

PM announces fast-track courts for paper leak cases, vows strict punishment for accused

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday announced that the government will establish fast-track courts to ensure the speedy trial of paper leak cases, asserting that safeguarding the interests and future of students remains the government's highest priority and warning that those responsible for compromising the future of the country's youth "will not be spared."

In a post on social media platform X, the Prime Minister said the decision was aimed at ensuring swift justice and stringent punishment for those involved in examination paper leaks, which have triggered

widespread concern over the integrity of competitive examinations and recruitment tests. "Nothing is more important than the welfare and future of our youth!" Modi said, adding, "We have decided to set up fast-track courts to ensure swift and stringent punishment for those involved in paper leaks. Have directed the concerned authorities and officials to take all necessary steps in this regard. This continues our series of steps for safeguarding the interests of students."

Reiterating the government's resolve to crack down on those responsible for such offences, the Prime Minister said, "Those



who try to harm the future of our youth will not be spared." In his Hindi post, Modi said,



"The welfare and future of the country's youth are our highest priority. To ensure that those

guilty in all paper leak cases receive strict punishment at the earliest, fast-track courts will

be constituted for the speedy disposal of these cases. Directions have already been issued to the concerned departments to ensure the necessary action."

He described the move as "an important step" in the series of measures being undertaken by the government to protect the interests of students and reiterated that "anyone who tampers with the future of the youth will not be spared." The announcement comes amid heightened political and public focus on examination irregularities and paper leak incidents, with concerns over the credibility of recruitment and entrance examinations dominating public discourse in

recent months. The issue has sparked protests by students and criticism from opposition parties, which have accused the government of failing to prevent repeated examination leaks.

The Centre has maintained that it is committed to protecting the interests of students through legislative, administrative and technological measures to strengthen the examination system. The proposed fast-track courts are expected to expedite the prosecution of those accused in paper leak cases and reinforce the government's efforts to deter such offences through quicker judicial proceedings and stricter punishment.

Congress says PM under pressure over student protests

New Delhi: Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh on Thursday launched a fresh attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the issue of examination paper leaks and the ongoing student protests, alleging that the Prime Minister was avoiding parliamentary debate and had come under pressure due to the growing nationwide outrage over the issue.

In a post on social media platform X, Ramesh claimed that the Prime Minister lacked the courage to participate in a serious debate in Parliament, unlike his predecessors who addressed the House whenever the situation demanded.

"The Prime Minister does not have the courage to stand up in Parliament and participate in a serious debate, as all Prime

Ministers before him did whenever the occasion demanded," Ramesh said. Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's social media announcement earlier in the day on setting up fast-track courts for paper leak cases, the Congress leader alleged that the post was an attempt to project concern for students but reflected the government's defensive position.

"This morning, through a social media post, he tried to create the impression that he is concerned about the issues being raised by students across the country. But in reality, that post shows that he is under pressure and completely rattled," Ramesh wrote.

Escalating his criticism, the Congress leader accused the government of presiding over a series of alleged irregularities, saying, "Vote theft, seat theft, donation theft, theft of examination

Jairam Ramesh targets Modi on paper leak issue



papers... the list keeps getting longer." The remarks came amid an intensifying political confrontation over alleged irregularities in competitive examinations and paper leak cases. The Congress has been accusing the Centre of failing to protect the interests of students and suppressing protests over the issue, while demanding accountability from the government.

Earlier on Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra

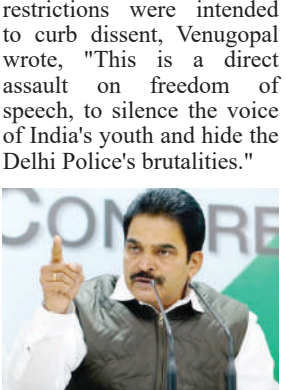
Modi announced that fast-track courts would be established to ensure the speedy disposal of paper leak cases and said those responsible for jeopardising the future of the country's youth would face swift and stringent punishment. The government has maintained that it is committed to safeguarding students' interests through a series of administrative and legal measures to strengthen the integrity of the examination system.

Congress alleges internet curbs near Jantar Mantar, accuses Centre of silencing student protest

New Delhi: Congress general secretary (Organisation) K C Venugopal on Thursday accused the Narendra Modi government of imposing internet restrictions around Jantar Mantar in New Delhi to suppress the voices of protesting students, alleging that the move was aimed at preventing information about the Delhi Police's alleged actions against demonstrators from reaching the public.

In a post on social media platform X, Venugopal claimed that internet services had been cut off in the Jantar Mantar area, creating panic among those present and describing the alleged move as an attack on democratic freedoms.

"PM Modi has cut off internet around Jantar Mantar, which is creating immense panic," the Congress leader said. Alleging that the



restrictions were intended to curb dissent, Venugopal wrote, "This is a direct assault on freedom of speech, to silence the voice of India's youth and hide the Delhi Police's brutalities."

He also warned the government against taking further action to suppress the ongoing agitation, saying, "Be warned, Modi - any untoward step to quash this youth protest will be deeply disastrous and the people will deliver a historic punishment against you."

The Congress has been mounting a sustained attack on the Centre over the handling of student protests linked to alleged

irregularities in competitive examinations and paper leak cases.

The opposition party has accused the government of suppressing peaceful protests and has demanded accountability over the alleged use of force against students.

The Centre, however, has maintained that it is committed to protecting the interests of students and preserving law and order. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday announced the setting up of fast-track courts to ensure the speedy trial of paper leak cases and said those responsible for jeopardising the future of the country's youth would face swift and stringent punishment.

The government has not officially responded to Venugopal's allegation regarding internet restrictions around Jantar Mantar.

DMRC shuts down 16 metros again amid the ongoing CJP protests

New Delhi: Sixteen Delhi Metro stations were closed for operations from 7:30 am until further notice, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said on Thursday. At 6:55 am, the DMRC released a list of the 16 stations affected: Lok Kalyan Marg, Rajiv Chowk, Patel Chowk, Ramakrishna Ashram Marg, Barakhamba Road, Supreme Court, Seva Teerth, Janpath, Mandi House, Central Secretariat, ITO, Delhi Gate, Indraprastha, Khan Market, Jor Bagh and Shivaji Stadium. While entry and exit at these stations have been suspended, interchange facilities will continue to be available at Rajiv Chowk, Mandi House and Central Secretariat, the DMRC said. The announcement came after fresh tensions erupted on Sansad Marg on Wednesday night, away from the protest site. Security has also been tightened around Jantar Mantar, where the protest led by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) is continuing.

IMD forecasts widespread rain over Delhi-NCR, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal and J&K over next week

Panchkula: The India Meteorological Department (IMD), in its morning bulletin issued at 0820 hours IST on Thursday, forecast widespread rainfall over Himachal Pradesh, Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh-Gilgit-Baltistan-Muzaffarabad, Punjab, Haryana-Chandigarh-Delhi, and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan for the coming week.

