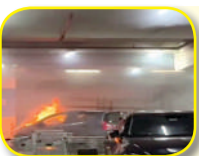



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Car Catches Fire Inside Underground Parking Lot Of Shopping Mall PG.3



Keerthy Suresh reveals how Savitri's daughter helped her prepare for Mahanati: "That helped me build her character" PG.6



India eyes Pro League return at FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup 2025-26 PG.7



India continues to be world's fastest-growing major economy: Sitharaman PG.8

Macron Hails India as Innovation Powerhouse and Pushes for Tech Ties

Nice/New Delhi: French President Emmanuel Macron delivered a strong endorsement of India's technological rise at the inauguration of the "Bharat Innovates 2026" event in Nice, calling the nation a global innovation powerhouse. Macron stated that the international community no longer views India as a mere source of basic tech talent or back-office outsourcing. Instead, India has established itself as a leading force shaping the global frontier of deep-tech and emerging applications. Macron pointed to India's massive demographic dividend, noting that the country trains more than one million engineers every single year—a figure that

matches the combined educational output of the entire European Union and south pole, as definitive proof of India's advanced industrial capabilities and sectors. The French President emphasized that the current international race for artificial intelligence supremacy is heavily dependent on three critical components: talent, computing capacity, and a stable energy supply. Macron showcased France's own credentials as Europe's premier investment hub for seven consecutive years, recently securing 93 billion euros through the "Choose France" summit. He noted that France possesses a highly decarbonized energy grid perfectly suited to power data centers, alongside Mistral AI, which stands as Europe's only large language model ecosystem capable of competing with the tech sectors of the United States and China. Looking ahead, Macron identified civil nuclear energy as a key area for expanded bilateral collaboration, specifically focusing on the development of Small Modular Reactors. He concluded by announcing that he will join Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the upcoming VivaTech conference to further align India's capabilities with France's technological initiatives like Choose France and France 2030. The collaborative effort highlights a shared push by New Delhi and Paris to secure technological sovereignty, drive clean energy initiatives, and establish a stable, sustainable economic framework.



French President Emmanuel Macron addressed an audience of international entrepreneurs and investors, Modi framed the India-France alliance as a partnership of "connection, conviction, and shared vision" built for the challenges of the 21st century. Modi highlighted a youth-led startup revolution rewriting India's economic story, noting that while the event showcased around 100 select startups, the nation boasts a massive pool of over 200,000 startups.

PM Modi Debuts 'Bharat Innovates 2026' in France, Inviting Global Investors

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron jointly launched the historic "Bharat Innovates 2026" platform on Sunday in Nice, France. The initiative is a strategic bridge designed to connect India's rapidly growing deep-tech startup ecosystem with European venture capital, research universities, and industrial leaders. Addressing an audience of international entrepreneurs and investors, Modi framed the India-France alliance as a partnership of "connection, conviction, and shared vision" built for the challenges of the 21st century. Modi highlighted a youth-led startup revolution rewriting India's economic story, noting that while the event showcased around 100 select startups, the nation boasts a massive pool of over 200,000 startups.

Iran Blames US After Israeli Airstrike on Beirut



Teheran : Tensions in West Asia have risen again after Israel carried out an airstrike on Lebanon's capital, Beirut, on Sunday, even as talks between the United States and Iran to find a long-term solution to the regional conflict were reportedly in their final stage. The attack killed three people and seriously injured around 15 others. Iran strongly condemned the strike and directly criticised the United States, saying the Donald Trump administration had failed to control its closest ally, Israel. Iran also argued that the US position has raised serious doubts about the ongoing diplomatic efforts to end the conflict in the Middle East. According to Lebanese officials, the Israeli Air Force targeted the Dahieh area in southern Beirut, a stronghold of Hezbollah, on Sunday afternoon. Three people were killed on the spot, while around 15 others suffered serious injuries and were rushed to hospitals. Some of the injured are said to be in critical condition. This was Israel's second airstrike on the southern suburbs of Beirut within a week. The attack came at a time when negotiations between the United States and Iran to reduce regional tensions were nearing completion. The airstrike caused heavy damage to buildings in Beirut, and thick smoke was seen rising from the area. Local residents searched through the rubble for survivors trapped under collapsed structures. Witnesses said the area is a densely populated commercial neighbourhood with many residential buildings and shops. Israel said the operation was carried out in response to suspected activities by Hezbollah. In an official

statement, the office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Israeli military launched the strike after Hezbollah attacked Israeli territory. The statement said the Israeli forces carefully verified the presence of militants before carrying out the operation. It also claimed that those killed in the strike were Hezbollah militants and not ordinary civilians. Meanwhile, Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf accused the United States of playing a double game. He said that while Washington was publicly talking about peace negotiations, it was also supporting Israel's military operations. In a post on his official X account, Ghalibaf said the attack on Dahieh showed that the United States either lacks the willingness or the ability to honour its commitments. He also claimed there was no visible coordination between the United States and Israel, adding that Israel had ignored every suggestion made by Donald Trump so far. Ghalibaf further said that allowing Israel to continue its attacks would not force Iran into making compromises or concessions. He described the situation as an outdated "good cop, bad cop" strategy, where one side appears moderate while the other acts aggressively. He warned that if the United States cannot fulfil its own promises, there is no point in continuing future negotiations. The United States has not yet issued an official response to the Israeli strike. The latest escalation has now raised fresh questions about the future of the ongoing US-Iran peace talks, with the international community closely watching how the situation develops.

Maharashtra teachers yet to be trained for revised syllabus already introduced in schools

Pune : Even as schools across Maharashtra have begun teaching the revised curriculum for Classes I to IV for the 2025-26 academic session, a large number of teachers are yet to undergo training for the new syllabus, triggering concerns over effective classroom implementation. The updated curriculum, initially introduced for Class I, has now been expanded to include Classes II, III and IV this academic year. However, many teachers responsible for teaching the revised content have not yet received the required orientation. Acknowledging the delay, the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) has issued a revised schedule, making it mandatory for all training programmes to be completed by July 10. The in-service training, which had earlier been planned during the academic session, was deferred following public objections, prompting authorities to restructure the schedule. Under the revised plan, nearly 24 lakh Marathi-medium teachers and around 26 lakh Urdu-medium teachers across the state are expected to undergo syllabus-related training. The programme, to be conducted at the taluka level, will involve up to 85 hours of instruction per teacher. Training sessions will be held in phases according to grade levels. Teachers of Classes I and II will undergo state-level training from June 19 to 24, district-level sessions from June 29 to July 2, and taluka-level training between July 8 and 10. A similar phased schedule has been prepared for teachers of Classes III and IV, with training planned for late June and early July. The implementation process will be supervised by the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET).

CM Fadnavis Checks Progress On Mega Western Suburb Mumbai Coastal Road project

Mumbai: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis visited Charkop on Sunday to personally inspect the ongoing construction of the massive Coastal Road project. Local leaders called the visit excellent news for residents of Mumbai's western suburbs, noting that the Chief Minister's inspection is expected to speed up the engineering work. The new coastal highway will stretch from Bandra to Gorai and aims to provide massive relief to daily commuters. Currently, thousands of drivers face heavy traffic delays every day due to the massive load of vehicles traveling on the Western Express Highway. Speaking to reporters, Chief Minister Fadnavis stated that the Mumbai Coastal Road project is expected to be completed by October-November or December 2028. "This will provide great relief to Mumbai. 60% of Mumbai's traffic goes directly via the Western Expressway, and to reduce the pressure on it, we are preparing a signal-free road from Nariman Point to Bhayandar. Our effort is that this entire project will be completed by October-November or December 2028," said CM Fadnavis. The Mumbai Coastal Road is a 29.2-kilometre-long, toll-free, eight-lane expressway

running along the city's western coastline from Marine Lines to Kandivali, with planned extensions to Bhayandar. The high-speed corridor aims to slash travel time across the entire stretch from over two hours to just 40 minutes. Earlier, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on February 12 inaugurated the 'Melody Road' stretch from Amarsons Garden to Breach Candy on the Dharmaveer, Swarajyarakshak Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj Mumbai Coastal Road (South). What makes this stretch even more special is that commuters can hear the Oscar-winning song "Jai Ho" from Slumdog Millionaire as they drive along it. The Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj Coastal Road is equipped with specially designed rumble strips that generate a melody as vehicles pass over them.



Thackeray Holds Key MPs' Meeting at Matoshree, Rumours of Split Rejected

Mumbai: Amid strong political speculation that some MPs from the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) could join the ruling Eknath Shinde faction, party chief Uddhav Thackeray held an important meeting with the party's Lok Sabha MPs at his residence, Matoshree, on Sunday. After the meeting, party chief spokesperson and MP Sanjay Raut claimed that all nine Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs had participated, putting an end to rumours of any split in the parliamentary group. Uddhav Thackeray also announced that another detailed meeting with the MPs would be held next month. During the meeting, Uddhav

Thackeray interacted with the MPs both in person and through video conferencing. He asked them to strongly raise the issues of farmers, the incomplete farm loan waiver, and rising inflation both inside and outside Parliament. A strategy was also discussed to question the government over its promises regarding farm loan waivers. Thackeray said confusion had been created among party workers about some MPs, and instructed every MP to clearly tell party workers that they remain firmly with the Shiv Sena (UBT) and with Uddhav Thackeray. After meeting the MPs, Thackeray also held a separate Zoom meeting with district chiefs to understand

local issues from every district and strengthen the party organisation. Out of the nine MPs, four attended the meeting at Matoshree, while five joined online. Sanjay Dina Patil, Arvind Sawant, Rajabhau Waze, and Anil Desai were present in person. Omraje Nimbalkar, Bhausaheb Wagchaure, Sanjay Deshmukh, and Nagesh Patil Ashtikar joined the meeting virtually. Uddhav Thackeray also personally spoke on the phone with Parbhani MP Sanjay Jadhav. Yuva Sena chief Aaditya Thackeray was also present during the meeting. Later, Sanjay Raut explained on social media why some MPs could not attend physically. He

said Omraje Nimbalkar joined online because his son is admitted to Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital in Pune for treatment. Shirdi MP Bhausaheb Wagchaure attended virtually because his wife's health had deteriorated. Some other MPs were unable to travel to Mumbai due to local political work and unavoidable family reasons. Raut added that all these MPs would personally visit Matoshree within the next two or three days to meet Uddhav Thackeray. Responding to the ongoing discussions about the alleged "Operation Tiger" aimed at breaking away Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs, Sanjay Raut strongly



attacked the political opponents. He said the party's entire parliamentary team stands united and loyal to Uddhav Thackeray, and hoped that the rumours would finally end. Raut said the party is not afraid of such threats or political speculation. He warned that those talking about "Operation Tiger" should be careful because the Shiv Sena (UBT) would launch "Operation Wolf" against its opponents and give them a strong political reply.



Come out and unite instead of lamenting problems: RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat

Thiruvananthapuram: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Sarsanghalak Mohan Bhagwat has called upon people to step out of their homes and unite with a sense of national purpose rather than merely lamenting social problems, asserting that only an organised society can become strong and fulfil its responsibilities towards the nation and humanity. Addressing a public

lecture organised as part of the RSS centenary celebrations at the Udaya Palace Auditorium here, Bhagwat said the RSS has no adversaries and considers every individual a potential swayamsevak. He also described India as a "Hindu Rashtra," explaining that the term signifies the country's cultural ethos and civilisational way of life rather than a purely religious identity. Emphasising the importance of social cohesion, Bhagwat said strength emerges only through organisation. Recalling Swami Vivekananda's observation that "weakness is death," he urged Hindu society to unite and foster brotherhood based on the belief that India is their common motherland and that all Indians are children of the same mother. He said the contemporary world is searching for values and principles that are deeply embedded in India's civilisational heritage, and it is the responsibility of Indians to prepare themselves to share this wisdom with humanity. Society derives strength from mutual cooperation

and interdependence, he noted, adding that a life rooted in dharma is essential for building a strong, self-confident and resilient nation. Referring to perceptions surrounding the RSS, Bhagwat said public interactions such as the centenary lecture series offer an opportunity for people to understand an organisation that has often been misunderstood and misrepresented. He urged citizens not to rely solely on propaganda or prevailing narratives but to form opinions based on direct experience. "Listening to speeches alone may not be enough to understand the RSS. One should visit a shakha, participate in

a camp, interact with swayamsevaks and observe the organisation's activities before forming an opinion," he said. Tracing the origins of the RSS, Bhagwat said the organisation was founded with the objective of national reconstruction. Despite possessing immense strengths and resources, India remained under foreign domination for centuries, he observed, adding that Britain was the seventh foreign power to invade and rule the country. He noted that many movements that emerged during the freedom struggle lost momentum after Independence, while several social reform initiatives remained confined to limited sections

of society. RSS founder Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, through his experiences and observations, concluded that India could regain its former glory only through the organisation of society in accordance with its civilisational character, Bhagwat said. According to him, Bharat is not merely a geographical territory defined by political boundaries but a living civilisational entity. The country's uniqueness lies in its ability to accommodate diversity while preserving unity, he added. "The feeling that others exist within us and we exist within others is the essence of Hindu thought. Bharatiyata, or Indianness, is a defining characteristic

responded to questions and concerns raised by members of the audience. Bhagwat, who arrived in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday evening on a three-day visit to Kerala, addressed invited gatherings at the Udaya Palace Convention Centre on Saturday. He is also scheduled to address a similar centenary programme at Hyatt Regency, Thrissur, later on Sunday. On Friday evening, the RSS chief visited Amritapuri and met spiritual leader Mata Amritanandamayi Devi. Following the completion of his engagements in the state, Bhagwat is scheduled to depart for Bengaluru from Cochin International Airport on the morning of Monday.



Govt stands with the needy and will ensure resolution of every genuine grievance: CM Yogi

Gorakhpur: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath assured the people that the government stands with every needy person and will ensure resolution of all genuine grievances.

The CM held a 'Janata Darshan' on Sunday in the Gorakhnath Temple premises. Around 200 people from different districts of the state arrived with their grievances. The Chief Minister listened to each person individually and directed officials to ensure appropriate resolution of their issues.

Referring the applications to administrative and police officials, CM Adityanath directed that all issues should be resolved fairly and within the stipulated timeframe.

During the Janata Darshan, the Chief Minister took a firm stand on complaints related to police and revenue matters. He directed the District Magistrate that any negligence at any level in resolving revenue-related complaints should invite strict action. He said laxity or negligence at any level will not be tolerated and di-



rected officials to ensure that victims receive justice within the prescribed time limit.

People who approached the Chief Minister seeking financial as-

sistance for medical treatment were told to focus on the health of their family members. The Chief Minister said they should leave the concern of treatment expenses to the govern-

ment, which would provide assistance. Ayushman Cards will be made available to eligible needy people, and financial help will also be provided through the discretionary fund. CM Yogi directed officials to ensure that every eligible and needy person receives an Ayushman Card.

During his stay at the Gorakhnath Temple, Chief Minister Adityanath followed his traditional routine on Sunday morning as well. After seeking the blessings of Mahayogi Guru Gorakhnath and his late Guru, Mahant Avaidyanath Ji, he performed Gausava (cow service) at the temple cowshed. He fed jaggery and rotis to the cows with his own hands and expressed his affection towards them.

Later, while visiting the temple premises, he called children who had come with their families, interacted with them about their studies and distributed chocolates. During the Janata Darshan as well, the Chief Minister gave chocolates to children and blessed them to study sincerely and move forward in life.

Bihar's treasury strong, economy entering new growth phase: Sanjay Saraogi

Patna: Bihar BJP President Sanjay Saraogi on Sunday said that the state's treasury is far from empty and is, in fact, enriched by development and welfare-oriented initiatives while asserting that the state's economy is "entering a new era of growth, confidence, and self-reliance" under the leadership of Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary.

Rejecting opposition allegations about a financial crisis, Saraogi termed them "misleading and completely devoid of facts." He pointed to the Bihar Economic Survey 2025-26, stating that it clearly reflects Bihar's economic performance outpacing the national average.

