his concluding remarks, Goyal said that India offers immense potential, possibility, and profitability through high-quality products, goods and services designed and produced competitively in the country.

Singareni CMD Calls Upon Employees to Work with Dedication to Sustain Competitiveness

Hyderabad: Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) Chairman and Managing Director Dr Budhaprakash Jyoti has called upon employees to discharge their duties with dedication and commitment to ensure the company's continued growth and competitiveness.

He said transforming Singareni into an organisation of international standards would bring greater recognition and honour to Telangana.

Addressing the Telan-

gana State Formation Day celebrations held at Singareni Bhavan in Hyderabad, Dr Jyoti said Singareni, one of Telangana's most important public sector enterprises, is steadily expanding its operations beyond the state and should work towards establishing a presence at the global level in the coming years.

He noted that Telangana was achieved through the sacrifices of countless youth, leaders and people from all sections of society.

Since its formation, the

state has made remarkable progress across various sectors and generated substantial employment opportunities for the younger generation, he said.

Highlighting the company's promising future, the CMD stressed the need to increase production and productivity by making optimum use of machinery in both opencast and underground mines.

He also underlined the importance of improving operational efficiency and maintaining high standards

in mining operations.

Earlier, Dr Jyoti paid floral tributes to Telangana Thalli, the Martyrs' Memorial and the portrait of Professor K. Jayashankar before unfurling the National Flag as part of the celebrations.

On the occasion, employees who rendered outstanding services to the organisation were felicitated. The awardees included L. Srinivas, AGM (Purchase), Y. Lakshminarayana, MV Driver, and D. Rudramma, an outsourcing employee.

Vamsiram Builders Acquires Raidurgam Land Parcel for ₹1,040 Cr, Plans 20-Lakh-Sq-Ft IT Park

Hyderabad: In one of the biggest commercial land transactions in Hyderabad's real estate market, Vamsiram Builders has acquired a prime 5.09-acre land parcel in Raidurgam for approximately ₹1,040 crore and announced plans to develop a landmark 30-storey mixed-use commercial tower with a built-up area of 20 lakh square feet.

The strategically located Plot P4, situated adjacent to ITC Kohinoor in Hyderabad's prime commercial corridor, was secured through an e-auction conducted by the Telangana Government Infrastructure and Investment Corporation (TGIIC), the Hyderabad based Real Estate company said in a

release here on Wednesday.

The winning bid of ₹204 crore per acre represented a premium of 46.76 per cent over the reserve price of ₹139 crore per acre, underlining the strong investor demand for premium commercial assets in Hyderabad's rapidly expanding business districts.

The proposed development will comprise premium IT office space, retail zones and a hotel within a single integrated project.

Designed in a distinctive 'U'-shaped configuration, the tower will feature a landscaped central garden and rise to a height of 145 metres across 30 floors. Vamsiram Builders Chairman and Managing Director B.

Subba Reddy said Raidurgam has emerged as the nerve centre of Hyderabad's new economy and the company intends to create a landmark project that reflects the city's growing global stature. "We are building a project that is worthy of the location and Hyderabad's global ambitions, setting new benchmarks in commercial design and functionality," he said. The company plans to engage an international architectural firm for the project and aims to complete construction within four years. The project comes at a time when Hyderabad's office market continues to witness robust leasing activity, particularly in large-format transactions.

SHF to open 25 Emerging Business branches this year

Chennai: Sundaram Home Finance (SHF) on Thursday announced plans to expand its footprint in the Emerging Business (EB) segment by opening 25 new branches across South India during the current financial year. The expansion follows the company crossing the milestone of 100 EB branches last year, reflecting its growing focus on affordable housing finance and small-ticket lending in underserved markets. The new branches will primarily be established in Tier-3 and Tier-4 towns across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana. Through this expansion, the company aims to strengthen its presence in smaller towns where demand for affordable housing finance is steadily increasing. The Emerging Business segment is a key growth area for SHF and comprises Affordable Housing Finance and Small Ticket Loans. The segment caters mainly to first-time homebuyers, self-em-



ployed individuals, small business owners, and families seeking access to formal credit in semi-urban and rural markets. According to the company, the expansion strategy is designed to tap into the growing housing aspirations of people living in smaller towns and emerging economic centres. These locations have witnessed rising income levels, improved infrastructure, and increased demand for affordable housing in recent years. The company reported disbursements of approximately Rs 590 crore in the Emerging Business segment during the previous financial year. Building on this momentum,

Aditya Birla housing finance opens new branch in Kurnool

Kurnool: Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited (ABHFL), a leading housing finance company and a subsidiary of Aditya Birla Capital Limited, has expanded its footprint in Andhra Pradesh with the launch of a new branch in Kurnool, as part of its broader plan to expand its pan-India distribution network.

With this addition, ABHFL's total network in Andhra Pradesh has increased to 14 branches, strengthening its presence in high-growth markets and

improving customer accessibility. Kurnool is witnessing growing demand for affordable housing, supported by rapid urbanisation, improving highway connectivity along the NH-44 corridor, and new industrial and renewable-energy projects that are expanding local employment opportunities.

Rising numbers of salaried and self-employed households, together with developer interest in budget and mid-segment housing, are driving demand from first-time buyers and emerg-

ing-income segments. The new ABHFL branch will enable the company to provide accessible, customised housing-finance solutions for purchase, construction, and home improvement across Kurnool and surrounding regions.

ABHFL offers a comprehensive suite of housing finance solutions tailored to diverse customer segments, including affordable housing, prime housing, construction finance, and loans against property, catering to salaried individuals, self-

employed professionals, self-employed non-professionals, and emerging income groups.

Backed by a robust digital ecosystem, ABHFL enables a seamless onboarding, faster approvals, and enhanced transparency, ensuring superior customer experience. To mark the launch, ABHFL is offering zero login fees along with spot loan sanctions of up to Rs 50 lakh, valid from June 3 to June 30 2026, enabling faster and more affordable access to credit for custom-

ers at these new branches.

Speaking on the expansion, Pankaj Gadgil, MD & CEO, Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited, said, "Andhra Pradesh is a key growth market for us. With strong demand and rising aspirations, we are scaling our regional presence to deepen customer engagement. By combining our growing distribution footprint with robust digital capabilities, we aim to make the home ownership journey simpler, faster, and hassle-free for customers."