The IMD also warned of isolated very heavy rainfall in several of these areas.

The IMD expects widespread rainfall over Himachal Pradesh, Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh-Gilgit-Baltistan-Muzaffarabad, and Uttarakhand from July 23 to 28. Ladakh will likely experience isolated to scattered light to moderate rainfall over the next two days. The IMD forecasts widespread rainfall in Punjab on July 23 and July 27-28, with

lighter, scattered rainfall from July 24-26. Haryana, Chandigarh, and Delhi are likely to receive widespread rainfall on July 27-28 and scattered rainfall from July 23-26. East Uttar Pradesh is expected to see widespread rainfall on July 27-28, with scattered rainfall earlier in the week.

West Uttar Pradesh will have widespread rainfall on July 28 and scattered rainfall from July 23-27. West Rajasthan is likely to receive widespread rainfall from July 23-26, followed by scattered rainfall on July 27-28. East Rajasthan is expected to see widespread rainfall from July 23-27, with scattered rain on July 28.

The bulletin warns of isolated thunderstorms, lightning, and gusty winds of 30-40 kmph, gusting up to 50 kmph, over Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh-Gilgit-

Baltistan-Muzaffarabad from July 23-28. West Rajasthan may experience thunderstorms, lightning, and winds of 40-50 kmph, gusting to 60 kmph, on July 23, with similar conditions in East Rajasthan.

Isolated thunderstorms and lightning are also forecast for Uttarakhand from July 23-28 and for East and West Rajasthan from July 24-28. Heavy rainfall over Himachal Pradesh and Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh-Gilgit-Baltistan-Muzaffarabad during July 23-28; over Uttarakhand during July 23-28; over Punjab on July 23 and July 25; over Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi on July 23; over East Rajasthan and West Uttar Pradesh during July 27-28; over East Uttar Pradesh during July 26-28; and over West Rajasthan during July 23-26.

Army counters viral misinformation linking scrap yard blast to terror attack

New Delhi: The Indian Army has dismissed as "false and misleading" a viral social media post that claimed an Indian security post in Jammu and Kashmir had come under attack, resulting in the deaths of several security personnel, and alleged that the incident was a "false flag" operation to divert attention from ongoing protests.

In a fact-check issued on Thursday, the Army's official fact-check handle, @MythbusterXX, said the claim was part of a Pakistan-sponsored disinformation campaign aimed at misleading the

public by falsely portraying an unrelated local incident as a terrorist attack on security forces.

The viral post alleged that "another 'false flag' operation" had taken place in India and claimed that "an Indian security post in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) has once again come under attack," adding that "several Indian personnel have been killed."

Rejecting the claim, the Army clarified that the visuals and reports being circulated online were actually linked to a blast and fire that occurred at a scrap yard in Mirbazar along the

Jammu-Srinagar National Highway on May 10, and had no connection with any attack on security forces.

"Pakistan-sponsored propaganda handles are falsely claiming that an Indian security post in Jammu & Kashmir was attacked and several Indian personnel were killed, portraying it as a 'false flag' operation to mislead audiences," the Army said.

It added, "The actual incident was a blast that broke out at a scrap yard in Mirbazar, along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway on Sunday afternoon, 10 May 2026. The incident

is being falsely presented online with fabricated claims of a terror attack and military casualties."

The Army further said the misleading narrative followed a familiar pattern of online disinformation.

"Real local incidents fake security narratives exaggerated casualty claims = propaganda strategy designed to create confusion, spread fear, and manipulate public perception about Jammu & Kashmir," the fact-check noted.

Urging the public to exercise caution, the Army advised citizens to verify

defence and security-related information only through official sources before sharing it on social media.

"Always verify defence and security-related information through official sources before believing or sharing sensational claims. Don't let propaganda accounts exploit sensitive issues," it said.

The clarification is part of the Army's continuing efforts to counter misinformation and coordinated propaganda campaigns targeting national security issues, particularly those relating to Jammu and Kashmir.

Congress refuses discussion without Pradhan's exit, steps up attack on Centre over Exam row

New Delhi: The Congress on Thursday sharpened its offensive against the Narendra Modi government over the alleged examination paper leaks and the treatment of protesting students, with Congress President and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge declaring that the party would agree to a discussion in Parliament only after union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigns, while Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra accused the government of suppressing democratic dissent and evading responsibility for repeated paper leaks.

Speaking to reporters in the Parliament House complex amid the continuing confrontation between the treasury benches and the Opposition during the Monsoon Session, Priyanka Gandhi questioned the ruling BJP's decision to stage protests outside Parliament, saying it reflected the government's inability to conduct the proceedings of the House.

"Have you ever seen, in the history of our democracy, ruling party MPs themselves staging a protest outside Parliament? They are unable to run Parliament. They are extremely weak and cowardly," she said.

Expressing solidarity with students protesting against the alleged examination irregularities, Priyanka Gandhi accused the government of using force against young demonstrators instead of addressing their concerns.

"Is this how the youth are treated in a democracy? They are being subjected to repression for raising legitimate demands. They are being lathi-charged and tear gas is being used against them," she said.

She also targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging that while he claimed credit for national achievements, he was refusing

to accept responsibility for the alleged failures of the examination system.

"The Prime Minister claims credit for every achievement of every Indian, even for India's mission to Mars. Why, then, is he not taking responsibility for the paper leaks? There have been 152 paper leaks, and no one has been punished. Prime Minister Modi must take responsibility for this," she said.

Congress President and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, addressing reporters separately in Parliament, reiterated the Opposition's demand for a discussion under

Rule 267 in the Rajya Sabha and accused the government of refusing to permit such a debate.

"We wanted a discussion in the House under Rule 267, but the government was not prepared to allow it," Kharge said.

Escalating the Congress' political offensive, Kharge alleged that the government had insulted not only Congress leaders but also the students protesting over the examination controversy.

"The Modi government has insulted Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and the students," he said.

Kharge made it clear that the Congress would not

participate in any discussion on the issue unless the Education Minister stepped down.

"Now, we will agree to a discussion only after Dharmendra Pradhan resigns," he said.

The statements came as Parliament witnessed another day of disruptions over the alleged examination paper leaks and the police action against student protesters, with the INDIA bloc insisting on a debate under Rule 267 in the Rajya Sabha and demanding Pradhan's resignation.

Opposition parties have alleged that repeated paper leaks have undermined the credibility of



competitive examinations and jeopardised the future of lakhs of students across the country.

The government has rejected the Opposition's allegations, defended its handling of the examination issue and maintained that appropriate investigations are underway into the alleged irregularities.

However, the Opposition has continued to insist that political accountability must precede any parliamentary

discussion, making the Education Minister's resignation its principal demand.

With neither the government nor the Opposition showing signs of relenting, the confrontation over the examination controversy has emerged as one of the defining issues of the Monsoon Session, raising the prospect of continued disruptions in Parliament in the days ahead.