Citing official data, he said Bihar's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) at current prices grew by 13.1 per cent in 2024-25 to reach Rs 9.92 lakh crore, compared to the national growth rate of 9.8 per cent. At constant prices, the state recorded a robust growth rate of 8.6 per cent. He added that Bihar's GSDP is projected to touch Rs 10.97 lakh crore in 2025-26, reflecting the state's growing economic strength and development momentum.

Saraogi said such rapid economic growth, record investments and large-scale infrastructure expansion would not have been possible if the state's finances were weak. According to him, Bihar's total revenue receipts increased from Rs 1.28 lakh crore in 2020-21 to Rs 2.18 lakh crore in 2024-25. The share of tax revenue in total receipts has also risen from 70 per cent to 84 per cent, indicating increasing fiscal self-reliance.

"The development roadmap of Bihar under Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary is clear, focused and finan-



cially sound," he claimed.

Highlighting infrastructure progress, he noted that annual railway investment in Bihar has surged from Rs 1,132 crore a decade ago to Rs 10,066 crore. He said expansion of major railway lines, introduction of Vande Bharat services, and road projects worth nearly Rs 4 lakh crore are reshaping Bihar's connectivity and economic landscape.

He noted that major infrastructure projects, including the bridge connecting Aunta and Simaria, have been completed, improving regional connectivity and accelerating economic activity.

Saraogi said Bihar has also witnessed significant progress in the power sector with the commissioning of major thermal power projects at Nabinagar and Buxar, leading to improved energy availability. Expansion of airport infrastructure and continued support from the Centre through special development initiatives have further strengthened the state's growth prospects, he added.

Referring to the agriculture sector, the BJP state president said production of makhana, litchi and fish has increased steadily. He noted that lakhs of fishermen have

benefited from the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, while industrial investments are also rising across the state.

Saraogi claimed that various national reports now place Bihar among the fastest-growing states in the country. He further said that more than 2.5 crore people have moved above the poverty line in recent years.

Drawing a comparison with the pre-2005 period, he said Bihar was once associated with corruption, poor infrastructure and slow growth, whereas under the NDA government the state has consistently recorded growth rates close to double digits and is steadily moving towards becoming an economy of nearly Rs 11 lakh crore.

The BJP leader said the people of Bihar have endorsed politics centred on development, good governance and public welfare. He urged the opposition to study the state's development indicators instead of making baseless allegations.

"Bihar is moving forward with confidence towards becoming a developed state, and the NDA government remains committed to achieving this goal," Saraogi said.

CID tightens security at Bhawani Bhavan ahead of Abhishek Banerjee's scheduled appearance

Kolkata: Security has been stepped up at the CID headquarters in Bhawani Bhavan as Trinamool Congress national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee is scheduled to appear before investigators on Sunday in connection with the alleged signature forgery case linked to the West Bengal Assembly. Banerjee was questioned for nearly five-and-a-half hours by the state police's (CID) on Thursday night. Following the interrogation, he was summoned again and asked to appear on Sunday morning. Banerjee had earlier said that he would cooperate with the investigation and

appear before the agency as directed. The fresh summons comes amid a series of developments involving the Diamond Harbour MP. On Friday, CID officers visited his residence and served him another notice in connection with a separate case arising out of a complaint lodged in Salt Lake over one of his remarks. He has been asked to appear in that matter on June 16. In addition, the (ED) has summoned Banerjee on June 15 in connection with its investigation into the alleged primary school recruitment scam. He has no legal protection in either of these two cases.

Samrat launches Kharif campaign 2026 to aware farmers and promote modern agriculture practices

Patna: Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary on Sunday said that his government is committed to ensure that farmers are informed about all welfare schemes and are equipped with modern agricultural technologies to enhance productivity and income. Launching the Sharadiya Mahabhiyan-2026 by flagging off farmer awareness vehicles here, the Chief Minister said the campaign would focus on educating farmers about various government schemes and technological interventions related to the upcoming Kharif season. After flagging off two Agriculture Knowledge Vehicles along with farmer

awareness vehicles designated for all districts of the state, Choudhary said the campaign would disseminate technical information on Kharif crops and create awareness about programmes being implemented by the Agriculture Department during the Kharif season. He said farmers would be informed about the availability of agricultural inputs at subsidised rates and the various assistance programmes being offered by the state government. The campaign would also provide information on measures aimed at increasing farmers' income and improving agricultural productivity. The CM said special empha-

sis would be laid on creating awareness about the Digital Crop Survey and Farmer Registry, which are expected to strengthen agricultural planning and facilitate better delivery of government benefits to cultivators. Farmers will also be educated about modern agricultural equipment, training opportunities and extension services available through the Agriculture Department. In addition, the campaign will promote awareness regarding the "Khet Bachao Abhiyan" (Save the Fields Campaign), balanced and environment-friendly use of fertilisers, natural resource conservation and scientific crop residue management practices.

Cong govt in Karnataka cutting guarantee beneficiaries due to financial crisis: BJP's Vijayendra

Bengaluru: Escalating his attack on the Congress government in Karnataka, state BJP president and MLA Vijayendra Yediyurappa on Sunday alleged that the ruling party was preparing to slash the number of beneficiaries under its flagship guarantee schemes after realising the severe financial burden they had imposed on the state's exchequer.

Addressing reporters here, Vijayendra said the Congress government had promised guarantees to lakhs of people before the Assembly elections without properly assessing eligibility criteria and was now attempting to reduce the beneficiary base by branding many recipients as ineligible.

"The government is facing an economic crisis because of the guarantees. After using the schemes to win elections, it is now resorting to various excuses to remove lakhs of beneficiaries. Those

who were considered eligible before the elections are suddenly being termed ineligible after the elections. This amounts to deceiving and insulting the people of Karnataka," he charged.

The BJP leader claimed that concerns over the fiscal impact of the guarantee schemes had been acknowledged not only by opposition parties but also by Congress legislators and individuals associated with the government. He alleged that the Congress was trying to conceal the financial strain caused by the welfare programmes while quietly reducing the number of beneficiaries. Turning to the proposed Bidadi township project, Vijayendra reiterated the BJP's opposition and vowed to stand with farmers resisting land acquisition. "The BJP's position is unequivocal. We will not allow farmers' land to be taken forcibly. Farmers

themselves have declared that they are unwilling to part with their land. Any attempt to displace them in the name of development is unacceptable," he said.

He accused the state government of pushing the project despite resistance from landowners and urged Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to intervene. He also demanded strict adherence to land acquisition norms under the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) framework.

Vijayendra further targeted the government over the Dharmasthala controversy, alleging that the decision to constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) was politically motivated and unnecessary. Referring to the role of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, he claimed the government had acted under pressure and without adequate consideration of the implications.

Three ZPM members in Mizoram's Chakma Autonomous Council quit, seek to join BJP

Aizawl: Three elected members of the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) in Mizoram have resigned from the ruling (ZPM) and announced their intention to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a move that has further deepened the prolonged political instability within the autonomous council. The three Members of District Council (MDCs) who quit the ZPM are Kalasoga Chakma, Sanjib Chakma and Supan Chakma. Their resignations mark yet another shift in the political landscape of the CADC, which has witnessed repeated changes in party affiliations since the council elections held in 2023. In their resignation letters, the leaders stepped down not only from the primary membership of the party but also relinquished all organisational responsibilities associated with the Chakma District Zoram People's

Movement (CDZPM), the district unit of the ZPM functioning within the autonomous council. The development is being viewed as a significant setback for the ruling party in the region and is expected to alter the existing political equations in the 20-member council, where numerical strength has remained fluid due to frequent defections. The CADC administers the Chakma-majority areas of Mizoram under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, which grants a degree of autonomy to tribal regions through elected district councils empowered to manage local governance and development matters. However, since the 2023 CADC elections, the council has been plagued by persistent political uncertainty. A series of defections, resignations and shifting alliances among elected representatives have prevented the emergence of a

stable administration capable of governing effectively.

The situation deteriorated further after the Governor suspended the Executive Committee, the executive wing responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the autonomous council. The suspension added another layer of uncertainty to an already fragile political environment. Despite the Executive Committee remaining under suspension, political realignments have continued unabated. Elected representatives have repeatedly switched parties, leading to widespread criticism from residents who have expressed frustration over the lack of stability and governance. The prolonged crisis has had tangible consequences on the functioning of the council. Administrative activities have reportedly been disrupted, affecting the implementation of various public services.

CBI arrests three forest officials in Budgam bribery case

Srinagar: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested three individuals, including a forest range officer posted in central Kashmir's Budgam district, in connection with an alleged bribery case involving the release of official documents linked to a furniture unit, officials said on Sunday. According to officials, the arrests were made following the registration of a (FIR) by the CBI after allegations surfaced that officials of the Forest Department had demanded illegal gratification from a local resident in exchange for returning seized documents. The accused have been identified as Manzoor Ahmed, who was serving as the Range Officer in Budgam district, along with a forester and a casual labourer associated with the department. The case has been registered under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, which deals

with public servants accepting or obtaining undue advantage. The matter came to light after a resident of Shippora Nasipora in Budgam approached the CBI with a written complaint detailing the alleged demand for a bribe by forest officials. The complainant stated that documents pertaining to their family-owned furniture unit had been taken away by officials during the course of official proceedings. According to the complaint, the documents were essential for the functioning and legal operations of the furniture unit, and repeated requests were allegedly made to secure their release. However, the complainant alleged that the accused officer demanded money before returning the papers.

The initial demand for illegal gratification was allegedly fixed at Rs 15,000. The complainant further alleged that after discussions

From SCR to AI city, defence corridor to wellness city: Sarojini Nagar emerges as UP's new growth engine

Lucknow: Riding on the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Viksit Bharat and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's commitment to transforming Uttar Pradesh into a trillion-dollar economy, Sarojini Nagar has rapidly emerged as one of the state's most dynamic growth centres.

From the proposed State Capital Region (SCR) and India's first AI City to the Defence Corridor, Aero City, Wellness City, and the country's first Naval Museum, the constituency is witnessing an unprecedented wave of investment, infrastructure development, innovation, and urban transformation.

Senior BJP leader and Sarojini Nagar MLA Dr. Rajeshwar Singh said that the scale and diversity of projects underway have positioned Sarojini Nagar at the forefront of Uttar Pradesh's development journey. With major investments spanning defence manufacturing, artificial intelligence, health-care, education, transporta-

tion, housing, tourism, and governance, the region is not only reshaping the future of Lucknow but also emerging as a key driver of Uttar Pradesh's economic growth and modernization.

Dr. Singh said here on Sunday that over the past twelve years, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India has achieved unprecedented progress in development, governance, national security, digital transformation, social welfare and global standing.

Flagship initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, Ayushman Bharat, Jal Jeevan Mission, Jan Dhan Yojana, and PM-Kisan have transformed the lives of millions of Indians.

National security has been significantly strengthened through decisive actions such as the surgical strikes, the Balakot air strike, and Operation Sindoor. India's successful G20 Presidency, the achievements of

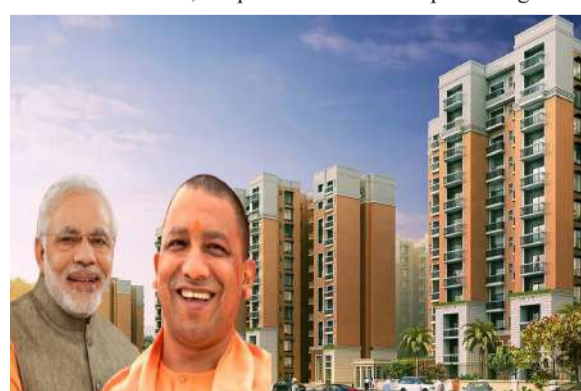
Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya-L1, the Digital India revolution, and the country's emergence as the world's fourth-largest economy reflect the effectiveness of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. He further noted that Prime Minister Modi has become India's longest-serving continuously elected Prime Minister.

He further said that under the guidance of Prime Minister Modi and the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh has established new benchmarks in development and governance since 2017.

The state budget has increased from approximately ₹3.85 lakh crore to over ₹8.08 lakh crore. Uttar Pradesh has emerged as India's second-largest state economy and has attracted investment proposals worth more than ₹40 lakh crore through the Global Investors Summit.

Nearly 42% of India's operational expressway network is currently located in

Uttar Pradesh, a figure expected to rise to nearly 62% after the completion of the Ganga Expressway. Improved law and order, the Defence Corridor, expan-



sion of medical infrastructure, religious tourism initiatives and record infrastructure investments have positioned Uttar Pradesh among India's leading development models.

Dr. Singh highlighted that the proposed State Capital Region (SCR), with Sarojini Nagar at its core, is one of the most significant regional

development initiatives in Uttar Pradesh's history. Spread across approximately 27,826 square kilometres, the project will facilitate balanced and planned growth

across six districts—Lucknow, Unnao, Raebareilly, Hardoi, Sitapur and Barabanki—with Sarojini Nagar emerging as its central growth node.

He stated that the proposed 1,500-acre Aero City project near Amausi will transform Sarojini Nagar into a major centre for investment, business, tourism,

hospitality and global services. Modern hotels, business parks, convention facilities, shopping destinations and entertainment infrastructure will provide the region with an international identity. According to Dr. Singh, Uttar Pradesh's first AI City is being developed in Sarojini Nagar with an investment of approximately ₹10,732 crore. The project is expected to become a major hub for artificial intelligence, data centres, IT services, research and innovation. He also highlighted Ashok Leyland's state-of-the-art electric bus manufacturing facility, involving an investment of nearly ₹10,000 crore. Spread over approximately 70 acres, the facility will have the capacity to manufacture 2,500 electric buses annually and generate significant employment opportunities for youth. Dr. Singh said that the expansion of Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport and the development of Terminal-3 have trans-

formed Sarojini Nagar into a global connectivity gateway, accelerating growth in investment, tourism, logistics and services. He further noted that India's first Naval Museum is being developed at a cost of approximately ₹19 crore, showcasing the Indian Navy's legacy of courage and service to future generations. The Defence Industrial Corridor is also bringing transformative investments to the region. A BrahMos Aerospace unit worth approximately ₹1,500 crore is being established, creating high-skilled employment opportunities and strengthening indigenous defence manufacturing.

Dr. Singh said that the VFS Global Centre in Sarojini Nagar currently provides visa services for 15 countries. The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) campus has been developed at a cost of approximately ₹17 crore. Additionally, an International Convention Centre, being developed at a cost of ₹1,287 crore across

32 acres, will have a capacity of nearly 10,000 people and become a premier venue for national and international events. He added that a State Disaster Management Headquarters is being developed at a cost of ₹66.40 crore, while a modern Integrated City Bus Terminal worth approximately ₹380 crore is also under construction.

Dr. Singh emphasized that the proposed Wellness City, spread over nearly 485 hectares, will become a modern centre for health-care, medical education, research and integrated wellness services. He stated that Sarojini Nagar is no longer merely an emerging health-care destination but is steadily establishing itself as Uttar Pradesh's Medical Capital. Institutions such as UPIFS, Lok Bandhu Raj Narayan Combined Hospital, multiple super-specialty hospitals and expanding health-care infrastructure are positioning the region as a leading healthcare and medical education hub.

Car Catches Fire Inside Underground Parking Lot Of Shopping Mall

Mumbai: A vehicle burst into flames inside the basement parking area of the Crystal Point Mall in Andheri West on Sunday, causing widespread panic among shoppers and store workers.

Videos shared online showed the car completely trapped in large flames as thick black smoke quickly filled up the underground space. Firefighters rushed to the scene and managed to put out the blaze before it could spread to other vehicles, and fortunately, no injuries were reported. Witnesses alleged that it took extra time to control the situation because the basement parking lot lacked proper ventilation, and the building's emergency exhaust systems were not working correctly.

The sudden outbreak of a vehicle fire inside the basement parking area of the Crystal Point Mall in Andheri West triggered widespread anxiety and chaos among hundreds of weekend shoppers and retail employees. The incident, which occurred during peak evening hours, transformed the subterranean parking facility into a hazardous zone within minutes as the flames rapidly consumed the vehicle. Security personnel immediately initiated emergency evacuation protocols, guiding alarmed patrons out of the retail complex and away from the spreading smoke as sirens began to echo throughout the structure.

Amateur video footage captured by onlookers and subsequently shared across various social media platforms vividly documented the



intensity of the blaze, showing the parked sedan completely engulfed in towering orange flames.

As the fire grew, thick, toxic black smoke quickly accumulated in the underground space, severely reducing visibility and creating a highly challenging environment for

anyone attempting to navigate the exit ramps.

The dramatic visuals generated significant online concern regarding the structural safety of the building and the potential risks posed to other vehicles parked in adjacent bays.

Upon receiving the emergency

distress call, the Mumbai Fire Brigade dispatched multiple fire engines and rapid response tankers to the Andheri West location to contain the situation.

Firefighters equipped with specialized breathing apparatus entered the darkened, smoke-filled basement to locate the seat of the fire and initiate intense water-dousing operations. Thanks to the swift, tactical intervention of the rescue teams, the main body of the fire was successfully suppressed and extinguished before the extreme heat could spark a chain reaction among neighboring automobiles. Fortunately, municipal healthcare officials and mall management confirmed that no injuries or casualties were reported as a result of the fire or the subsequent evacuation process.

The driver of the vehicle had reportedly stepped away from the car shortly before the fire broke out, preventing what could have been a tragic situation inside the confined space.

Emergency medical services remained stationed outside the mall premises as a precautionary measure to assist anyone suffering from minor smoke inhalation, but no transportations to local hospitals were necessary.

In the aftermath of the incident, several eyewitnesses and vehicle owners alleged that the response time within the basement was unnecessarily prolonged due to critical infrastructure failures within the mall's maintenance systems.

White Markings On Walkways Spark Tension Between Local Groups

Mumbai: A growing dispute regarding white stripes painted on local pathways has spread to the Girgaon neighborhood after similar issues were reported in Ghatkopar and Shivtirth.

On Sunday morning, local Marathi residents in the Mangalwadi area noticed the fresh white markings on the ground and expressed strong objections over why they were painted. Political leaders and community groups quickly intervened to question local Jain residents about the purpose of the stripes. The incident has heightened local tensions and sparked a wider public debate across Mumbai regarding the use of shared community spaces and religious practices.

The emergence of fresh white markings on public walkways has become the center of an escalating dispute regarding the use of shared community infrastructure and religious practices in Mumbai. The localized friction, which initially flared up in residential pockets of Ghatkopar and Kanjurmarg before spreading to Dadar, has now found a new flashpoint in the historic neighborhood of Girgaon. On Sunday morning, local Marathi residents in the Mangalwadi area expressed strong objections after discovering that public footpaths had been heavily painted

with distinctive white stripes overnight, leading to an immediate intervention by various community representatives and political organizations. The underlying reason for painting these white lines is deeply rooted in the traditional religious practices of Jain monks and ascetics, who travel entirely barefoot as part of their spiritual vows. During the monsoon season, public paver blocks and walkways frequently collect a thick layer of green moss and slippery algae, which harbors millions of microscopic living organisms. Because the core tenets of Jainism place an absolute, uncompromising emphasis on ahimsa (non-violence) and the protection of all life forms, monks try to avoid trampling these micro-organisms underfoot. The thick application of white paint effectively kills or prevents the growth of moss on that specific path, providing a visible, clear corridor where the monks can walk to collect alms without violating their religious principles.

While members of the Jain community argue that the pathways are created out of pure spiritual devotion and practical necessity for their religious leaders, the practice has faced severe pushback from other local groups who view it as an unauthorized alteration of public proper-

ty. In Girgaon, the objection materialized rapidly as members of local organizations, including the 'Aamhi Girgaonkar' group, gathered at Charni Road to protest the markings. In a direct demonstration of their disapproval, residents smeared black paint over the white stripes during the night, arguing that public roads and municipal footpaths must remain completely neutral and free from any unilateral religious modifications.

The controversy has quickly transitioned from a neighborhood disagreement into a larger socio-political debate across Mumbai, drawing sharp reactions from prominent political parties like the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS). Political leaders have publicly questioned the legality of altering public infrastructure for specific communal purposes, warning against what they describe as an attempt to establish cultural dominance over shared civic spaces.

Conversely, representatives from housing societies where the lines were drawn have stated that the paint was intended to be temporary and would naturally wash away with the seasonal rains, adding that they had no intention of causing communal disharmony or divisions within the city's multicultural fabric.

Passenger Fined For Staying On Platform Too Long While Train Was Delayed

Mumbai: A railway passenger at Kalyan station was fined ₹500 for staying on the platform past the two-hour limit of his platform ticket while waiting for a delayed train.

The incident took place on Thursday when the man bought a platform ticket to see his family members off on a long-distance train. The train was scheduled for noon but faced major delays and arrived much later in the evening. When the passenger tried to leave the station after seeing his family off, ticket checkers stopped him and penalized him for overstaying. The event has sparked a massive public debate over whether strict railway regulations should be adjusted to accommodate families dealing with unexpected train delays.

The enforcement of strict railway administrative regulations at major transit hubs became a subject of intense public debate following a controversial ticketing incident at Kalyan station in the Mumbai metropolitan region. A railway passenger was officially penalized and fined five hundred rupees by ticket checking authorities for exceeding the standard two-hour time limit permitted on a standard platform ticket. The enforcement action has triggered widespread discussion among daily commuters and pas-

senger welfare associations regarding whether the rigid application of station by-laws should be modified to show flexibility when travelers are forced to wait due to operational failures on the railway network itself.

The incident unfolded on Thursday afternoon when a local resident arrived at the busy junction station to see off his family members, who were booked to travel on a long-distance express train. To ensure compliance with entry regulations and gain legitimate access to the boarding area, the man purchased a standard platform ticket at the station counter before accompanying his relatives to the designated platform. At the time of his arrival, the family anticipated a routine departure, expecting to exchange farewells and exit the terminal premises well within the standard time frame allocated by Central Railway guidelines for non-traveling visitors.

According to station schedules, the long-distance express train was originally slated to arrive at the platform and depart at noon, which would have allowed the passenger to easily leave the station within his ticket's validity period. However, due to unforeseen technical snags and logistical complications further down the railway line, the scheduled

train faced major delays, leaving hundreds of passengers stranded on the platform for hours. Rather than abandoning his family members, including elderly relatives and young children, in the crowded and chaotic environment, the man chose to remain with them to assist with their heavy luggage and ensure their safety during the prolonged wait.

The delayed train finally rolled into Kalyan station much later in the evening, allowing the family to safely board their coach and begin their long-distance journey. After successfully helping his relatives settle into their berths and seeing the train officially depart the platform, the man proceeded toward the main exit gates of the station to return home. However, as he attempted to pass through the exit turnstiles, he was intercepted by a team of stationed ticket checkers who were conducting routine inspections of inbound and outbound passengers to curb unauthorized entry.

Upon examining the man's ticket, the enforcement personnel immediately noticed that the timestamp printed on the slip indicated he had been inside the station complex for significantly longer than the permitted two hours. Despite the passenger's detailed explana-

tion that the excessive delay was entirely caused by the railway department's own scheduling failures, the ticket checking staff remained firm in their interpretation of the rulebook. The officials argued that according to standing operational protocols, a platform ticket automatically expires after one hundred and twenty minutes, irrespective of external factors or train performance.

Because the passenger had technically overstayed the authorized duration, the railway staff issued a formal penalty of five hundred rupees for traveling or staying on railway property without a valid ticket.

The man was forced to pay the fine on the spot to secure his release from the inspection area, an outcome that left him deeply frustrated and prompted him to share his grievance with fellow commuters and local passenger groups. The story quickly gained traction across social media platforms, transforming a localized ticketing dispute into a broader commentary on institutional empathy and customer service standards.

The incident has sparked a massive public debate across Mumbai and neighboring districts regarding the fairness of penalizing citizens for situations created by administrative inefficiency.

Broken Public Bus Roof Caught On Video Raises Major Safety Fears

Mumbai: A viral video showing an state transport bus running with a broken roof panel has triggered widespread safety concerns among regular passengers in Maharashtra.

The online footage shows a bus driver attempting to manually pull down a loose piece of the roof right from his driving seat while passengers are actively boarding the vehicle. The incident reportedly happened just as the bus was preparing to leave a station. The viral clip has raised serious questions about the poor maintenance of public transport vehicles and the potential safety risks commuters face when vehicles are not checked regularly.

The viral spread of a video showcasing a state transport bus operating with a severely compromised roof panel has triggered widespread concern among daily commuters across Maharashtra. The footage, which quickly gained traction across various social media platforms, highlights significant gaps in the routine upkeep and safety audits of public transport vehicles. For a state that relies heavily on its public transit network to connect millions of passengers daily, the visual evidence of such structural neglect has sparked an intense public debate

regarding passenger safety and administrative accountability. The online video captures a highly concerning moment where the driver of the state transport bus is seen attempting to manually manage a detached piece of the vehicle's roof right from his seat. While the bus is actively stationed and passengers are in the process of boarding, the driver stretches out to pull down the loose panel in an attempt to temporarily secure it. This improvised and hazardous response to a structural failure underscores the lack of immediate maintenance support at transit hubs, forcing crew members to handle major mechanical defects on their own.

Regular commuters and public safety advocates have expressed sharp criticism over the incident, pointing out that such vehicle conditions present an immedi-



ate hazard to everyone on board and nearby. A loose roof panel, especially when a large vehicle is traveling at high speeds on open highways, can easily detach completely due to strong wind resistance. Such an occurrence could not only injure passengers inside the cabin but also cause catastrophic accidents for other motorists traveling behind or alongside the bus.

The incident has also brought the overall condition of the state's public transport fleet under intense scrutiny, with passenger unions demanding stricter enforcement of safety protocols. Many argue that a vehicle with visible structural damage should never be cleared to operate or pick up passengers in the first place. The fact that the bus was preparing to depart on its scheduled route with a broken roof indicates a major breakdown in the pre-trip

inspection routines that are legally required to ensure roadworthiness. In response to the growing public outcry and the viral nature of the footage, senior officials within the transport department have promised a comprehensive review of maintenance operations. Administrative representatives stated that strict action will be taken against the workshop personnel and depot managers responsible for clearing the compromised vehicle for active duty. The department emphasized that it maintains a zero-tolerance policy for maintenance oversights that compromise public safety, promising that structural audits will be intensified across all regional depots.

Urban planning and transit experts note that the underlying issue often stems from a combination of aging vehicle fleets and overextended maintenance staff at regional workshops. When repair bays are overwhelmed with a high volume of daily buses, minor or developing structural flaws are sometimes overlooked in favor of addressing critical engine or braking failures. However, this incident serves as a stark reminder that bodywork integrity is just as vital as mechanical health when it comes to safeguarding the lives of commuters.

Massive Dam Project Reaches Final Stages To Help Water Scarcity

Vasai: The local municipal corporation has finished over 80 percent of the construction on the ₹135-crore Kholsapada-2 dam, offering hope to residents facing severe water shortages.

The twin cities of Vasai and Virar have seen rapid population growth and urban development, causing a massive spike in daily water demand. Officials state that the new dam is expected to start working very soon and will inject an extra 22 million liters of water per day into the municipal supply. To further improve distribution, local authorities are also building new water storage towers under a national development scheme.

The extensive infrastructure development aimed at addressing chronic water scarcity in the Palghar district has reached a major operational milestone. The Vasai-Virar City Municipal Corporation has successfully completed over eighty percent of the civil construction



work on the 135-crore rupee Kholsapada-2 dam project. Located in the mountainous terrain near the tribal-dominated regions of Vasai, this massive engineering endeavor is being fast-tracked to provide long-awaited relief to hundreds of thousands of local residents who endure severe water cuts and tanker dependencies during the peak summer months.

The urgency surrounding the completion of the dam is deeply tied to the unprecedented urbanization and rapid population expansion within the twin cities of Vasai and Virar over the past decade. As affordable housing projects and commercial centers continue to expand along the western suburban corridor, the daily municipal water demand

has far outpaced the capacity of existing reservoirs. This massive supply-demand gap has frequently led to public protests and placed immense pressure on local administrative bodies to secure new, reliable water resources to sustain the growing metropolis. According to senior engineering officials overseeing the site, the new reservoir is designed to capture and store

seasonal monsoon runoff that would otherwise flow unused into the Arabian Sea. Once fully operational, the Kholsapada-2 dam is projected to inject an additional twenty-two million liters of clean, treatable water per day into the municipal distribution network. This substantial increase in daily supply is expected to stabilize water pressures across several major residential sectors, significantly reducing the civic body's reliance on external water sources and private water tankers. To ensure that the newly generated water supply reaches household taps efficiently without significant transmission losses, local authorities are simultaneously upgrading the region's distribution infrastructure. Under the central government's flagship urban development scheme, the Amrut Mission, the municipal corporation is constructing several new elevated water storage reservoirs and balancing towers at strategic locations.

Local Government Swept Up In Attendance Record Salary Fraud

Bhiwandi: A major controversy has hit the sanitation department of the Bhiwandi-Nizampur Municipal Corporation over allegations that employee attendance records were intentionally faked.

Dubbed the "Magic Pen Scam," the issue came to light when a local politician checked the official records at a sanitation office in Ward No. 14. He discovered that multiple sanitation workers who had been completely absent from work for several months were marked as present every day.

This allowed the absent employees to continue collecting their regular salaries straight from public funds, raising serious concerns about corruption and a lack of management inside the city's civic body.

The administration of the Bhiwandi-Nizampur Municipal Corporation is currently facing severe scrutiny following the exposure of a highly organized payroll and attendance scam within its

sanitation department. The administrative irregularity, which local observers have labeled the "Magic Pen Scam," involves allegations that official attendance registers were systematically manipulated to show full attendance for employees who were consistently absent from their duties. The revelation has sparked widespread public anger and political debate across the region, as citizens demand a thorough investigation into how public funds were used to pay for non-existent labor.

The fraudulent practice was brought to light during an unannounced inspection conducted by a local political representative at the sanitation department's field office in Ward Number 14.

Upon reviewing the physical ledger books and comparing them against the actual deployment of workers on the ground, the official discovered a massive discrepancy in the record-keeping system. Multiple sanitation

workers who had not reported for duty or performed any civic work for several consecutive months were meticulously marked as present on a daily basis, effectively bypassing the municipal corporation's internal check-and-balance systems.

By maintaining these falsified records, the absent employees were able to successfully clear administrative audits and continue drawing their full monthly salaries directly from the municipal treasury.

This illicit diversion of public resources has raised serious questions regarding the level of oversight exercised by senior department supervisors and ward officers, who are legally responsible for verifying labor outputs before authorizing payroll disbursements.

Critics argue that a scam of this magnitude could not have operated over several months without either extreme negligence or active collusion from higher-ranking administrative staff inside the civic body.

Editorial

Fear of Cockroaches or the Voice of the Youth?

The growing discontent among the nation's youth is no longer confined to social media posts or hashtags. Chaos within the education system, questions surrounding competitive exams, rising unemployment, and a youth population awaiting answers are giving rise to new forms of public agitation. Emerging against this backdrop, the 'Cockroach Janata Party' movement initially seemed like a joke; today, however, it is becoming a symbolic voice for the youth's mounting frustration and the tough questions being posed to the establishment.

Many movements have come and gone in the country's political landscape; some dissolved during elections, others were lost in power negotiations, while some remained confined to the pages of history. Yet, the 'Cockroach Janata Party' (CJP) movement which began on social media appears to be taking shape in a distinct manner. Initially, many mocked the movement, dismissing it as 'meme politics' and assuming the hype would soon fizzle out. However, following protests at Delhi's Jantar Mantar and subsequently in Amritsar, Punjab, it has become clear that this is not merely digital entertainment but a symbol of rising discontent regarding the education system, unemployment, and the central government's policies.