Day after policeman's killing, LG Sinha orders intensified anti-terror operations

Srinagar: A day after a policeman was shot dead in Anantnag, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday directed security forces to remain highly vigilant and intensify intelligence-led anti-terror operations during a high-level security review meeting.

Senior officials from the Army, Jammu and Kashmir Police, civil administration, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), intelligence agencies, and the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board attended the meeting.

An official spokesman said the Lieutenant Governor also comprehensively reviewed logistics and safety arrangements for the ongoing Amarnath Yatra in light of the recent inclement weather and heavy rainfall across the region.

The Lieutenant Governor instructed all departments to maintain seamless coordination and ensure the safety, well-being and convenience of all pilgrims of Baba Barfani.

He directed a comprehensive department-wise review of all amenities, including rigorous audits of fire and emergency services, power grids, and water supply infrastructure.

More than 3,91,000 pilgrims have performed darshan at the holy cave in the first 20 days.



The Lieutenant Governor said the resumption of the Yatra is strictly contingent upon weather conditions.

In view of recent heavy rains, the Lieutenant Governor directed strengthening flood protection measures and immediate clearance of debris from all nallahs along the pilgrimage tracks.He emphasized the need for continuous operational readiness, focusing on round-the-clock disaster response preparedness, ensuring clean tracks and well-

maintained sanitation facilities and adequate reserves of rations, LPG, kerosene, and emergency medical supplies.The Lieutenant Governor instructed officials to strictly prohibit unregistered service providers along the route and to enforce a mandatory 100 per cent prepaid service system. He also instructed for the setting up of additional power DG sets, round-the-clock healthcare services, adequate availability of manpower, oxygen cylinders, and ambulances.

Bihar Govt announces strict action against 'anti-social elements' behind Patna violence, says attackers were not students

Patna : The Bihar government Thursday announced stringent action against those involved in the violence that broke out during a students' protest in Patna yesterday, alleging that anti-social elements had infiltrated the agitation with political motives to spread violence, target journalists and legislators and destabilise the state government.

Making a statement on behalf of the government in the Bihar Legislative Assembly, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Vijay Kumar Choudhary said the government would identify every person involved in the violence and ensure the "strictest action" against them. Addressing the House, Choudhary said the protest had begun over the alleged NEET paper leak issue but was subsequently hijacked by anti-social elements.

"The entire state witnessed how anti-social elements entered the gathering of students and attempted to spread violence with political motives. They deliberately identified and attacked journalists and legislators in an attempt to defame and de-

stabilise the government. Such acts will not be tolerated under any circumstances," he said.

The minister asserted that those involved in the attacks could not be considered students.

"The government's clear view is that those who targeted MLAs and journalists were not students and cannot be students. They were anti-social elements disguised as students, acting with vested political interests and a hidden agenda," he said.

At the same time, Choudhary said the government was fully sensitive to the concerns of students over the alleged examination paper leak.

Referring to recent legislative measures against examination fraud, he said the paper leak had now been explicitly brought under strict-er legal provisions and treated as an organised crime, enabling stronger punishment for offenders. He added that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also emphasised speedy trials through fast-track courts to ensure exemplary punishment in such cases.

Yogi Reviews Rain Situation, Orders Swift Relief Measures

Lucknow: In view of the continuous heavy rains and flood-like situation in various districts of Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday directed officials to immediately expedite relief and rescue operations.

According to an official statement, the Chief Minister has asked all District Magistrates and concerned officials to remain in the field and continuously monitor the situation and provide all possible assistance to the affected people.He also directed to immediately assess the loss of life, livestock, and property and provide the permissible relief amount to the affected families within 24 hours.The Chief Minister asked officials to regularly review the relief work and maintain constant communication with the affected families so that assistance can be provided as per their needs. He appealed to the people to take special precautions during bad weather, asking them not to leave their homes if there is a possibility of lightning strikes, and to avoid going near rivers and water bodies during heavy rains.

UP CM Yogi Adityanath takes cognizance of heavy rains , directs officials to expedite relief work

Lucknow : Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday instructed officials to immediately accelerate relief and rescue operations in several districts of the state affected by continuous heavy rainfall and flood-like conditions.

Taking note of the worsening situation due to incessant rains, the Chief Minister directed district administrations to remain on high alert and ensure that affected residents receive timely assistance. He emphasised that the safety and well-being of people should remain the top priority during the ongoing weather crisis.

According to an official statement, Yogi Adityanath asked all District Magistrates and concerned officials to remain present on the ground and continuously monitor the situation. He



instructed authorities to personally oversee relief measures instead of relying only on reports from field-level teams.

The Chief Minister directed officials to provide all possible support to people affected by floods, waterlogging, and other rain-related challenges. He said immediate steps should be taken to

ensure that no affected family faces difficulties in accessing essential assistance.

Yogi also ordered officials to conduct a prompt assessment of damages caused by the heavy rains. The assessment will cover loss of human lives, livestock, and property so that affected families can receive government assistance without unnecessary delays.

He instructed authorities to provide the eligible relief amount to affected families within 24 hours after verification of losses. The move aims to ensure quick financial support for those who have suffered due to flooding and weather-related incidents.

The Chief Minister further asked officials to regularly review relief operations and maintain continuous communication with affected communities.

KTR serves legal notice to CM Revanth Reddy over Globarena allegations

Hyderabad: Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) Working President K T Rama Rao (KTR) on Thursday said he had served a legal notice on Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, demanding an unconditional public apology within 48 hours over allegations linking him to Globarena Technologies.

In a statement, KTR said the Chief Minister had made "false, malicious and defamatory" allegations by claiming that Globarena Technologies was his benami company.He asserted that he had no ownership, financial, proprietary or any other rela-



tionship with the firm and challenged the Chief Minister to produce evidence supporting his claims.KTR said that if the Chief Minister failed to substantiate the allegations or apologise within

the stipulated period, he would initiate civil and criminal proceedings, including a defamation suit.Rejecting the allegations as "false and politically motivated", KTR questioned why the Con-

gress government had entered into agreements with Globarena if it believed the company belonged to him. He also alleged that the Chief Minister was attempting to divert attention from the issue of alleged irregularities in national examinations and criticised the state government for not questioning the BJP-led Central government over the NEET controversy. KTR further accused the Congress and the BJP of having a covert understanding and claimed that the Chief Minister was reluctant to confront the Centre due to political compulsions.

Six critical as PG fire engulfs workers' hostel in Bengaluru

Bengaluru: Eight migrant labourers from West Bengal suffered burn injuries after a massive fire broke out at a paying guest (PG) accommodation in Bengaluru's industrial area of Bommasandra early Thursday morning. Six of the injured workers sustained critical burns and are undergoing treatment, police said.

The incident took place at Sai PG, where several employees of a private engineering company were staying. According to preliminary investigations, a suspected LPG cylinder leak triggered the fire, which quickly spread through the room on the second floor of the building.