Controversies surrounding the 'NEET' and 'CBSE' exams across the country have shaken the confidence of millions of students. There was an expectation that the government would accept concrete political responsibility for these issues. Instead, a growing sentiment suggests that the protesting students' anger is being ignored rather than acknowledged or understood. Against this backdrop, the Cockroach Janata Party spearheaded by Abhijit Deepke is launching a nationwide protest demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. As this movement expands from Jantar Mantar to Pune, Amritsar, and now Jaipur, it is becoming impossible for those in power to ignore it.

The choice of Punjab in this entire sequence of events is particularly noteworthy. Currently, farmers, the educated unemployed, ASHA workers, contract employees, linemen, and various employee unions in Punjab have taken to the streets to press for their respective demands. In Dhuri, a youth climbs a mobile tower to protest for employment; in Patiala, unemployed linemen face police lathi-charges; and the state government is constantly being cornered over various local issues. Yet, amidst this situation, the 'Cockroach Janata Party' has kept its entire political focus trained on the central government and the national education system. There may be differences of opinion as to whether this contradiction is deliberate or strategic, but it has certainly deepened the political significance of this movement.

Punjab is currently a state where the Aam Aadmi Party holds a full majority. Thanks to an anti-BJP organizational climate, active cadres, and an influential youth network on social media, the state is considered fertile ground for launching new forms of mass movements. Consequently, there is speculation that the 'Cockroach Janata Party' has chosen Punjab as its primary battleground. Notably, activists associated with the Aam Aadmi Party were observed participating in these protests. Although the party clarified that it had no official stance on the matter, several local office-bearers participated in the agitation in their personal capacities. Thus, even in the absence of a formal alliance between the Cockroach Janata Party and opposition parties, a political message regarding mutual interests has certainly been conveyed.

Photos of Abhijit Deepke circulating on social media alongside AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, the support extended by AAP regarding student issues, and the prevailing anti-BJP sentiment have collectively created an atmosphere of suspicion within the ruling camp. In politics, public perception often carries more weight than formal agreements. Consequently, the BJP is questioning whether this movement enjoys indirect backing from opposition parties, though no concrete evidence has surfaced so far.

The movement's greatest strength lies in its structure. Instead of registering as a political party with the Election Commission, Abhijit Deepke has chosen to operate as a pressure group. This frees them from the constraints and compromises of electoral politics and the need to navigate complex power equations. Their core agenda focuses on student issues, transparency in examinations, and employment. Following the protest at Jantar Mantar in Delhi, a nationwide series of agitations has been announced, accompanied by a warning that the struggle will intensify if the government fails to meet their demands.

However, the movement also faces some difficult challenges. If it claims to represent the voice of ordinary youth, why is it relatively silent on issues such as local unemployment in Punjab, the grievances of ASHA workers, and the struggles of farmers and contract employees? If criticism is directed solely at the central government while the state government is spared, the claim to political neutrality could be undermined. To maintain the credibility of any mass movement, it is essential to apply consistent standards against injustice, regardless of which party is in power.

Nevertheless, the government should not make the mistake of dismissing this movement with mere ridicule. History shows that many major political movements were initially viewed merely as jokes, satire, or objects of mockery. However, when they give voice to suppressed societal discontent, their nature changes rapidly. The anger of youth frustrated by the education system, lack of employment, issues surrounding competitive exams, and a scarcity of opportunities is clearly visible today. If the government dismisses this anger as merely a 'digital trend,' it may have to pay a heavy political price in the future.

No one currently has the answers as to whether the 'Cockroach Janata Party' will succeed, endure in the long run, or eventually enter electoral politics. Yet, one thing is certain: the 'cockroach' symbol has transcended being a mere social media joke. It has become a symbol of distrust in the current education system, the pain of unemployment, and the youth's discontent with those in power. Consequently, the true test of this movement will now play out on the streets, within society, and in the public's trust. If it maintains consistency, broadens its scope, and upholds a uniform stance on all issues, it will not remain confined to a single protest; instead, it could carve out a distinct niche in Indian democracy as a pressure group that unsettles the political establishment and compels the powers-that-be to be more accountable.

The government must provide concrete answers regarding the education system, transparent recruitment processes, employment opportunities, and the dialogue between the authorities and the citizenry. History shows that if societal discontent is not addressed in time, it ceases to be merely a protest and transforms into a massive movement for change. Today, the 'cockroach' has become a symbol not of ridicule, but of the restless minds of young people awaiting answers. Hearing this voice and embracing dialogue would serve the best interests of democracy; otherwise, this simmering discontent could evolve into a much broader political and social phenomenon in the future.

"Bharat Innovates 2026"



Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi and President of the French Republic HE Emmanuel Macron today jointly inaugurated the maiden edition of Bharat Innovates 2026 at the Palais des Expositions de Nice, France. Organized by the Government of India as an initiative of the Union Ministry of Education, this high-impact event serves as a premier platform for advancing innovation-led partnerships between India's deep tech innovators and global stakeholders.

Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal, welcomed the dignitaries participating in this event. Union Minis-

ter for External Affairs Dr. S Jaishankar; National Security Advisor, Shri Ajit Doval and Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India, Dr. Ajay Kumar Sood attended the inaugural event, among others.

Addressing the gathering, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi underscored India's growing leadership in innovation and technology, stating, "Bharat innovates with scale and speed. Bharat innovates for a sustainable future, and Bharat innovates for the whole world. Innovation is in India's DNA. Bharat Innovates is an invitation to the world to co-create the next chapter of global innovation

with India."

President HE Emmanuel Macron lauded India's vibrant innovation ecosystem and said that "I deeply believe that the fact that Nice is hosting today the first Bharat Innovates 2026 event ever held outside India is a powerful testament to the strength of the ties that unite our two countries. These ties are grounded in a long-standing technological, scientific and industrial partnership that has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years. They also demonstrate how much our two countries still have to build together through their scientific, entrepreneurial, and industrial strengths."

Following the inauguration, the leaders undertook a walk-through of the Bharat Innovates Innovation Pavilion, showcasing 120 cutting-edge technologies and breakthrough innovations developed by Indian innovators and premier Indian higher education institutions across sectors including artificial intelligence, semiconductors, biotechnology, healthcare, energy, advanced manufacturing, mobility, and space technologies.

Bharat Innovates aims at showcasing and promoting Indian DeepTech innovations to facilitate partnerships with investors, industry, institutions and innovators from across the globe. It is expect-

ed to deepen bilateral cooperation in science, technology, innovation, education, and entrepreneurship while strengthening India's integration into global innovation networks.

Scheduled over three days from 14-16 June 2026, Bharat Innovates 2026 features an extensive programme comprising 11 high-level panel discussions, multiple

universities, incubators, and policymakers. The programme brings together global industry leaders, investors, academics, and technology experts, to discuss emerging opportunities across artificial intelligence, semiconductors, biotechnology, healthcare, energy, advanced manufacturing, space, defence, and climate technologies.

The inaugural edition of Bharat



sector-focused masterclasses, curated B2B matchmaking meetings, focused investor pitch sessions involving over 50 startups, and dedicated networking engagements with global investors, corporates,

Innovates reflects the shared commitment of India and France to foster a future-ready innovation ecosystem driven by collaboration, talent, and transformative technologies.

India-France ATL Bridge to Strengthen Bilateral Innovation Cooperation through School Innovation Labs

Guided by the shared resolve of Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, to deepen innovation-led cooperation between India and France, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog, and La Fondation Dassault Systèmes have established the India-France ATL Bridge to enable collaboration among young innovators in both countries.

The initiative establishes the first School Innovation Lab in France, inspired by India's Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) framework, creating a structured platform for young learners to collaborate, strengthen linkages between innovation ecosystems, and deepen bilateral innovation cooperation between the two countries.

The Letter of Intent (LoI) formalizing this collaboration was exchanged between Mission Director, Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog, Deepak Bagla and Managing Director, La Fondation Dassault Systèmes Ms. Marie-Pierre Aulas in France today.

The India-France ATL Bridge will serve as a strategic platform for fostering cross-border innovation programmes, entrepreneurial exchanges, and deeper collaboration between the innovation ecosystems of India and France.

Through knowledge exchange, capacity building, and joint innovation activities, the ATL Bridge will enable young innovators to co-create solutions to real-world challenges and strengthen early-stage innovation capabilities. By strengthening connections among young innovators, educators, and stakeholders, the initiative aims to further cultivate a vibrant culture of innovation and drive mutually beneficial partnerships between



India and France.

The India-France ATL Bridge initiative is being undertaken during the India-France Year of Innovation 2026, reflecting the shared commitment of both nations to strengthen innovation-led cooperation and nurture future-ready talent.

The initiative represents a significant step towards expanding international collaboration in school-level innovation and fostering meaningful exchanges among students, educators, and innovation ecosystems in both countries.

Rooted in India's civilizational philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam—"the world is one family, the initiative reflects the belief that knowledge, innovation, and progress are most meaningful when shared. Through

the exchange of the Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) methodology and innovation ecosystem approach, India is extending not only a proven innovation model but also a spirit of partnership, friendship, and collective growth.

Reflecting on the significance of the initiative, Deepak Bagla, Mission Director, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog, said "This milestone reflects the growing confidence of the world in India's innovation journey. Guided by the vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, India has evolved into a nation that not only nurtures innovation domestically but also contributes globally relevant models and solutions. As we work towards the goal of Viksit Bharat 2047, initiatives such as the India-

France ATL Bridge reaffirm India's commitment to fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and international cooperation. The establishment of the School Innovation Lab in France, connected with the Atal Tinkering Lab ecosystem in India, is not merely the creation of a new learning space, it is the sharing of a vision that every young person, irrespective of geography, should have the opportunity to innovate, create, and lead."

Sharing her views Managing Director, La Fondation Dassault Systèmes, Marie-Pierre Aulas, stated that "Education is the most powerful lever for building a sustainable future. It is essential to inspire young people to learn and discover science and technology through explorative and experiential

learning. The Atal Innovation Labs are a unique initiative to help achieve this ambition by nurturing creativity, experimentation, and entrepreneurial skills from an early age. Since 7 years, through our actions in India and in France, La Fondation Dassault Systèmes has been committed to fostering this innovation mindset and strengthening international collaboration. I am delighted about this new step in the relationship between our two countries, thanks to Atal Innovation Mission, in the service of youth and a shared innovative future."

Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in 2016 with the vision of fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship across the coun-

try and contributing towards the goal of Viksit Bharat 2047. Since its inception, AIM has emerged as a flagship national initiative to create and promote innovation ecosystems across schools, universities, research institutions, startups, and industry. Under AIM, Atal Tinkering Labs have evolved into one of the world's largest school-based innovation networks, empowering millions of students with skills in design thinking, problem-solving, emerging technologies, and entrepreneurship.

Over the last decade, India has built one of the world's largest innovation ecosystems. A key driver of this transformation has been the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog, which has nurtured innovation from classrooms to startups and industry.

Since 2016, more than 10,000 Atal Tinkering Labs have been established across India, enabling over 11 million students to engage with design thinking, robotics, electronics, 3D design and printing, artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies. The ATL movement has demonstrated that innovation begins with curiosity and flourishes when young minds are provided with the right environment to experiment, create, and solve real-world problems.

As Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi has noted, "The future of India will be dependent on the innovations and work done by the youth." The India-France ATL Bridge embodies this vision and stands as a powerful symbol of friendship, collaboration, and a shared belief in the power of young innovators and student entrepreneurs to shape a more innovative and prosperous future.

PM Modi's Vision Driving India's Transformation Towards Viksit Bharat

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision and leadership over the past twelve years have transformed India into a global clean energy leader and accelerated the country's journey towards Viksit Bharat, Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy and Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Shri Pralhad Venkatesh Joshi said here today. He said India has moved from discussing renewable energy potential to delivering measurable outcomes on the ground, with rapid expansion in renewable energy capacity, manufacturing and citizen participation defining the country's clean energy transition.

Highlighting a major milestone in this journey, Shri Joshi released the Report on Floating Solar PV Potential Assessment of India, which estimates the country's floating solar potential at over 102 GWp and takes In-

dia's total assessed solar potential to 3,445 GWp. He said the Ministry is working on a dedicated scheme to promote floating solar deployment across the country.

Shri Joshi said that reservoirs and other water bodies are emerging as important assets for clean energy generation through floating solar projects.

He added that these initiatives reflect the Government's commitment to harnessing natural resources in a sustainable and efficient manner while accelerating India's clean energy transition.

The Minister also launched the Online Portal for the Small Hydro Power Development Scheme, stating that it will enhance transparency and efficiency in implementation. He said the initiative marks the first major policy intervention in the small hydro sec-

tor since 2017.

Shri Joshi said that flagship programmes such as PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana and PM-KUSUM are expanding citizen participation in India's clean energy transition and accelerating the adoption of renewable energy across the country.

Shri Joshi highlighted that India has emerged as one of the world's leading solar markets, with non-fossil fuel capacity increasing from 81 GW in 2014 to 288 GW and solar capacity rising from 2.8 GW to 155 GW. He added that domestic solar manufacturing capacity has also expanded significantly, with module manufacturing reaching 192 GW and cell manufacturing capacity touching 30 GW.

The Minister said that India's clean energy achievements have earned global recognition and demonstrated the country's ability to

deliver on ambitious climate and energy goals. He added that India has transformed from a power-deficit nation into a power-surplus nation while emerging as a major renewable energy manufacturing hub.

On the occasion, NISE and Military Engineering Services exchanged an MoU to strengthen the adoption of solar energy across defence establishments. Under the collaboration, NISE will provide technical support for planning, implementation and monitoring of renewable energy projects.

Shri Joshi also released the book "Green Energy and Sustainable Development" authored by Dr. Mohammad Rihan. He expressed confidence that the publication would serve as a valuable resource for students, researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders.

Mumbai youth Cong organises 'Reel SeRealTalk' competition on Rahul Gandhi's birthday

Mumbai : On the occasion of the birthday of the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and people's leader Rahul Gandhi, the Mumbai Pradesh Youth Congress has announced a special social media reel competition titled 'ReelSe-RealTalk'.

Mumbai Youth Congress President Zeenat Shabreen has appealed to young people to participate in large numbers and express their views fearlessly on issues that directly impact the youth of the country. The competition focuses on three important themes: Unemployment, Paper Leaks, and Inflation. Participants are required to create a reel ex-



pressing their views on any one of these topics. The reel must be post-

ed on the participant's Instagram account by June 17. Participants must tag

@mumbaiycc and use the hashtag ReelSeRealTalk while posting their entries,

said the release.

Organisers have clarified that the audio and video quality should be clear and that no offensive, obscene, or abusive language should be used.

Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three entries. The first prize is rupees 11,000, the second prize is 5,000, and the third prize is 3,000. The competition aims to encourage young people to voice their opinions on critical issues such as unemployment, rising inflation, and paper leaks, while promoting active participation in social and democratic processes and amplifying the concerns of the people, said the release.

Pune court orders return of NCP (SP) spokesperson Vikas Lavande's mobile phone

Pune : A local court has ordered the return of a mobile phone seized by police from Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar faction) spokesperson Vikas Sadashiv Lavande, nearly three weeks after his arrest in connection with an alleged inflammatory speech case.

Lavande was arrested by the Wagholi Police on May 21, while attending a court hearing at the Shivajinagar court complex in Pune. His mobile phone was confiscated at the time of arrest.

The case stems from a complaint filed by a woman alleging that Lavande, in a YouTube video uploaded on April 29, 2026, made controversial remarks referring to saints, kirtankars and religious figures associated with the Warkari tradition as "intruders" and used objectionable language that could promote social discord.

While allowing the application for release of the device, the court observed that there appeared to be no crucial evidence of immediate investigative value on the phone. The court also noted that prolonged retention

of the device by the police could diminish its value and utility, making it appropriate to return it to its owner.

The court directed the Wagholi Police to hand over the mobile phone to Lavande upon execution of a bond of Rs 2.20 lakh. It imposed conditions that the handset's colour and physical form should not be altered, it should not be transferred to any other person, and it must be produced before the court or investigating authorities whenever required.

Meanwhile, Lavande's counsel, Advocate Milind Dattatray Pawar, has maintained from the outset that the arrest was illegal. A petition challenging the legality of the arrest has also been filed before the Bombay High Court on Lavande's behalf by Advocate Harshvardhan Milind Pawar. The issue regarding the validity of the arrest remains pending before a Pune district court.

Legal representatives described the order as significant, stating that it underscores the need to balance the requirements of criminal investigations with the protection of citizens' rights over their personal property.

Unique Pune Tree initiative highlights art as a therapy

Pune : The Unique Pune Tree Painting initiative, which highlighted the role of art in promoting mental well-being and emotional expression, was organised on Sunday as part of the Venus Art Fest at the Raja Ravi Varma Art Gallery on Ghole Road in Pune.

Designed as an interactive and reflective experience, the initiative sought to encourage participants to embrace art not merely as a creative pursuit but as a means of mental relaxation and emotional release in an increasingly demanding world.

The event brought together several distinguished personalities from diverse professional backgrounds, underlining the universal relevance of mental wellness

irrespective of social status or occupational responsibilities. Among those present were Pune Deputy Mayor Parshuram Wadekar, Kasba Peth MLA Hemant Rasne, Rotary Governor Santosh Marathe and businessman Cawas Pundole. The gathering also saw the participation of noted rally driver Sanjay Takle, Shailesh Bhandari, Indian Medical Association Chairperson Dr Alka Kshirsagar, advocate Ravi Mane and Venus Traders director Surendra Karamchanani. According to the organisers, the initiative was conceptualised around the idea that artistic engagement can provide a meaningful pause from the pressures of everyday life. They emphasised that creative expression often helps in-

dividuals process emotions, reduce stress and reconnect with themselves.

"At its core, the Unique Pune Tree initiative is centred on art as a tool for mental relaxation and emotional release. In today's fast-paced lifestyle, especially for individuals in high-responsibility roles, stress often goes unaddressed.

This initiative creates a pause, encouraging individuals to step away from constant pressure and engage in a simple, reflective act of creation," a release issued by the organisers stated. The organisers pointed out that modern lifestyles, particularly those involving demanding careers and leadership positions, frequently leave little room for emotional reflection or self-care.

Gadkari approves 100 pc Ethanol fuel use to curb fossil fuel imports

Nagpur : Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said that he has approved the use of 100 per cent ethanol fuel, a move aimed at reducing India's dependence on imported fossil fuels and accelerating the transition to alternative energy sources.

Addressing a press conference in Nagpur to mark 12 years of the NDA government, Gadkari said the regulatory process to legalise the use of pure ethanol as fuel had been completed.

"Last night at 8 pm, I signed the file finalising the regulations to legally authorise the use of 100 per cent ethanol," he said.

Highlighting ethanol's potential as a sustainable

substitute for petrol, the minister said the initiative could significantly reduce India's fuel import burden while promoting cleaner energy alternatives.

Recalling the early days of the proposal, Gadkari said the concept was initially met with scepticism and criticism.

"When I first spoke about this vision, people laughed at it. Some even criticised the idea," he remarked. The minister further said leading automobile manufacturers are preparing to roll out vehicles compatible with 100 per cent ethanol fuel in the coming weeks.

Companies including Toyota, Suzuki, MG and Hyundai are expected to



introduce ethanol-compatible vehicles within the next month and a half, he added.

The announcement comes days after the government introduced E85 fuel for flex-fuel vehicles designed

to operate on the ethanol blend.

Meanwhile, Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said India has surpassed its ethanol blending targets ahead of

schedule.

He said ethanol blending in petrol has risen from 1.5 per cent in 2014 to 10 per cent by November 2022. While the target of achieving 20 per cent blending was originally set for 2030, it was accomplished in 2024 itself.

Puri said discussions are underway with industry stakeholders, including the automobile industry body SIAM and other organisations, to further expand ethanol adoption.

"At present, extensive consultations are being held with the industry. E85 fuel has already been introduced, but it is meant only for E85-compatible flex-fuel vehicles," he added.

Elderly woman robbed of gold jewellery in Mah district

Dhule : A shocking case of cheating and theft targeting an elderly woman has come to light in Maharashtra's Dhule district, where two unidentified individuals allegedly duped a 72-year-old woman into handing over her gold jewellery weighing eight tolas by claiming that her child's life was in danger.

The incident, which occurred in broad daylight near the Dhule District Court area, has created panic among local residents and raised concerns about the safety of senior citizens, particularly those who venture out alone for their daily routines.

According to police officials, the victim has been identified as Pratibha Prakash Kulkarni, a 72-year-old resident of Jagdamba Housing Society near the Suratwala Building in the Mill Compound area of Dhule city.

As part of her regular routine, Kulkarni had stepped out of her residence early in the morning for a walk.

She was reportedly walking near the District Court premises when two strangers approached her and initiated a conversation.

The suspects allegedly engaged the elderly woman by pretending to seek directions. During the interaction, they gradually gained her confidence before resorting to a deceptive tactic designed to instil fear and confusion.

According to the victim's complaint, the two men told her that a grave crisis had struck her family and claimed that her child was facing a life-threatening situation. Exploiting her emotional vulnerability, they convinced her that urgent measures were required to avert the impending danger.

The accused further claimed that certain rituals needed to be performed immediately to protect her child from harm. As part of these so-called rituals, they allegedly instructed Kulkarni to remove the gold ornaments she was wearing.

Fearing for the safety of her family member and trusting the assurances of the strangers, the elderly woman complied with their instructions and removed her jewellery, which weighed approximately eight tolas and carried substantial monetary as well as sentimental value. The suspects then allegedly handed her further instructions and asked her to walk forward without turning back. They specifically told her to take 51 steps and not look behind under any circumstances, claiming that doing otherwise would negate the ritual's effect. Believing the instructions to be genuine, Kulkarni walked ahead as directed. However, after taking a few steps, she began to suspect that something was amiss and turned around to check on the two men. To her shock, the strangers had vanished from the spot along with the jewellery. It was then that she realised she had fallen victim to a carefully orchestrated fraud and had been robbed of all her ornaments.

Neelam Gorhe allays concerns over Pandharpur temple corridor project

Solapur : Shiv Sena (Shinde) leader and Deputy Chairperson of the Maharashtra Legislative Council, Dr. Neelam Gorhe, has assured that the concerns of the local residents over any loss of lands and relocation of their houses on account of the proposed Pandharpur temple corridor project would be addressed.

A delegation from the Pandharpur Teerthakshetra Bachav Samiti met Dr. Gorhe and submitted a memorandum regarding the proposed temple corridor project during her visit on Saturday to the ASI protected Shri Vitthal-Rukmini temple where she performed traditional prayers and sought blessings for the prosperity and overall development of the State and its

people. The delegation expressed concerns that the project could affect local residents' homes, lands, businesses and livelihoods. It urged the government to take local stakeholders into confidence.

Responding to the concerns, Dr. Gorhe assured the delegation that safeguarding the interests of local residents was of utmost importance while carrying out developmental projects.

She requested the committee to prepare a detailed assessment outlining the number of houses, shops and land parcels likely to be affected by the corridor project.

A separate memorandum was also submitted by the Pandharpur Citizens'

Action Committee, seeking government intervention and follow-up regarding the concerns of families likely to be affected by land acquisition and housing displacement under the project.

She further assured that the issues and difficulties faced by citizens in connection with the proposed corridor would be taken up with the state government and that efforts made to find an appropriate solution. During her visit Dr. Gorhe was facilitated by representatives of local community organisations with a shawl and coconut as a mark of respect.

After offering prayers, she reviewed the facilities and ongoing development works within the temple premises and directed the temple management com-

mittee to expedite all pending works before the onset of the monsoon.

She noted that despite waterproofing efforts, complaints of water leakage were still being reported from certain areas and urged the Archaeological Department to take immediate corrective measures.

Dr. Gorhe also stressed the need for a comprehensive and independent electrical infrastructure plan for the temple complex, keeping in mind the increasing number of devotees visiting the pilgrimage centre. She further instructed the temple management to improve amenities for women devotees by providing adequate seating arrangements and clean drinking water facilities in the Hirakani Hall.

World's perspective towards India changed; Minister Ashish Shelar

Mumbai : Maharashtra Minister Advocate Ashish Shelar today hailed the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for demonstrating to the world that India is not merely a market but a superpower. He was speaking to the media persons in Panvel on the occasion of the completion of 12 years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure.

On the occasion, he presented an overview of the achievements and initiatives undertaken during Prime Minister Modi's successful 12-year tenure. He emphasized that this was not a celebration by the government or the party, but an effort to present an account of the work done for the people who had reposed immense trust in him.

He asserted, "These twelve years have been years of trust, development and public welfare. Prime Minister Modi has served the nation as its 'Pradhan Sevak' (Chief Servant), fulfilling his duty with dedication. Such public mandate and such blessings from the people and voters may not be seen

again. Under his leadership, we are serving the people in 22 states across the country. This is a rare phenomenon in Indian politics."

He further observed that considering the current global situation, particularly the instability prevailing in any Asian countries, it would be difficult to find another example anywhere in the world of a leadership, a political party and a government with such sustained popularity and growth. Referring to the government's guiding philosophy of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas', he said that the Modi government has worked tirelessly for public welfare and upliftment. He highlighted that around 25 crore Indians have been lifted above the poverty line through focused policy interventions and welfare schemes. Minister Shelar noted that India has successfully transitioned to a largely digital and online system for financial transactions, resulting in savings of approximately Rs ₹4.31 lakh crore. This transparency prevented large-scale leakages and misuse of public funds.

He said that Prime Minister Modi pursued these reforms with the resolve of 'Desh Nahin Jhukne Doonga' (I will not let the nation



bow). Also, through decisive actions such as the Air Strikes, Surgical Strikes, Operation Sindoor and Operation Mahadev, India has demonstrated its strength and status as a superpower.

Highlighting internal security achievements, he said that the government's vision of a 'Naxal-free India' has achieved significant success, with large numbers of Naxalites surrendering across the country.

The once-notorious 'Red Corridor' is gradually transforming into a 'Green Corridor'. Speaking about financial inclusion, he pointed out that before 2014, banking services were largely limited to select sections of society.

Since then, more than 58 crore bank accounts have been opened, including 32 crore accounts held by women. He further stated that the government has focused on affordable healthcare for ordinary citizens through the Ayushman Bharat scheme, under which more than 60 crore health cards have been issued. Demonstrating its commitment to the poor, the government has provided homes to over 4 crore families under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, LPG connections to more than 12 crore women who previously lacked access to cooking gas and household tap water connections to over 16 crore citizens. Minister Shelar also highlighted the construction of 12 crore toilets under the Swachh Bharat Mission. Under the PM SVANidhi scheme, more than 74 lakh beneficiaries have received hassle-free loans. Through the Mudra Yojana, over 57 crore collateral-free loans have been sanctioned for small businesses. Additionally, ₹15,000 crore has been allocated for tribal welfare initiatives, while ₹79,000

crore has been sanctioned under the Dharti Aaba Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan.

He further informed that under the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme, more than ₹4.3 lakh crore has been directly transferred into the bank accounts of over 11 crore farmers. Through the Kisan Credit Card scheme, more than seven crore farmers have been provided with affordable credit worth approximately ₹10 lakh crore.

Minister Shelar said that alongside farmers' welfare, the government has paid special attention to women's empowerment. More than three crore women have benefited under the Lakhpati Didi initiative. Other successful schemes include the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, increased opportunities for women officers in the armed forces, and the PM Surya Ghar Muft Yojana. He also stated the government's achievements over the last twelve years in areas such as rural road development, expansion of national highways, heritage conservation and various nation-building initiatives.

Workshop on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's visionary management inaugurated by Minister Shivendraraje Bhosale

Pune : Maharashtra Public Works Minister Shivendraraje Bhosale on Sunday inaugurated a two-day workshop titled "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj: A Visionary Manager", highlighting the enduring relevance of the Maratha ruler's leadership principles and administrative acumen in contemporary times.

The workshop has been jointly organised by the National Book Trust (NBT), Savitribai Phule Pune University and the Samarth Yuva Foundation. The initiative aims to explore the multifaceted personality of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj beyond his well-known image as a warrior king and present his contributions as a visionary administrator and manager.

Addressing the inaugural session, Bhosale said that the legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj belongs not only to Maharashtra but to every citizen of India. He noted that while many people are familiar with important historical events associated with the Maratha ruler, several inspiring aspects of his life and achievements remain relatively unexplored.

He observed that the workshop offers an oppor-

tunity to understand Shivaji Maharaj's exceptional leadership qualities, governance model and management skills in greater depth. According to the minister, these principles continue to hold relevance in today's social, administrative and organisational contexts.

Highlighting Shivaji Maharaj's military brilliance, Bhosale said the Maratha ruler successfully managed multiple battles simultaneously through meticulous planning, strategic foresight and efficient administration. He noted that such accomplishments reflected not only courage on the battlefield but also extraordinary organisational capability.

The minister further pointed out that despite undertaking extensive military campaigns and expanding his kingdom, Shivaji Maharaj refrained from imposing additional taxes on the people. He described this as an important lesson in responsible governance, demonstrating that statecraft could be effective without placing undue burdens on citizens. Bhosale stressed the importance of studying the Ashtrapadhan Mandal, the council of eight minis-

ters established by Shivaji Maharaj, as an example of decentralised administration and institutional decision-making. He said the administrative framework adopted during the Maratha era offers valuable insights into accountability and efficient governance.

He also highlighted Shivaji Maharaj's expertise in fort management, noting that the forts under his rule were not merely military outposts but well-planned administrative centres equipped with systems designed to sustain communities during prolonged conflicts.

The minister referred to the Maratha ruler's emphasis on water conservation and resource management, describing it as a visionary approach that remains relevant in an era marked by climate concerns and increasing pressure on natural resources. Bhosale further pointed to the marketplaces established within and around forts, saying they reflected Shivaji Maharaj's understanding of trade, logistics and economic sustainability. According to him, such initiatives demonstrated that governance extended beyond warfare to encompass the welfare and prosperity of the people.

25 years later, 'Lagaan' and 'Gadar' continue to stand tall as milestones of Indian Cinema

Mumbai: In the history of Hindi cinema, two films, 'Lagaan' and 'Gadar: Ek Prem Katha', released on June 15, 2001, wrote such a story of success, which even after 25 years, has retained its shine till date.

In the history of Hindi cinema, there are some films that become not just a medium of entertainment, but also a symbol of their time and a source of inspiration for generations to come. "Lagaan" and "Gadar: Ek Prem Katha" achieved unprecedented success despite their different themes, different presentations, and different audiences. Today, even 25 years after their release, these films are discussed with the same enthusiasm and respect.

While "Lagaan" gave Indian cinema a new identity on the global stage and earned it an Oscar nomination, "Gadar: Ek Prem Katha" set box office records that remained unchallenged for years. Both films proved that any risk pales in comparison to a strong story, powerful direction, and impressive acting.

The late 1990s and early 2000s were a period of change for the Hindi film industry. While traditional romantic and family films continued to entertain audiences,

multiplex culture was slowly taking shape. Until then, single-screen theaters had been the driving force behind Indian cinema.

It was during this period that filmmakers began experimenting with new subjects. Audience tastes were shifting, and the demand for content-driven cinema was gradually increasing.

In this environment, directors Ashutosh Gowariker and Anil Sharma delivered two completely different films that made history.

"Lagaan" is set in the fictional village of Champaner in 1893, where farmers are reeling from the heavy taxes imposed by the British rulers. British officer Captain Russell presents a strange challenge to the villagers, struggling with drought and poverty. A cricket match.

Village youth Bhuvan accepts the British challenge, with the condition that if the village wins, three years' worth of taxes will be waived, and if they lose, taxes will be tripled. This story was as thrilling as it seemed impossible, especially in an era when cricket-themed films were almost nonexistent.

Many producers rejected the film, fearing that its rural setting, lengthy duration, and

overly British characters would make it a commercial underdog. But Aamir Khan recognised the story's strength and became its producer. It was the biggest risk of his career, and it would later become history.