The blaze reportedly erupted around 6.30 am, when nine workers were

present inside the accommodation. Police suspect that the leaking gas cylinder caused the fire to intensify rapidly, leaving the occupants with very little time to react and escape.Local residents noticed the fire and immediately alerted emergency services. Firefighters and police teams reached the spot shortly after receiving information and launched a rescue operation to evacuate the trapped workers. The injured labourers were shifted to nearby hospitals for medical attention. Officials said the victims suffered varying degrees of burn injuries, with several of them requiring specialised care due to the severity of their condition. The injured workers have been identified as Debasis Halder, Debasis Malik, Sub-

rata Bera, Hisbul Rehman, Sourav Chowdary, Santan Ray, Syed Alahuddin, and Diswanath. All eight victims are residents of West Bengal and were employed at a private engineering firm in Bengaluru.Police officials said that six of the victims suffered more than 60 per cent burns and are currently being treated at Best Hospital in Chandapura. Doctors are closely monitoring their health condition as they continue to receive treatment. Following the incident, police registered a case against the owner of the PG accommodation on charges of alleged negligence. Investigators are examining whether safety guidelines were followed at the premises and whether any violations contributed to the fire.

Congress accuses Odisha government of denying OBC reservation in Panchayat, ULB elections

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) on Thursday launched a sharp attack on the Odisha government, accusing it of denying political reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Panchayat and Urban Local Body (ULB) elections.

Addressing a press conference at Congress Bhawan here, former MLA and PCC Organisation In-charge Santosh Singh Saluja, senior party spokesperson Sonali Sahu, and Debashish Bhuyana alleged that the absence of OBCreservation in local body elections is unjust and deprives a majority section of the state's population of meaningful political representation at the grassroots level.

The Congress leaders

said the government's failure to implement constitutional provisions and comply with the Supreme Court's "Triple Test" guidelines has stalled the political empowerment of backward classes in Odisha.The party demanded the immediate constitution of an independent commission in accordance with the Supreme Court's directions to undertake a scientific and empirical study on the political representation of OBCs. It said reservation in Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies should be implemented on the basis of the commission's recommendations before the next round of local body elections.

The Congress also called for a comprehensive reservation mechanism to ensure inclusive governance and

equal political participation for all sections of society.

Claiming that OBCs constitute nearly 54 percent of Odisha's population, the party asserted that the constitutional ideals of social justice and inclusive democracy cannot be realised if such a large section of society remains without political reservation in local body elections.The Congress maintained that Articles 243D(6) and 243T(6) of the Constitution, read with the Supreme Court's "Triple Test" guidelines, make it imperative to provide reservation for backward classes in local self-governing institutions. Such representation, it said, would strengthen grassroots democracy and uphold the constitutional promise of equality and so-

cial justice.The party argued that political representation is not merely a constitutional provision but the cornerstone of social justice, adding that democracy cannot be truly representative if 54 percent of the population is excluded from adequate participation in local governance.The Congress further alleged that after the BJP came to power, the Housing and Urban Development Department issued a notification on March 12, 2022, finalising the reservation list for 358 Municipalities and Notified Area Councils (NACs), but not a single seat was reserved for OBC candidates.The party contended that denying reservation to OBCs in Municipalities and NACs, despite their significant contribution to the

state's economy and tax revenues, amounts to a violation of their constitutional rights.

Questioning the government's commitment to backward class welfare, the Congress asked why Odisha has statutory commissions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Women and Children, but is yet to establish an OBC Commission.

The party also alleged that despite the provision of 27 percent reservation for OBCs in government employment, a substantial number of reserved posts remain vacant. It claimed that around 50-55 percent of Class-I posts, 55-65 percent of Class-II posts, 65-75 percent of clerical posts, and 75-85 percent of peon and attendant posts earmarked for OBCs have not been filled.

Arunachal Guv lauds decade of Khandu Govt, reviews state's development agenda

Itanagar: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) KT Pamaik on Thursday congratulated Chief Minister Pema Khandu and "Team Arunachal Pradesh" on completing ten years of dedicated public service and leadership, while lauding the State Government's achievements in infrastructure, governance and public service delivery.The Governor made the remarks when the Chief Minister called on him at Lok Bhavan here.

During the meeting, the two leaders held detailed discussions on the State's developmental priorities, implementation of key projects, and measures to address challenges arising from natural disasters and climate-related events.

Congratulating the Chief Minister, the Governor said the past decade had witnessed significant progress across sectors such as infrastructure, education, healthcare, connectivity, tourism and rural development.



He observed that the Government's people-centric approach had helped bring governance closer to citizens, particularly those living in remote and border areas.Appreciating the flagship Seva Aapke Dwar initiative, the Governor said the programme had transformed public service delivery by ensuring government services reached the doorsteps of the people.He noted that the initiative had strengthened public trust and rein-

forced the spirit of inclusive development.The Governor also commended the State Government's efforts in promoting e-governance and digital service delivery.Emphasizing the importance of technology-driven administration, he advocated greater use of geospatial applications, satellite imagery and data analytics for planning, monitoring and evaluation of developmental projects.

He said these technologies could significantly en-

hance decision-making, strengthen disaster preparedness, optimize resource utilization and ensure timely implementation of welfare and infrastructure programmes for the benefit of the people of Arunachal Pradesh.Meanwhile, the Governor handed over a cheque of Rs two lakh to Abotani Vidya Niketan, Pachin Colony, Naharlagun, to support the strengthening and expansion of the school's library. The cheque was received by Vice Principal Yanya Karlo and Arunachal Shiksha Vikas Samiti (ASVS) State Coordinator Sukumaran K at Lok Bhavan here.The financial assistance was announced by the Governor during his visit to the school last month to facilitate the procurement of books and enrich the library. Highlighting the transformative power of books, the Governor said reading nurtures curiosity, critical thinking, creativity and lifelong learning among children.

Karnataka battling worst drought in 150 years, no shortage of relief funds: Parameshwara