Aamir Khan played Bhuvan in the film, which remains one of his most iconic roles. Gracy Singh played Gauri. British actors Paul Blackthorne and Rachel Shelley also played pivotal roles. Raghuvver Yadav, Yashpal Sharma, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Rajesh Vivek, Aditya Lakhia, and others brought the film to life.

The film was shot in Bhuj, Gujarat, where a massive set of Champaner village was constructed. The harsh weather, desert heat, and long shooting schedules put the entire team to the test. The cricket match scenes were the most challenging part of the film, for which the actors trained for months.

In "Lagaan," Aamir Khan as Bhuvan, portrayed a young man from rural India who stands up against injustice and unites the entire village. His performance clearly displays confidence, leadership, and emotional depth, which captivated the audience throughout the film.

Even at the production level, Aamir Khan paid close attention to the film's quality, location selection, cast training, and every detail, making "Lagaan" one of Indian cinema's most significant and internationally acclaimed films.



Gracy Singh's portrayal of Gauri with such ease and simplicity forms a crucial part of the film's emotional core. Gauri, as a rural young woman, demonstrates her love, sensitivity, and self-respect for Bhuvan. Her character embodies the innocence of a traditional Indian woman, yet also the ability to make strong decisions when faced with the circumstances. Gauri's character provides the emotional balance between Bhuvan's struggle and the village's collective efforts, making the story even

more vibrant and impactful.

In "Lagaan," megastar Amitabh Bachchan played the role of narrator, giving the story a powerful and lively flow. His deep and powerful voice brought the backdrop of Champaner village in 1893, the suffering of the

farmers, and the struggle against British rule even more vividly. Amitabh Bachchan's narration emotionally connected the audience to the story and provided a powerful context to events at every crucial juncture. His voice makes both the beginning and end of the film extremely impactful, establishing "Lagaan" as not just a film but a landmark cinematic experience.

A.R. Rahman's music and Javed Akhtar's lyrics gave "Lagaan" an emotional heft. Songs like "Ghanan

Ghanan," "Radha Kaise Na Jale," "Mitwa," "O Palanhaar," and "Chale Chalo" remain popular even today.

In 2002, "Lagaan" received an Oscar nomination in the Best Foreign Language Film category. This was a watershed moment for Indian cinema, cementing the recognition of Indian films worldwide. Director Anil Sharma's film "Gadar: Ek Prem Katha," released on the same day, unleashed a wave of emotions across the country, creating history at the box office. "Gadar: Ek Prem Katha" was a story from a completely different world. Set against the backdrop of the India-Pakistan partition, the film explores the emotions of love, family, patriotism, and sacrifice. The film revolves around the love story of Sikh truck driver Tara Singh and Muslim girl Sakina. This love, born amidst the violence of Partition, grapples with social and political circumstances.

The unique blend of love, family, and patriotism struck an emotional chord with audiences. Sunny Deol's powerful performance, powerful dialogues, and patriotic scenes became the film's hallmarks.

Lines like "Hindustan

Zindabad Tha, Zindabad Hai, Zindabad Rahega" remain popular even today.

The hand pump scene from "Gadar" remains one of the most iconic scenes in Indian cinema history. This scene gave the film its distinctive identity.

Sunny Deol's portrayal of Tara Singh has made him one of the most iconic characters in Indian cinema. Ameesha Patel played Sakina. Amrith Puri's portrayal of Ashraf Ali was crucial. His portrayal of a stern yet sensitive father living in Pakistan adds emotional depth to the story. His love for his daughter Sakina and his inner struggles arising from the tragedy of Partition are clearly evident in his character. His powerful dialogue delivery and impressive screen presence made this role unforgettable. "Gadar" created a storm at the box office that no one had expected. The film generated unprecedented excitement in small towns and cities. Many theaters ran full houses for months. It became one of cinema's most iconic scenes. Songs like "Ud Ja Kale Kawan" and "Main Nikla Gaddi Leke" further enhanced its popularity.

The success of "Gadar: Ek Prem Katha" was driven

by the pairing of its lead actors, Sunny Deol and Ameesha Patel.

The on-screen chemistry between the two actors further strengthened the film's emotional power, making it not just a love story but a landmark cinematic experience. The success of "Gadar 2," released in 2023, proved that the film's legacy remains as strong today.

It is generally believed that big films releasing on the same day suffer losses, but "Lagaan" and "Gadar" proved this notion wrong.

"Lagaan" was well-received by both urban and critical audiences, while "Gadar" was a hit in rural and semi-urban areas. Both appealed strongly to their respective audiences.

Even 25 years later, both films continue to have an impact. A new generation is watching them on OTT platforms and television. The success of "Gadar 2" has further cemented its legacy, while "Lagaan" continues to be considered a top inspirational film.

Even after 25 years of their release, the magic of these two films not only remains intact but will also continue to inspire generations to come.

Kangana Ranaut praises Deepika Padukone: "There will never be another Deepika"

Mumbai: Actress Kangana Ranaut has weighed in on Bollywood's legacy of iconic actresses, asserting that certain stars across generations simply cannot be replaced. In a recent interview, she reflected on how each era of Hindi cinema has produced faces that remain singular even decades later. "Humko lagta hai ki actresses aati hain aur jaati hain. Lekin aisa nahi hai. Dusri Meena Kumari nahi milegi, yahan tak ki main soch rahi thi dusri Karisma Kapoor bhi nahi hogi (We often think that actresses come and go. But that isn't true. There can never be another Meena Kumari. In

fact, I don't think that there can ever be another Karisma Kapoor either)," she said. Ranaut went on to name a string of veteran actresses whose presence, she said, defined eras of their own. "Voh jo ek waqt hota hai, chahе Hema Malini ji ho, Waheeda Rehman ho yaa Madhubala toh khair ho hi nahi sakti. Har daur ke ek face hote hain jinko aap kabhi replace nahi kar sakte (Every era has its own icons, whether it's Hema Malini ji, Waheeda Rehman, or Madhubala, who is simply irreplaceable. Each generation has certain faces that can never be replaced)," she said.

Extending the thought to



more recent stars, she added, "Madhuri Dixit dusri nahi hogi.

Yeh meri hi baat nahi hai. Mujhe lagta hai dusri Deepika Padukone bhi nahi hogi." Ranaut, who debuted with

Anurag Basu's 2006 film Gangster: A Love Story, has recently completed twenty years in the industry, having delivered notable performances in films such as Queen, Fashion and Life in a

Metro. Her latest release, Bharat Bhagya Viddhaata, featuring Girija Oak, Smita Tambe, Amrutha Namdev, Esha Dey, Priya Berde, Asha Shelar, Suhita Thatte, Rasika Aghase, Aditya Mishra and Zahid Khan, is currently running in cinemas. Deepika Padukone, the subject of Ranaut's praise, was last seen in Singham Again and will next appear in Siddharth Anand's King alongside Shah Rukh Khan, as well as in director Atlee's upcoming film opposite Allu Arjun, tentatively titled AA22xA6, marking the next chapter for an actress Ranaut considers irreplaceable.

Vedang Raina admits people often think he's 'rude' before meeting him

Mumbai: With Main Vaapas Aaunga now running in cinemas, lead actors Vedang Raina and Sharvari, along with director Imtiaz Ali, recently came together for IMDb's popular segment Ask Each Other Anything. The candid interaction saw the trio opening up about their experiences working on the film, public perceptions, favourite movies, and amusing behind-the-scenes memories from the set. One of the most talked-about moments from the conversation came when Vedang Raina addressed a common misconception people have about him. Speaking about first impressions, the actor admitted, "People before meeting me, think that I am

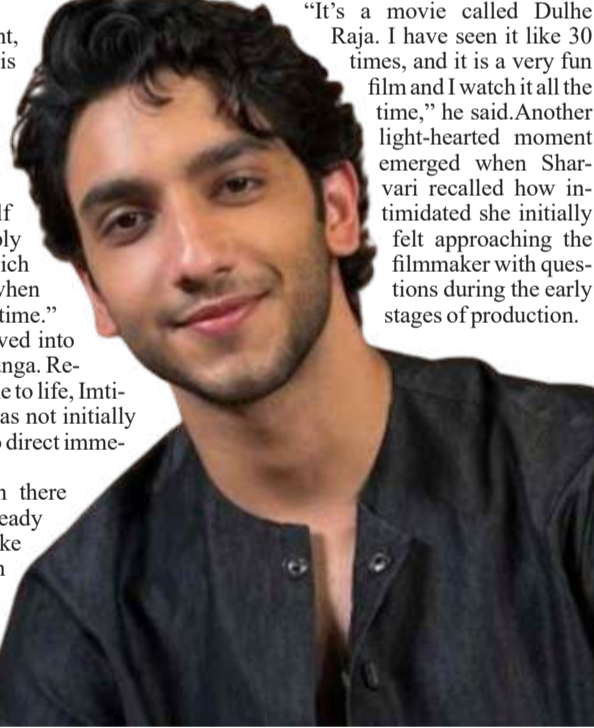
rude." Reacting to the statement, filmmaker Imtiaz Ali offered his own interpretation of why some people may perceive Vedang that way. He said, "I can understand that. You are a person who second guesses himself, someone who puts himself through scrutiny a lot. You apply a lot of your mind to that, which makes you less free flowing when you meet someone for the first time."

The conversation also delved into the origins of Main Vaapas Aaunga. Reflecting on how the project came to life, Imtiaz Ali revealed that the film was not initially among the scripts he planned to direct immediately.

"There was a time when there were many films that were ready scripts, and I was going to make them at some point. Main Vaapas Aaunga at that point was just a small fledgling thought which was not even ready to be made into a film. That is the time I decided to

make it," the filmmaker shared. The trio further discussed films and performances they admire. Sharvari spoke about her appreciation for Raazi, saying, "I have said this before as well, and not that I am saying that I could have done a better or worse job, but because of the film and performance that I genuinely like is Raazi." She also expressed admiration for 12th Fail, adding, "I would have loved to do a movie like 12th Fail, calling it an incredible film and an equally incredible part." Vedang echoed her sentiments, stating, "12th Fail is one of my recent favourites as well." Meanwhile, Imtiaz Ali surprised his co-stars by revealing his comfort-watch film.

"It's a movie called Dulhe Raja. I have seen it like 30 times, and it is a very fun film and I watch it all the time," he said. Another light-hearted moment emerged when Sharvari recalled how intimidated she initially felt approaching the filmmaker with questions during the early stages of production.



Tahira Kashyap calls Main Vaapas Aaunga a 'classic love story'; says Imtiaz Ali's film left her in tears

Mumbai: Imtiaz Ali's Main Vaapas Aaunga continues to garner appreciation from audiences and members of the film fraternity alike. The latest celebrity to express admiration for the film is author and filmmaker Tahira Kashyap, who took to social media to share a heartfelt note after watching the recently released romantic drama. Headlined by Naseeruddin Shah, Diljit Dosanjh, Vedang Raina, and Sharvari, Main Vaapas Aaunga explores themes of

love, longing, memory, and displacement against the backdrop of Partition-era migration. Since its theatrical release on June 12, the film has generated conversations for its emotional narrative and performances.

Sharing her thoughts on social media, Tahira praised director Imtiaz Ali's storytelling and described the film as a deeply moving cinematic experience. She wrote, "This is what a legend makes. If love had a language it would be this film. Every frame felt

lived, felt, aged, loved. There was a constant lump in my throat, heart was pining for the unrequited love, tears were streaming down my cheeks as if they intuitively knew what the characters felt, how they felt. Only Imtiaz Ali could have created this magic. I am your biggest fan. The love and intimacy with which you weave your stories is unparalleled."

Tahira also singled out the film's cast for special praise, beginning with veteran actor Naseeruddin Shah,

whose performance reminded her of personal memories from her own family. "Naseeruddin sir you reminded me of my nanaji, Darji for us. He came from Sargodha and told us endless stories about his hockey days. You were such a treat to watch, love and more love for you. Sharvari, you brought magic to Jia. Your poetry, the stammer and accent had me in awe. What a star! Vedang Raina, you were amazing. From love to pain and longing, it was lovely.

Keerthy Suresh reveals how Savitri's daughter helped her prepare for Mahanati: "That helped me build her character"

Mumbai: Keerthy Suresh's portrayal of legendary actress Savitri in Mahanati remains one of the most celebrated performances in contemporary Indian cinema. The role not only earned widespread critical acclaim but also won Keerthy the National Film Award for Best Actress.

Now, the actress has opened up about the extensive preparation that went into bringing the iconic star's life to the screen. In a recent conversation, Keerthy reflected on the research process behind Mahanati, revealing that while Savitri's films were an important starting point, understanding her personality away from the camera was equally essential.

According to the actress, she immersed herself in Savitri's filmography but soon realized that watching the legendary actor's perfor-

mances alone would not help her fully understand the woman behind the screen persona. To bridge that gap, she reached out to Savitri's daughter, Vijaya

Chamundeswari, who became an invaluable source of information during her preparation.

Sharing details of the process, Keerthy said, "As a source, there were her movies that one could watch, and I had watched her movies. But I was like, 'How do I know her off-screen personality?' So I spoke to Vijaya Chamundeswari Garu, her daughter. She shared a lot of messages and I realised that a few things were common between us. And also, when she used to come to the shoot, she would share her personal memories. That helped me build her character (in my head).

Then I heard one of her interviews on FM. It was just a two-minute interview, but when you listen to it, you have one picture in mind of her character. She was very playful, very spontaneous, and had a great sense of humour. Also, I talked to a lot of people. Once

I signed the film and then whenever I went, people would say, 'Hey, you are doing Savitri Garu's film. My grandmother used to say this about her'. You know, they would start sharing their stories. And my mom too knew some stories. So, by putting all this together, you get some picture in mind. And then, I felt like, 'Okay, this might be her character and now this is how I am going to give it a life.' The actress explained that it was the combination of family anecdotes, personal memories, interviews, and stories shared by admirers of Savitri that ultimately helped her visualize the legendary actor's personality. By piecing together these different perspectives, Keerthy was able to create a nuanced portrayal that resonated with audiences across languages and generations. Released in 2018, Mahanati chronicled the life and career of Savitri, one of the most celebrated actresses in Indian cinema. Keerthy's performance was widely praised for capturing both the public persona and emotional complexities of the late star.

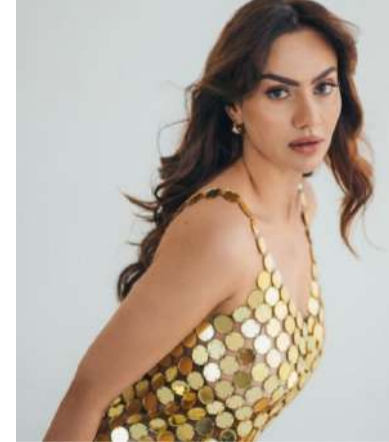
After 'Pallo Latke', Shreya Sharma reunites with producer Prerna Arora for an exciting Malayalam film song

Mumbai: Actress Shreya Sharma is set to reunite with producer Prerna Arora for an exciting new project after the success of their previous collaboration, the popular track Pallo Latke. The duo, whose partnership received widespread appreciation from audiences, is now coming together for a grand promotional dance number that will feature in an upcoming Malayalam film.

The new venture marks a significant milestone in Shreya Sharma's career as it will be her first-ever association with the Malayalam film industry. The actress, known for her screen presence and energetic performances, is expected to bring a fresh dimension to the promotional track, which is already generating considerable buzz within industry circles. According to sources associated with the project, the dance number is being designed on a much larger scale than Shreya's earlier musical outings. The song is not merely an addition to the film's soundtrack but is being positioned as one of the major attractions of the upcoming Malayalam release.

Producer Prerna Arora, who has previously worked with Shreya on Pallo Latke, reportedly had complete clarity regarding the casting of the promotional number. Given the positive audience response to their earlier collaboration, Arora believed that Shreya was the ideal choice to headline the song.