Bengaluru: Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and Revenue Minister G Parameshwara on Thursday said the state government was fully prepared to deal with what it has termed the worst drought in nearly 150 years, assuring that adequate funds were available for relief and emergency measures.Addressing concerns over the severe rainfall deficit and widespread crop losses across several parts of the state, Parameshwara said drought management had become the government's top priority. He asserted that there would be no shortage of financial resources while implementing relief measures for affected regions. Speaking after hearing public grievances at his official residence, the Deputy Chief Minister said the government had already allocated funds to ensure the availability of drinking water in drought-hit areas. He said every MLA had been provided Rs 1 crore, while each district had received Rs 5

crore specifically for drinking water-related requirements. In addition to these allocations, Parameshwara said around Rs 329 crore was available in Personal Deposit (PD) accounts to address urgent requirements arising from the drought situation. He reiterated that the state administration had sufficient resources to handle immediate challenges."The government is fully prepared. There is no scarcity of funds for drought relief," Parameshwara said, highlighting the measures being taken to provide assistance to people facing the impact of water shortages and agricultural distress.The Deputy Chief Minister said the government was conducting detailed reviews across different regions to assess the severity of the drought and prepare a comprehensive response strategy. These region-wise assessments are aimed at understanding local challenges and implementing targeted relief measures. He said review meetings

for some revenue divisions had already been completed, while the review of the Bengaluru division would be conducted on July 25. The meeting will be jointly chaired by Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Parameshwara. A similar review for the Mysuru division will also be held before finalising the state's overall drought mitigation plan. Concerned about the possibility of rural distress and migration due to lack of employment opportunities, Parameshwara said district administrations had been instructed to immediately generate employment in drought-affected villages.He said all Deputy Commissioners and Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officers had been directed to utilise the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) to provide livelihood support to people facing difficulties due to the drought.Parameshwara also said Karnataka had approached the Centre seek-

ing financial assistance for drought management but was yet to receive a response. He added that the state government would submit a formal memorandum in August, when the Union government generally considers proposals related to drought relief.The Deputy Chief Minister explained that the current crisis had intensified after farmers began sowing crops following pre-monsoon showers. However, the failure of subsequent rains severely affected agricultural activities, leaving large areas of farmland dry and damaged.He said many farmers are now hoping for adequate rainfall in August to begin a second round of sowing and recover from the losses caused by the delayed and insufficient monsoon. The Karnataka government had on Wednesday described the prevailing situation as the most severe drought in around 150 years, citing rainfall levels far below normal, limited sowing progress.



OUR CITY

Briefs :

Delhi Police dismisses claims linking Commissioner's NSA powers renewal to CJP protests

New Delhi: Delhi Police on Thursday dismissed media reports which claim that the Commissioner of Police had been granted detention powers under the National Security Act (NSA) to deal with the on-going CJP protests, saying the order being circulated was a "routine quarterly renewal" issued before the protests began. In a clarification posted on its official X account, Delhi Police said the order in question was part of the standard administrative process under which the Commissioner's powers under the NSA are renewed every three months. "The current renewal order was issued on July 7 for the period from July 19 to October 18, predating the commencement of the CJP protests," the police said. It also clarified that no special request or fresh order had been initiated in connection with the recent demonstrations. The clarification came after media reports and social media posts emerged online claiming that the Delhi Police Commissioner had been specifically empowered under the National Security Act (NSA) to detain protesters participating in the ongoing CJP agitation. The posts circulating carried an official order issued by the Delhi Home Department on July 15 and approved by the Lieutenant Governor. Rejecting the claims as misleading, Delhi Police said.

Delhi court allows CBI to collect accused's handwriting specimen again

New Delhi: A Delhi court has allowed CBI's plea seeking further specimen handwriting or signatures of an accused in the NEET paper leak case. Print-Newspaper Delivery Special Judge Ajay Gupta was hearing the agency's plea seeking additional handwriting samples of accused Manisha Sanjay Havaladar. The prosecutor told the court that Havaladar shared handwritten physics questions with co-accused Manisha Mandhare, she also dictated physics questions to another accused, Tejas Harshad Kumar Shah, and during the investigation, handwritten images containing physics question notes were recovered from Mandhare's phone. He said the court has already permitted CBI to obtain the specimen handwriting of the accused on May 30. Still, the prosecutor said that since the record of this case is bulky, to compare each document in a fair manner.

Delhi High Court seeks Centre, police replies over use of 'excessive' force on students

New Delhi : The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought replies from the Centre and the Delhi Police on a batch of PILs alleging use of excessive force against students during the Cockroach Janta Party's July 20 "Sansad Chalo" march over the alleged NEET paper leak, while directing the authorities to preserve the CCTV footage, videography and all other records related to the incident. A Bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia issued notices to the respondents, granting them four weeks to file their replies. The matter will now be heard on September 11. The direction came after senior advocates N Hariharan, Gopal Sankaranarayanan and Vikas Singh, appearing for the petitioners, alleged that the police resorted to disproportionate force against peaceful protesters exercising their constitutional right to assemble.

Light rain, cloudy skies to continue in Delhi as Monsoon remains active

New Delhi: Delhi is likely to continue experiencing typical monsoon weather over the next few days, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasting light rain, cloudy skies and no significant change in day-time temperatures during the coming week.

According to the IMD's Daily Weather Report and Forecast Bulletin issued on Thursday evening, the monsoon trough continues to remain active across northern India, while a western disturbance over Jammu and a cyclonic circulation over southeast Rajasthan and adjoining northwest Madhya Pradesh are influencing weather conditions over the region.

During the past 24 hours, many parts of the national capital witnessed very light to light rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning. Safdarjung, the city's base observatory, recorded 2



mm of rainfall, while Palam received 1.2 mm and Lodhi Road 1.6 mm.

The maximum temperature at Safdarjung settled at 34.5 degrees Celsius, which was 0.4 degrees below normal, while the minimum temperature was 27.2 degrees Celsius, close to the seasonal average. Humidity remained high, ranging between 68 per cent and 100 per cent, contributing to muggy conditions across the

city.

The IMD said easterly winds with speeds of 15-20 kmph, gusting up to 37 kmph over Palam during the day, prevailed across Delhi.

For Friday, the weather office has forecast a generally cloudy sky with very light to light rain at many places. A spell of rain accompanied by strong surface winds of 20-30 kmph is expected from early morning to noon, followed by another spell of

light rain towards the evening and night. Maximum temperatures are expected to remain between 34 and 36 degrees Celsius, while minimum temperatures are likely to range from 24 to 26 degrees Celsius.

No weather warning or adverse impact has been issued for Delhi over the next two days, and the IMD has not anticipated any major weather-related disruptions during the forecast period.

Across Delhi-NCR, Thursday's maximum temperatures ranged from 31.9 degrees Celsius in Mayur Vihar to 34.5 degrees Celsius at Safdarjung, while minimum temperatures varied between 24.5 degrees Celsius at Ridge and 27.9 degrees Celsius at Najafgarh. Light rainfall was reported from several monitoring stations, reflecting the widespread but low-intensity monsoon activity across the region.

Delhi Police say injured 21-year-old protester is stable, rubbish claims of her death

New Delhi: Delhi Police on Thursday said that the 21-year-old woman who was seriously injured during the stampede-like situation that occurred during a protest march on July 20 is stable and continues to receive treatment at Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital.

Providing an update on her medical condition, the police said the woman has shown significant clinical improvement since she was admitted in critical condition following the incident.

According to Delhi Police, the latest health bulletin received from RML Hospital at 1 pm on Thursday confirmed that the patient is conscious and responding appropriately to medical instructions.

Officials said the woman had sustained serious injuries during the stampede-like situation that unfolded after police initiated a lathi-charge while attempting to control protesters participating in the July 20 march.

When she was admitted to the hospital on Monday, her condition was critical and she was placed on mechanical ventilation to support her breathing while doctors began intensive treatment.

The police said doctors had successfully extubated the patient around 24 hours earlier, meaning the ventilator support had been removed after her condition improved.

"She was successfully extubated 24 hours back and is now breathing on her own," Delhi Police said while sharing details from the hospital's medical update.

Although her condition has improved, officials said she continues to require comprehensive critical care under the close supervision of a multidisciplinary team of doctors.

Medical experts at RML Hospital are closely monitoring her recovery, and she remains under observation to

ensure continued improvement and to manage any potential complications.

Meanwhile, Delhi Police strongly refuted rumours circulating on social media claiming that the injured woman had died.

Calling the reports false, the police said such messages were being circulated to spread panic and create emotional reactions against law enforcement agencies.

"This news circulating is false propaganda to create panic and emotional upsurge in anti-police and anti-establishment sentiments," the police said in an official statement.

The department also issued a public appeal asking citizens to avoid forwarding unverified information and to rely only on official sources for updates related to the incident.

In a post on X, Delhi Police reiterated that reports claiming the death of a female protester at Jantar Mantar were completely false.

CJI signals court intervention if student protest matter remains unresolved by lunch

New Delhi: The closure of the Supreme Court Metro station amid the ongoing student protests was brought to the attention of the Supreme Court on Thursday by Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) President Vikas Singh. He urged the Court to allow lawyers, litigants, Registry staff and others holding valid entry passes to the apex court to access the station.

Mentioning the matter

before Chief Justice Surya Kant, Singh suggested that individuals with valid Supreme Court entry passes, along with Registry staff, be permitted to exit at the Supreme Court Metro station after undergoing appropriate security screening.

"In the Metro, there is an advantage. Once passengers alight, there is a designated exit point where security screening can be carried out. Those holding Supreme

Court proximity cards, as well as Registry staff, can then be allowed to exit, while the remaining passengers can be directed to stay on the train and proceed to the next station.

This would ensure that the Metro remains operational for those authorised to access the Court," Singh submitted.

Addressing the submission, Chief Justice Surya Kant said the Supreme Court

administration had already initiated discussions with the Metro authorities on the issue. He added that if the matter was not resolved, he would personally intervene.

The CJI said he had already raised the issue with the authorities and expressed hope that it would be resolved by lunchtime, adding that he would personally intervene if necessary. He noted that Singh's proposal was also under consideration.

Delhi Congress demands Rs 1 crore compensation for MCD teacher who died during SIR duty

New Delhi : Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) president Devender Yadav on Thursday demanded Rs one crore compensation for the family of a Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) school teacher who allegedly died of cardiac arrest after being unable to cope with the pressure of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) work alongside her teaching responsibilities.

Addressing a press conference, Yadav alleged that the death of 51-year-old Suman Lata, who had been assigned Booth Level Officer (BLO) duties under the ongoing SIR exercise, highlighted the mounting pressure on teachers engaged in election-related work.

Calling the incident "a tragedy waiting to happen", Yadav said, "The death of a teacher working in an MCD school was a tragedy waiting to happen as the teachers assigned for SIR duty have been working under tremendous pressure. Many of them are unable to complete the SIR work while



balancing their responsibilities as school teachers."

He further said, "It was due to the insensitivity of the BJP Government that the 51-year-old teacher, Suman Lata, assigned Booth Level Officer (BLO) duty as part of the ongoing SIR exercise, died of a heart attack, unable to bear the considerable stress she suffered during the SIR exercise."

Demanding financial assistance for the bereaved family, Yadav said, "The family of the deceased teacher should be given Rs 1 crore compensation."

He said that following observations by the Supreme Court on the complexity of the SIR process, the Delhi Congress had written to the Lieutenant Governor on April 18, urging intervention to reduce the burden on teachers performing BLO duties.

Referring to another incident, Yadav alleged that a 45-year-old government mathematics teacher, Anand Kumar Saroha, attempted suicide on July 8 after allegedly being unable to cope with the pressure of SIR work while serving as a supervisor. Yadav also

claimed that the large-scale deployment of teachers for SIR and BLO duties was severely disrupting classroom teaching in government schools. He said principals and teachers had repeatedly raised concerns over the impact on education, student safety and compliance with the Right to Education (RTE) norms governing pupil-teacher ratios.

He alleged that in several schools, including those in Bhalswa and GTB Nagar, regular teaching staff had been diverted almost entirely to election-related surveys and data collection, leaving schools dependent on guest teachers to manage large numbers of students. Criticising both the current BJP government in Delhi and the previous AAP government, Yadav said, "The Rekha Gupta Government has given precedence to deploying teachers for SIR duty over their primary responsibility of teaching students in classrooms. It is no wonder that poor Board examination results and school dropouts

Delhi CM launches door-to-door waste collection & secondary transportation project

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Thursday launched a door-to-door waste collection and secondary transportation project in the West Delhi Municipal Corporation area.

On the occasion, CM Gupta flagged off a fleet of technologically advanced waste collection vehicles and interacted with sanitation workers of the MCD. She appreciated their dedicated service and acknowledged their vital contribution to building a clean Delhi.

The Chief Minister also shared a meal with sanitation workers and expressed her gratitude for their commitment and service.

Cabinet Ministers Ashish Sood and Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Delhi Mayor Pravesh Wahi, MCD Commissioner Sanjeev Khirwar, and several other senior officials were present on the occasion.

Gupta said that the

Delhi government's objective is not merely to collect waste but to build a modern, technology-driven, transparent, and citizen-centric solid waste management system.

She emphasized that the

new system would make door-to-door waste collection more efficient, timely, and accountable while playing a significant role in creating a cleaner, healthier, and more beautiful Delhi.

Congress slams security clampdown in Delhi, questions closure of Connaught Place amid student protests

New Delhi: The Congress on Thursday stepped up its attack on the Narendra Modi-led government over the extensive security arrangements imposed across the national capital during the ongoing student protests against the alleged examination paper leaks. The party accused the Centre of responding to peaceful demonstrations with excessive restrictions and treating students like security threats instead of addressing their concerns.

Congress General Secretary (Organisation) K C Venugopal alleged that the government had intensified its response to the protests by imposing stringent security measures across central Delhi. He claimed that the administration had moved beyond restricting communication services and was now disrupting normal commercial activity in the heart of the capital.

In a statement, Venugopal questioned the government's handling of the demonstrations, saying, "Yesterday, they cut off the internet. Today, they are shutting all shops around the protest. Is this how the national capital of the 'mother of democracy' reacts to a protest?"