Industry insiders suggest that the promotional track is expected to play a crucial role in the film's marketing cam-



paign. It is likely to be unveiled ahead of the movie's release later this year, serving as a key tool to build anticipation among audiences. Expressing her excitement about the reunion, Shreya Sharma described the collaboration as a special moment in her professional journey. She acknowledged that the overwhelming love received by Pallo Latke had strengthened their creative collaboration. Prerna Arora shared as creative collaborators. "Reuniting with Prerna Arora feels incredibly special because Pallo Latke received so much love from audiences, and that success gave us immense confidence," Shreya said while speaking about the project. "This upcoming song is completely different from anything I have done before."

The actress explained that while Pallo Latke possessed its own unique energy and appeal, the upcoming dance number has been conceptualised on a much grander scale. According to her, the song is "much bigger, bolder and truly hatke," promising audiences an entirely new experience. Shreya further revealed that the promotional track occupies a prominent place within the film's overall presentation. "It is the official promotional song of the film and, in many ways, one of the biggest highlights of this Malayalam project," she said. For the actress, the project carries an additional emotional significance because it introduces her to a new cinematic landscape. She described her debut association with Malayalam cinema as both exciting and memorable, adding another important chapter to her evolving career. Reflecting on Prerna Arora's faith in her abilities, Shreya said the producer had expressed her desire from the outset to have the actress feature in the song. According to Shreya, Arora believed that the "Prerna-Shreya combination" could once again create something distinctive and entertaining for audiences. "After delivering a hit song like Pallo Latke, this becomes my second major musical outing, and I couldn't have asked for a more exciting project," she said. "Prerna ma'am was very clear from the beginning that she wanted me to be a part of this song because she believes the Prerna-Shreya combination can once again create something spicy, fresh and memorable for audiences."

India eyes Pro League return at FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup 2025-26

New Delhi: The Indian Women's Hockey Team is all set to begin its campaign at the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup New Zealand 2025-26 in Auckland with a clear objective — securing promotion to the next year's FIH Hockey Pro League.

Captained by Salima Tete, India will open their Pool A campaign against the United States on June 15 before facing Japan on June 16 and Uruguay on June 18. The tournament brings together eight nations, with the winner promoted to the prestigious FIH Hockey Pro League.

Pool B includes hosts New Zealand, Chile, Korea and France.

India will look to make a strong start in the pool stage and build momentum heading into the knockout rounds, scheduled to take place on 20 and 21 June. The tournament also offers valuable international exposure against quality opposition as the Indian team continues its preparations for major events ahead, including the 2026 FIH Hockey World Cup and Asian Games 2026.

Notably, India head into the tournament on the back of a competitive four-match tour of Australia, where they showcased impressive character against one of the world's strongest teams on their home turf.

After suffering a narrow defeat in the opening encounter, the Indian side bounced back in emphatic



fashion to register victories in the next two matches before Australia edged the final game, resulting in the friendly series ending in a 2-2 draw.

The tour offered several encouraging signs for the Indian camp, with the team demonstrating resilience under pressure, tactical discipline across all phases of play and a potent attacking threat.

The performances reinforced the progress made by the squad in recent months and provided valuable momentum heading into the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup, the first major assignment of an important international season away from home. Speaking ahead of the tournament, the Indian

Women Hockey Team's Chief Coach Sjoerd Marijne expressed confidence in the squad's preparation and mindset.

"The Australia tour was an excellent preparation for us. We were pleased with the way the players responded to challenges, adapted to different situations and competed against a top-quality side. The results gave the group confidence, but more importantly showed that we are moving in the right direction as a team. Now our complete focus is on the Nations Cup and making the most of this opportunity," he said.

Marijne further stressed the importance of maintaining composure in a tournament where every game carries significance.

"In tournaments like these, small moments often make the biggest difference. We need to remain disciplined, stay united as a team and make the most of our opportunities. The objective is not only to achieve good results but also to continue building a strong foundation for the future. We know the expectations are high, and the players are motivated to give their best for the country."

Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey wished the team success ahead of the tournament.

"The FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup presents a significant opportunity for our women's team to showcase their growth and determination on the inter-

national stage. The players have worked extremely hard in preparation for this tournament, and I am confident they will approach every match with the belief and intensity required to succeed," Tirkey said.

"Earning promotion to the FIH Hockey Pro League is an important objective, but equally important is continuing to build a team capable of consistently competing with the world's best. On behalf of Hockey India, I wish the team and support staff the very best for the tournament and hope they make the nation proud," he said.

Hockey India Secretary General Bhola Nath Singh said, "The Nations Cup is a crucial tournament in the journey of our women's team as they continue their preparations towards major international events ahead. This competition provides an excellent platform for the players to test themselves against quality opposition and gain valuable experience in high-pressure situations."

"The team has shown tremendous commitment and progress over the past few months, and I am confident they will rise to the occasion. We extend our best wishes to the entire squad and look forward to seeing them perform with confidence, discipline and the fighting spirit that Indian hockey is known for," he added.

Serena Williams to partner Muchova as comeback continues

Berlin: Serena Williams will partner Czech Karolina Muchova at next week's Berlin Open as she continues her comeback.

The 44-year-old, a 23-time Grand Slam singles champion, made her return to tennis earlier this week at Queen's after almost four years away from the sport, partnering Victoria Mboko in the women's doubles.

The pair made a winning start as they upset third seeds Erin Routliffe and Nicole Melichar-Martinez in straight sets, but had to withdraw from their quarter-final after Mboko suffered a nasty fall in her singles tie.

Muchova, 29, is a two-time Wimbledon quarter-finalist in the women's singles



and sits 10th in the WTA rankings, according to BBC Sport. "I'm pretty excited about it. It doesn't happen every day that such an amazing athlete, not only in tennis but overall in sport, asks you to play tennis with her. I hope it's going to be fun," Muchova said at a press conference in Berlin on Saturday.

Mboko, who retired from her match against Kar-

olina Pliskova, has been ruled out of the remainder of the grass-court season, including Wimbledon, with a medial collateral ligament injury in her left knee.

"Unfortunately, my fall on Wednesday caused an injury to the MCL in my left knee," Mboko said.

"I had been so looking forward to playing [Wimbledon] this year."

Britain's Emma Raducanu powers into Queen's final

London: Britain's Emma Raducanu produced two superb victories in a day at Queen's to reach her first grass-court final.

Raducanu overcame an injury scare to beat Kamilla Rakhimova 6-3 7-5 in her weather-delayed quarter-final early on Saturday afternoon.

She returned to Andy Murray Arena a little over two and a half hours later and dispatched highly-rated American teenager Iva Jovic 6-2 6-2.

The British number one, who went into Queen's seeking to regain her form after a season disrupted by illness and injury, jumped for joy on sealing her victory as the crowd rose to applaud her, according to BBC Sport.

In Sunday's final - the 23-year-old will face Croatia's Donna Vekic, who beat British

number three Katie Boulter in straight sets.

Raducanu has not dropped a set on her run to the final and has thrived on the pressure of being the home favourite, beating two players ranked in the world's top 20.

Currently ranked 42 in the world after a disappointing first-round defeat at the French Open, her success this week has boosted her chances of being one of the 32 seeds at Wimbledon, which starts on June 29.

It comes after she rehired Andrew Richardson, the man who helped her claim her historic US Open title in 2021, as her coach in May.

Raducanu has struggled with injuries since that stunning triumph as a teenager in New York but is now one win away from a second career title.

Neuer to start in Germany's World Cup opener against Curacao after recovery

Houston: Veteran goalkeeper Manuel Neuer will start for Germany in its opening match of the 2026 FIFA World Cup against Curacao on Sunday after recovering from a calf injury, head coach Julian Nagelsmann confirmed.

Forty-year-old Neuer had been sidelined since suffering a left calf injury during Bayern Munich's final Bundesliga match of the season in late May.

The injury forced him to miss the German Cup final as well as Germany's recent friendly victories over Finland and the United States.

Speaking at a pre-match press conference on Saturday, Nagelsmann said Neuer has regained his fitness and is ready to return to international action.

"All the players are fit and Manu will start," Nagelsmann said, adding that the experienced goalkeeper has gradually recovered his rhythm and remains a key figure for the team.

Neuer has not represented Germany for nearly two years. His last international appearance came in Germany's UEFA



Euro 2024 quarterfinal defeat to Spain before he retired from national-team duty.

Nagelsmann later persuaded him to return following a strong season in which he helped Bayern Munich win the Bundesliga title and reach the Champions League semifinals, according to Xinhua.

He is the only remaining member of Germany's 2014 World Cup-winning squad in the current setup.

Sunday's match will mark his fifth World Cup appearance, equaling the German record held by Lothar Matthaus.

Neuer's return has also

provided valuable leadership for Germany's younger players. Midfielder Aleksandar Pavlovic, who is preparing for his World Cup debut, praised his Bayern teammate's influence both on and off the field.

Germany, a four-time winner, enters the tournament looking to rebound from consecutive group-stage exits at the previous two World Cups. Nagelsmann warned against underestimating the tournament's debutant Curacao.

"It is a 'David versus Goliath' situation," he said. "You never win a match simply because you are favorites.

France beat Ireland to secure semi-final spot as South Africa claim vital win

Cape Town: France booked their place in the semi-finals of the FIH Hockey Men's Nations Cup with a 2-0 victory over Ireland on the third day of action here in South Africa.

In the day's other fixture, hosts South Africa kept their semi-final hopes alive with an emphatic 4-0 win over the United States, setting up a decisive final round of pool matches.

France prevailed 2-0 in the battle of the unbeaten sides to top Pool B after a second victory in as many games.

The Irish enjoyed much of the possession and created the better chances in the first half, but it was France who took the lead, largely against the run of play.

After some patient build-up, they worked their way into the Irish circle and, while Corentin Sellier's initial shot was saved, he pounced on the rebound, popping the ball up and across

goal for Xavier Esmen-

jaud to fire home.

Thimothee Clement had the chance to double the lead in the final minute of the half, but his effort was well saved, ensuring the French took a 1-0 advantage into the break.

Ireland earned their first penalty corner of the match within five minutes of the restart, but it was comfortably dealt with, and France were soon back on the attack. Xavier Gaspard smashed the ball in from the edge of the D, with Clément applying the vital deflection to make it 2-0.

The French took control of the final quarter, although Ireland still created a couple of golden opportunities to get on the scoresheet. However, goalkeeper Corentin Saunier ensured France maintained their two-goal cushion, producing an excellent save before denying Ireland again from a penalty corner moments later.

France captain François Goyet was named Player of the Match and said, "We're really happy. We wanted six



points. Now we focus on the last pool game because it's really important. We want to win every game in this tournament, that's why we're here."

South Africa bounced back from their defeat at the hands of the French with a 4-0 victory over the United States.

The South Africans enjoyed the bulk of the possession in the first quarter but were unable to make it count in the early stages of the match. The home side even-

tually made the breakthrough in the 13th minute when Calvin Davis fired home from a penalty corner.

They continued to control proceedings, but the American defence managed to keep them out. The half-time statistics painted a clear picture, with South Africa enjoying 66 per cent possession, recording 17 circle penetrations to the USA's seven, and seven shots on goal compared to just two from their opponents. Despite their dominance, the

lead remained just one goal at the break.

Sihle Ngubane then picked out Ayakha Mthlale, who turned smartly and slotted home to double South Africa's advantage in the 36th minute, making amends after missing a gilt-edged chance in front of goal just moments earlier.

Mthlale was back on the scoresheet midway through the final quarter, netting his second international goal in style with a powerful strike from the edge of the circle. And Kenton

Melville then put the result beyond any doubt when he struck one in from a penalty corner as the host nation wrapped up an important 4-0 win to keep their semi-final hopes alive. Sihle Ngubane was named the Player of the Match and said, "Yesterday we just took some time to rest, reflect, watch videos and do our homework and just take a step forward towards our main goal... The crowd today was phenomenal. That helped us a lot."

Campbelle praised in Windies' major T20 World Cup scalp

Southampton: No Chinnelle Henry, no Stafanie Taylor, no problems for the Windies at the ICC Women's T20 World Cup. Shemaine Campbelle played the innings of her life to steer the Caribbean outfit to a famous nail-biting victory over the reigning champs, winning with a ball to spare. Campbelle also claimed a maiden half-century in T20 internationals in the process, as she anchored their run chase.



up, given the absence of two important contributors. "When we went into bat, we were probably a bit behind the run rate, versus where we wanted to be, but obviously the wickets in hand were super vital, super important," Matthews said post-game. "So having a set batter at the crease was crucial and then for Shemaine to play the innings that she did was fantastic.

She's obviously very emotional, as she should be, she's someone that plays with a lot of heart, and a lot of fight and I think at one point throughout that innings she was struggling to get the ball

hit, but I think she just stuck with it and fought with it and ended up with the score that she did, which was pretty amazing to see. "When people look at a West Indies women's team, they see sometimes just a few names and a few players, so to be able to come out here as a group, have players like Aaliyah Alleyne step up like she did with the ball, Afy Fletcher obviously, but just a full contribution from the team definitely means a lot and I think it'll give us a lot of confidence going back into the rest of the games knowing that when we do get back within this squad, it just adds

to what we can do, and if we can beat teams like this without the two of them, I think our potential is limitless. "The West Indies will be back in action on Thursday against Scotland at Leeds, in a match can now set them up for a deep run at the tournament. "It's obviously really exciting and I think everyone's going to be high on vibes tonight, but at the same time, at a World Cup, you have to be on the ball every single match," Matthews continued. "We play Scotland next and I certainly feel that you can't take any team lightly in this World Cup, T20 cricket has got to a place where one or two players can take a game away from you. We're going to be right back on it when we come back for the next match, so obviously enjoy the celebrations and enjoy the vibes that we have, but making sure we don't get complacent and know that we're going to have to lock back in and play really good cricket to beat Scotland again."

Curacao eyes surprise against Germany in historic World Cup debut

Houston: World Cup debutant Curacao will look to make history when it faces four-time champion Germany in their opening Group E match on Sunday, with head coach Dick Advocaat expressing confidence that the Caribbean side can compete against one of football's traditional powers.

The team, which relies heavily on players of Curacaoan heritage born in the Netherlands, arrives at the tournament determined to prove it belongs on the world's biggest stage.

Advocaat, 78, will become the oldest coach in World Cup history on Sunday. The Dutchman is also set to coach a third different team at the tournament after previously leading the Netherlands and South Korea.

Despite the challenge of facing Germany, Ecuador and Cote d'Ivoire in the group, Advocaat said his side has no reason to fear any opponent.

"We are a small team compared to Germany, but we will make life difficult for them and we'll take time to play," Advocaat told reporters on Saturday.

"It sometimes happens that small teams, amateur teams, beat much bigger sides. In the Netherlands, this happens regularly."

Advocaat said Curacao would seek to take advantage of opportunities created by Germany's attacking



style. "Germany will be the dominant team and we have to respond to that. We are going to use the space that Germany will create [when they attack] and benefit from it."

The veteran coach also highlighted the strong atmosphere within the squad, describing it as the best team spirit he has witnessed during his long coaching career, according to Xinhua.

"The team spirit in this team is something I've never seen before. As a team we will give everything to win for the island, but we're not the favorite," Advocaat said.

"When you are participating with the Netherlands or a bigger team, you are one of the favorites. Now it is just amazing to be a part of this."

"We would like to show them what we can do and what we're worth. And for the island of Curacao, it is amazing what we have shown the people over the past two years."

"Advocaat said all players are

available for selection and stressed that Curacao aims to compete rather than simply participate.

"We have nothing to lose. The expectation is not that high outside of us as a squad, because we think we can surprise people. Just being here is great for the players, but we also have to show people what we are made of."

"I think we will have to steal some points, but in a legitimate way. We want to show them that we have a good plan."

Curacao's relaxed and upbeat attitude has attracted attention in the tournament buildup, with videos of players singing and dancing on the team bus widely shared on social media.

Captain Leandro Bacuna said enjoying the occasion remains an important part of the team's identity.

"We are a team that we love to have a little bit of a party as well," Bacuna said. "We love to have fun."

Like many of his teammates, Bacuna was born in the Netherlands but represents Curacao through his family roots.

"People sometimes say I'm not really from Curacao. But these are people, my parents, who had been looking for opportunities and these opportunities are not always present on Curacao," he said. "But we are Curacaoans and we love Curacao!"