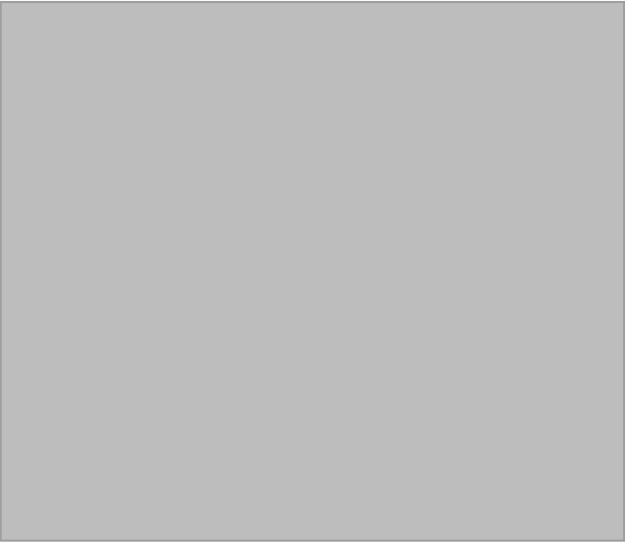
Launching a direct attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Congress leader alleged that the government was transforming Delhi into a "war zone" by deploying large numbers of security personnel and taking extraordinary measures against students demanding accountability over the alleged examination paper leak controversy.

"Mr. Modi is turning Delhi into a war zone. Numerous CRPF battalions are deployed, Delhi Police is still threatening students, repeated tear gas shelling and violence, and

the police is given powers of preventive detention under the NSA, as if the peaceful protesters are terrorists," Venugopal alleged. His remarks came amid heightened security arrangements across central Delhi, where student organisations and opposition parties have continued protests demanding action over the alleged irregularities in competitive examinations and calling for the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Adding to the disruption, the New Delhi Traders Association (NDTA) issued an advisory directing shops, offices, restaurants, and other commercial establishments in Connaught Place to close by 6.30 pm on July 23.

The advisory, signed by NDTA President Atul Bhargava, stated that it had been issued following the advice of the Chairman



Editorial



The Outcry of the Youth and the Silence f Power

In a democracy, protest is not a crime; it is a constitutional right of the people and the most effective way to hold those in power accountable. However, when the path of suppression is chosen over dialogue, the issue transcends the specific protest and becomes a question of fundamental democratic values. The events that unfolded at Jantar Mantar have raised serious questions regarding the government's sense of accountability, its willingness to engage with protesters, and its sensitivity toward the discontent of the youth. The scene witnessed in the heart of the capital on Monday was not merely the suppression of a protest; it was a brutal slap in the face of democratic dialogue by the powers that be. The sight of unarmed students holding the Tricolour—being subjected to lathi-charges and dragged away was harrowing enough to make any sensitive citizen’s heart skip a beat. Yet, those at the helm of power chose to completely ignore it, once again demonstrating their callousness; therein lies the true tragedy of this incident.

For the past month, thousands of young people and veteran social activist Sonam Wangchuk have been on a hunger strike at Jantar Mantar. Their primary demand is that Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resign, accepting moral responsibility for the massive irregularities and paper leaks associated with the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET). It is particularly distressing that, despite the heart-wrenching revelation that over twenty-two meritorious students across the country have committed suicide due to the trauma caused by this paper leak, the government has not shown even a shred of empathy. The fact that not a single minister or government representative extended the courtesy of engaging with the protesters over this prolonged period of 33 days speaks volumes about the government's insensitivity. On Monday the very first day of the parliamentary session—a stark contrast emerged that reveals the true nature of the country's governance: while protesters were raising their voices through the 'Chalo Sansad March' (March to Parliament), they faced an indiscriminate lathi-charge by the Delhi Police and central security forces, even as Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan was seen walking out of the Parliament steps with a smile. The government’s stance regarding listening, seeing, and speaking appears so unresponsive that it vividly brings to mind the imagery of Gandhiji’s ‘Three Monkeys.’ Although Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju claimed in the House that the government was "ready for discussion," the government has no answer to the pointed question of why not a single representative visited Jantar Mantar over the past 33 days.

The fact that BJP National President J.P. Nadda kept the protesting representatives waiting for two hours only to grant them a mere ten-minute meeting must also be seen as an open insult to the youth. Furthermore, the question of where trucks loaded with stones and bricks came from in a high-security zone like Jantar Mantar has cast a shadow of suspicion over the entire incident. After social activist Abhijit Deepke shared video evidence on social media, suspicions have deepened that this was a calculated attempt to discredit the students by turning a peaceful protest violent. If such tactics are employed to crush dissent in a democracy, it must be termed not merely an administrative failure but a constitutional betrayal.

Following these events, Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi staged a sit-in protest directly outside the Prime Minister's residence, demanding the resignation of the concerned ministers and a public apology from the Prime Minister. With the Congress, as well as leaders like Sharad Pawar, Uddhav Thackeray, and Raj Thackeray along with most regional parties across the country extending open support, this agitation is evolving from a mere student movement into a widespread political protest nationwide. The fact that thousands of students took to the streets in Mumbai's Shivaji Park area for the third consecutive day makes it clear that the scope of this discontent is no longer confined to Delhi.

This situation brings to mind the farmers' protest of three years ago. The very same government had labeled the farmers who had camped at Delhi's borders for a year as 'Khalistanis' and 'Andolanjivis' (professional agitators); yet, ultimately, as electoral calculations shifted, the three farm laws had to be withdrawn. Today, similar attempts are being made to discredit the students involved in the 'NEET' protest and brand them as political pawns. The common thread linking both these movements is telling: those in power do not open the door to dialogue until they perceive a threat to their own existence.

A distinctive feature of this protest is that 'Gen Z' mobilized via social media has shown the courage to take to the streets and fight for its future. For many, this marks their first-ever experience of street-level activism. The brutality displayed by the police while lathi-charging such innocent youth, contrasted with their resolve to return to Jantar Mantar that very night, underscores the intensity of this generation's discontent. Yet, the government appears oblivious to the gravity of the situation; instead, it resorts to familiar tactics dismissing the protest as a 'political stunt' and alleging foreign interference.

Over the last decade of the Modi government's tenure, the tradition of holding ministers accountable has all but vanished. From the international controversy surrounding the Epstein files to the failed ethanol-blending policy, and from collapsing bridges to incidents involving the Minister of State for Home's son, the tendency has consistently been to evade responsibility. If a minister’s resignation is avoided even in a grave matter like the NEET scandal which jeopardizes the futures of thousands of students then one must conclude that the very concept of accountability has been banished from the lexicon of those in power.

A government’s strength lies not in suppressing dissenting voices, but in listening to them and building trust. Ignoring students' concerns or attempting to silence them through repression might yield temporary success, but it ultimately erodes faith in democracy.

Honest dialogue regarding education, transparency, and accountability is the only sustainable path forward. After all, the youth currently on the streets are the ones who will shape the India of tomorrow. Whether they hold books or protest placards in their hands will ultimately depend on the government's sensitivity and its commitment to democratic values. The protesting students’ demands are not excessive; they simply seek accountability for the examination scandal specifically, the minister’s resignation and adequate financial support for the families of students who died by suicide. If those in power choose the path of repression instead of acceding to these demands, it will amount to an admission not merely of an administrative error, but of a moral failure.