India continues to be world's fastest-growing major economy: Sitharaman

New Delhi: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said India continues to be the world's fastest-growing major economy, even as rising geopolitical tensions and higher energy prices pose fresh challenges to the global growth outlook.

While speaking at the BJP's Viksit Bharat event in Bengaluru, she highlighted India's economic resilience after the country posted stronger-than-expected growth numbers for the January-March quarter.

"India's economy expanded 7.7 per cent in FY26, up from 7.1 per cent in the previous financial year. GDP growth in the March quarter came in at 7.8 per cent, beating economists' expectations and matching the pace recorded in the preceding quarter," she said.

Speaking at the event, she said, "Karnataka has witnessed a significant expansion of welfare and fi-



Healthcare coverage has also expanded, with more than 1.9 crore Ayushman cards issued, providing beneficiaries with health insurance cover of up to Rs 5 lakh.

Meanwhile, around 4 crore people in the state receive free foodgrains under the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, ensuring food security for vulnerable households," she added.

The agriculture sector has received continued sup-

port, with over 43 lakh farmers receiving direct income assistance under PM-KISAN. Additionally, 31.7 lakh Kisan Credit Cards have been issued, improving farmers' access to institutional credit, the minister said.

Rural infrastructure has seen a boost through the Jal Jeevan Mission, with around 87 lakh rural households in Karnataka now having access to piped

drinking water. The state has also recorded 41 lakh Ujjwala LPG connections, supporting cleaner cooking fuel adoption among households.

Social security coverage has expanded through multiple schemes, with 1.67 crore enrolments under PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), 2.60 crore enrolments under PM Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), and 49 lakh enrolments under Atal Pension Yojana.

"Over 12 crore household toilets, nearly 15.85 crore rural tap-water connections, 10.5 crore Ujjwala connections and free food grains for over 81 crore citizens show how welfare delivery is changing lives of crores of Indians on the ground," the minister highlighted.

"We're taking the approach of saturation governance, ensuring that development reaches the last person in the queue."

Market valuation of 8 of top 10 most valued firms surge by Rs 1.90 trillion

New Delhi: India's top-valued companies witnessed a remarkable surge in their combined market capitalisation last week, reflecting renewed investor confidence and strong momentum in domestic equities. Eight of the country's ten most-valued firms together added an impressive Rs 1.90 trillion to their market valuations, supported by a broad-based rally in the stock market.

Among the biggest beneficiaries of the rally was ICICI Bank, which emerged as the top gainer in terms of market capitalisation. The private sector lender added Rs 56,223 crore to its valuation during the week, taking its total market value to Rs 9,61,297.77 crore. The sharp rise underscored strong investor optimism surrounding the banking sector and the bank's financial performance outlook.

Another major contributor to the overall gains was HDFC Bank. India's largest private sector lender by assets saw its market valuation rise by Rs 38,571.11 crore to reach Rs 11,89,314.42 crore.



The increase further strengthened its position among the country's most valuable listed entities.

State Bank of India (SBI), the country's largest public sector bank, also posted substantial gains during the week. The lender's market capitalisation climbed by Rs 36,137.87 crore, pushing its valuation to Rs 9,38,661.50 crore. The rise reflected continued investor interest in banking stocks amid expectations of stable economic growth and healthy credit demand.

Bajaj Finance, one of India's leading non-banking financial companies, recorded a strong increase in its market worth as well. Its valua-

tion surged by Rs 18,366.57 crore to Rs 5,71,947.54 crore, highlighting investors' confidence in the company's growth prospects and robust retail lending business.

Engineering and infrastructure giant Larsen & Toubro (L&T) also benefited from the positive market sentiment. The company's market capitalisation rose by Rs 13,241.39 crore to Rs 5,57,197.83 crore, supported by optimism over infrastructure spending and the execution of large domestic and international projects.

Fast-moving consumer goods major Hindustan Unilever witnessed a healthy increase in its valuation during the week.

Tata Trust member seeks probe into 1989 share transfer deal

Mumbai: Tata Trusts Vice Chairman Vijay Singh has written to the Maharashtra Charity Commissioner seeking an independent investigation into a share transfer deal where 833 shares of Tata Sons were transferred from the Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust to the late industrialist Naval Tata on January 18, 1989.

Present Tata Trusts Chairman Noel Tata happens to be one of the heirs of the late industrialist Naval Tata, as well as a Director on the board of Tata Sons.

Tata Trusts control approximately 66 per cent of the equity share capital in Tata Sons, which is the principal holding company of the Tata Group. The two largest and most prominent trusts in this group are the Sir Ratan Tata Trust and the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust. Together with other smaller allied Tata family charitable trusts like the Tata Education and Development Trust (TEDT), Tata Trusts control approximately 66 per cent ownership of Tata Sons.

Significantly, it may be recalled that a former Tata Sons trustee Mehli Mistry had voted against the reappointment of trustees Venu Srinivasan and Vijay Singh to the Tata Education and Development Trust (TEDT),

even before their tenures ended on May 10.

Mehli Mistry had also opposed the listing of Tata Sons, while Vijay Singh had pushed for Tata Sons to be listed on the stock exchanges through an initial public offering (IPO). Similarly, Tata Trusts Chairman Noel Tata, who is one of the heirs of the late industrialist Naval Tata, has also opposed the listing of Tata Sons on the stock exchanges.

Singh's latest move came after he received a legal notice alleging that the 1989 transaction amounted to an unlawful diversion of charitable assets into private hands and he sought an investigation into the 1989 share transfer, urging the Maharashtra Charity Commissioner to safeguard the interests of public charitable trusts.

Earlier, a petitioner Suresh Tulsiram Patilkhede had approached the Maharashtra Charity Commissioner regarding alleged irregularities in the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, prompting official action. On June 4, Patilkhede filed a complaint alleging that the share transfer took place on January 18, 1989, just a week after Naval Tata resigned as a trustee of the Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust. Patilkhede also al-

leged that the 1989 share transfer transaction lacked any legal necessity, was unsupported by any valid instrument of share transfer and was carried out without consideration, making it unlawful under principles which govern public trusts.

According to the letter written by Tata Trusts Vice Chairman Vijay Singh to the Maharashtra Charity Commissioner, the legal notice has raised several questions, including whether there was any legal necessity for the transfer, whether any proper documentation of the share transfer existed, and whether the Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust received adequate consideration based on an independent valuation of the shares it transferred to the late industrialist Naval Tata in 1989.

Singh's letter highlighted a potential conflict of interest involving present Tata Trusts Chairman Noel Tata, since Tata Trust Chairman Noel Tata is one of the heirs of the late Naval Tata who was the beneficiary of the 1989 share transfer. Singh stated in his letter that Tata Trust Chairman Noel Tata should not participate in any deliberations regarding the 1989 share transfer, since that would be a conflict of interest.

Telangana Deputy CM Bhatti slams BRS for 'false propaganda' against Singareni, reaffirms commitment to workers' welfare

Mancherial: Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka on Sunday launched a strong attack on the BRS, accusing its leaders of spreading false propaganda against the workers of Singareni, the state-owned coal mining company, for political gains and attempting to undermine the dignity and hard work of coal mine workers.

He asserted that the government would not tolerate any attempt to tarnish the reputation of the state-owned mining giant and reaffirmed the administration's commitment to protecting workers' welfare and ensuring transparency in its operations.

Along with IT and Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu, Bhatti conducted an open-house inspection of the Srirampur Open Cast Mine in Mancherial district to counter what he described as misinformation being spread about Singareni.

Addressing workers and offi-

cial, the Deputy Chief Minister said, "Any insult to the hard work of Singareni employees would not be tolerated."

He said the inspection was organised to place facts before the public and expose what he termed as a "false campaign being carried out against the state-owned mining company."

Accusing BRS leaders of spreading misinformation for "political interests," Bhatti said he was not at the mine site to make political statements but to present facts to the people.

He maintained that the government had a responsibility to communicate the truth and ensure transparency. The Deputy Chief Minister said, "The growth and success of Singareni had been built on the sweat and dedication of its workers and condemned attempts to undermine their contribution."

He alleged that baseless propa-

ganda was being spread against the commitment of Singareni management and its transparent systems.

Describing Singareni as a crown jewel of Telangana, Bhatti said attempts to tarnish its image through unfounded allegations were unacceptable.

He also criticised letters reportedly written by BRS leaders to the Centre alleging irregularities in the company, stating that such claims were far from the truth.

"Singareni is not merely a company but an asset belonging to the people of Telangana," he said, adding that the government would remain vigilant to protect the institution from vested interests and political exploitation. The Deputy Chief Minister reiterated that the government was committed to ensuring complete transparency in coal production, stock management and transportation. During the inspection, he re-

viewed mining operations, safety measures and transportation records and sought details from company officials.

Officials informed the Deputy Chief Minister that the Srirampur Open Cast Mine has adequate coal reserves to continue production for another 28 years under current plans. They also explained that key operational processes are monitored through advanced computerised systems to ensure transparency.

Bhatti said the welfare of Singareni workers remained the government's top priority. He noted that efforts were underway to provide world-class healthcare facilities and international-standard education for workers' children. He said advanced healthcare infrastructure, including a Cath Lab, was being established, while funds had been sanctioned to upgrade educational institutions serving workers' families.

Welfare economist Jean Dreze awarded for his research on poverty and inequality measurement in India

New Delhi: Renowned Belgian-born Indian welfare economist Jean Dreze was awarded the Global Inequality Research Award (GiRA) during the world inequality conference organised at the Paris School of Economics.

Dreze got this recognition due to his pioneering work on poverty and inequality measurement in

India and his advocacy for the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

After receiving this award, Dreze said, "This recognition is not something I achieved on my own. All the work I do is in collaboration with people and collectives working for change." "I live and work in

India, which was rightly described as a 'museum of inequality' by Dr BR Ambedkar. India has all possible varieties of inequality—not only astronomical economic inequality, but also the caste system, huge gender disparities, massive disparities in access to education, and so forth. The silver lining is that India also has a rich history of resistance to

inequality. I've been very fortunate to be associated with some of these movements," Dreze said. Academically, economist Dreze has a PhD in theoretical economics of cost-benefit analysis from the Indian Statistical Institute. He also studied mathematical economics at the University of Essex in the 1980s. He contributed rigorously to criti-

cal areas of development economics, such as hunger, famine, education, gender inequality, childcare, school feeding, and employment guarantee.

The GiRA is a prestigious international prize recognising scholars whose work has improved the understanding of economic, social and environmental inequalities.

Twelve years of agri transformation with rising production, stronger farmer support and tech-led growth reshaping rural India

New Delhi: India's agriculture sector has witnessed a major transformation over the past 12 years, marked by record production levels, expanded farmer welfare programmes, greater access to institutional credit, stronger procurement systems and the growing use of digital technologies.

The government has highlighted the period as one of comprehensive reforms aimed at improving farm productivity, enhancing income security and building a more resilient and sustainable agricultural economy.

Agriculture continues to remain a cornerstone of the Indian economy, supporting the livelihoods of nearly half of the country's population. Over the last decade, policy interventions have increasingly focused on moving beyond traditional subsidy-driven support towards a more integrated framework that combines direct income assistance, risk mitigation, infrastructure development, market reforms and technological innovation.

One of the most significant indicators of this growth has been the rise in the Gross Value Added (GVA) of agriculture and allied sectors.

The sector's GVA increased from Rs 20.9 lakh crore in 2014-15 to Rs 48.7 lakh crore in 2023-24, reflecting both higher production and increased economic activity across agriculture, horticulture, livestock and fisheries.

The annual budget allocation for the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has also grown more than five-fold during the period, underlining the government's emphasis on the sector.

Foodgrain production has reached unprecedented levels. From 265.05 million tonnes in 2013-14, total foodgrain production is estimated to have risen to 357.73 million tonnes in 2024-25. Rice production has touched a record 150.18 million tonnes, while wheat production is estimated at 117.94 million tonnes.

Maize production has also crossed 43 million tonnes, reflecting improvements in seed technology, irrigation coverage and agronomic practices. The government has also reported substantial gains in the production of pulses and oilseeds, both of which are crucial for ensuring nutritional security and reducing import

dependence.

Farmer welfare has remained a central component of agricultural policy. The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme, launched to provide direct income support to farmers, has emerged as one of the world's largest direct benefit transfer programmes. Under the scheme, eligible farmers receive Rs 6,000 annually in three instalments directly into their bank accounts. Since its launch, more than Rs 4.28 lakh crore has been transferred to over 9.4 crore farmer beneficiaries, helping them meet cultivation-related expenses and reducing financial stress.

Risk management mechanisms have also been strengthened through the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY). The crop insurance programme has provided protection against crop losses arising from natural disasters, adverse weather events and pest attacks.

Since its introduction, the scheme has insured millions of farmers and facilitated compensation payments running into nearly Rs 2 lakh crore, making it one of the largest agricultural insur-

ance programmes globally.

The government has simultaneously expanded procurement operations and strengthened the Minimum Support Price (MSP) framework. MSPs for key crops have been steadily increased with the objective of ensur-



ing remunerative returns to farmers. Procurement of wheat, rice and several other crops has grown significantly, ensuring that farmers have access to assured markets and price support. The total value of payments made to farmers through procurement operations has risen substantially over the past decade, helping improve income stability in rural areas. Access to institutional credit has also improved dramatically. Agricultural credit disbursement has nearly quadrupled during the period, while the

Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme has been expanded to provide easier and more affordable access to working capital.

The number of KCC accounts and the amount of credit extended under the programme have both wit-

nessed sharp increases, enabling farmers to invest in seeds, fertilisers, machinery and other agricultural inputs without relying heavily on informal lenders. Water management and irrigation infrastructure have been another area of focus. Through the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY), efforts have been made to improve irrigation efficiency and extend irrigation facilities to previously underserved regions. The programme's emphasis on the principle of "Per drop More Crop" has encouraged

the adoption of micro-irrigation systems, helping conserve water while enhancing productivity.

The Soil Health Card initiative has also played a key role in promoting scientific farming practices. By providing farmers with detailed information about the nutrient status of their soil, the programme has encouraged balanced fertiliser use and improved soil fertility management. Nearly 26 crore Soil Health Cards have been distributed across the country, enabling farmers to make informed cultivation decisions.

In recent years, the government has increasingly promoted sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture. Programmes supporting natural farming, organic cultivation and integrated farming systems have been introduced to reduce input costs, improve soil health and mitigate the environmental impact of agriculture. These initiatives are gaining importance as the sector faces growing challenges from climate change, erratic weather patterns and resource constraints.

m=Technology and digitalisation have emerged as

major drivers of agricultural reform. Under the Digital Agriculture Mission, efforts are underway to create a comprehensive digital ecosystem for farmers. Millions of farmer identities have been generated and large-scale digitisation of agricultural land records has been undertaken. These measures are expected to improve service delivery, facilitate targeted policy interventions and enhance transparency.

The electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) has also transformed agricultural marketing by connecting more than 1,600 mandis on a unified online platform. The initiative enables farmers to access a broader market, compare prices across regions and benefit from greater transparency in trading operations. The growth story has not been limited to crop cultivation alone. Allied sectors such as dairy, fisheries, livestock and beekeeping have emerged as important contributors to rural income diversification. India has consolidated its position as the world's largest milk producer, with milk output increasing significantly over the last decade. Fisheries have also

registered rapid growth, with fish production nearly doubling, creating employment opportunities and boosting exports.

Agricultural exports have recorded steady expansion as well. The value of exports of agricultural and allied products has crossed USD 50 billion, supported by rising global demand for Indian rice, spices, marine products, processed foods and other agricultural commodities.

The growth in exports reflects improved competitiveness and greater integration of Indian agriculture with global markets. The government maintains that the combined impact of higher public investment, expanded welfare schemes, improved market access, digital innovation and sustainable farming initiatives has strengthened the agricultural ecosystem.

As India seeks to ensure food security for a growing population while improving farmer incomes, the changes witnessed over the last 12 years are being presented as the foundation for a more productive, technologically advanced and globally competitive agricultural sector.