History will never forgive the decision to use lathis against the very youth upon whom the nation’s future rests, rather than engaging in dialogue with them. The ultimate and grave warning emerging from these events is this: if the authorities fail to act sensibly in time, the discontent currently simmering at Jantar Mantar will inevitably erupt into a wildfire that holds the entire system accountable.

EDITORIAL

Mission "Golden Spice"

The Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER), Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, together with the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Shri Conrad K. Sangma, today launched the “Mission Golden Spice – Integrated Lakadong Turmeric Value Chain Enhancement Project”, a ₹175.45-crore convergence-led initiative for turmeric cultivation and value-chain development in the State of Meghalaya. The Mission is designed as a phased, five-year roadmap (2025–2030), to be implemented in two phases — Value Chain Strengthening (Phase 1) followed by Expansion & Scale-up (Phase 2) — for promotion of Meghalaya’s Unique Selling Proposition (USP), the GI-tagged Lakadong Turmeric.

Anchored by MDoNER and the North Eastern Council (NEC), the Mission builds upon convergence with schemes and interventions of the Ministries of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Food Processing Industries and Commerce, along with APEDA, the Spices Board, the National Turmeric Board, ICAR, MeitY, NABARD, SFAC and the Government of Meghalaya for establishing an integrated turmeric value-chain ecosystem in the State.

Smt. Nivedita Shukla Verma, Secretary, MDoNER, in her introductory remarks, elaborated on the implementation framework of the Mission and highlighted the need for a mission-mode approach to unlock the full economic potential of Meghalaya's Lakadong turmeric. She underlined that despite its exceptionally high curcumin content (7–10%), distinctive aroma and strong nutraceutical potential, the income realised by smallholder growers remains limited due to inadequate processing facilities, insufficient infrastructure, weak market linkages and the lack of high-value addition. She noted that processed and export-grade products have the potential to command significantly higher prices in both domestic and international markets.



The Secretary further highlighted that the Mission seeks to systematically address the major structural gaps in the sector including post-harvest losses, lack of integrated cold chain infrastructure, absence of commercial-scale processing facilities, weak branding, and lack of structured GI monetisation and buyer linkage systems.

As part of the launch programme, a short film on the Golden Spice Mission was screened, followed by interactions with progressive turmeric farmers from Meghalaya and remarks by investors and industry representatives. Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Union Minister, MDoNER, said the launch was part of Prime Minister Modi's vision for “Ashtalakshmi” — India's eight northeastern states — which he described as having moved from the periphery to the centre of India's developmental paradigm over the past twelve years. He said the Ministry had worked with the Chief Ministers of all 8 NE states to define a unique selling proposition (USP) for each state, and to promote each USP “bottom up as opposed to top down.” He noted that Lakadong turmeric's curcumin content is nearly four times the world average, and highlighted extraordinary role of women in turmeric produc-

tion and processing.

Recalling that the Prime Minister had recently showcased Meghalaya's Lakadong turmeric at the G7 Summit, Shri Scindia said the spice

ly 7,500 hectares.

He further stated that promotion of Lakadong Turmeric as USP of Meghalaya reflects the comparative and competitive advantage of



had generated strong interest among world leaders, and called on the Mission's stakeholders to ensure the crop's quality, authenticity, scale and sustainability help it fly high on the global stage. He said the Mission's objective was to nearly double farmers' remuneration — from ₹30–40 a kilo today to close to ₹80 a kilo by 2030 — while expanding the area under cultivation from around 2,500 hectares to near-

the state and is rooted in its tradition and agro-climatic conditions.

The Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Shri Conrad K. Sangma, said the Mission built on years of institutional groundwork laid by the state government, officials and farmers, and reflected the Union Government's “mission mode” approach of identifying one unique product from each North Eastern state and building a complete, replicable

National cyber crime data

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) compiles and publishes the statistical data on crimes in its publication “Crime in India”. The latest published report is for the year 2024. As per the data published by the NCRB, State/UT wise & Crime Head-wise cases registered under cyber crimes (involving communication devices as medium/target) during the period from 2020 to 2024 is at Annexure-I & Annexure-II.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has set up the ‘Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre’ (I4C) as an attached office to deal with all types of cyber crimes in the country, in a coordinated and comprehensive manner.

The ‘National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal’ (NCRP) (<https://cybercrime.gov.in>) has been launched, as a part of the I4C, to enable public to report incidents pertaining to all types of cyber crimes, with special focus on cyber crimes against women and children.

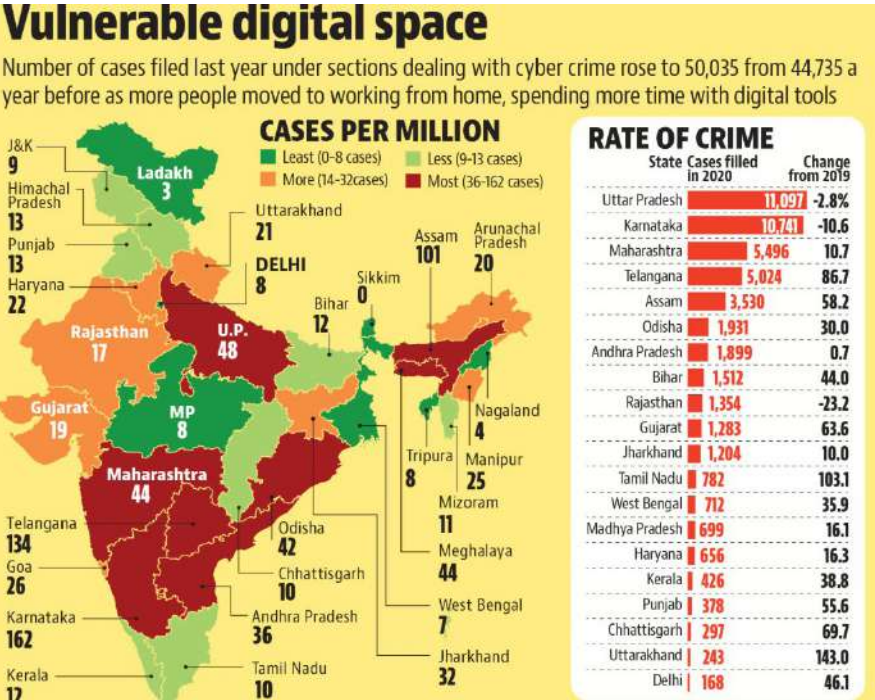
The ‘Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System’ (CFC-FRMS), under I4C, has been launched in year 2021 for immediate reporting of financial frauds and to stop siphoning off funds by the fraudsters. As per CFCFRMS operated by I4C, till 30.06.2026, financial amount of more than Rs. 11,158 Crore has been saved in more than 32.80 lakh complaints. A toll-free Helpline number ‘1930’ has been operationalized to get assistance in lodging online cyber complaints. As per NCRP & CFCFRMS operated by I4C, from the year 2021 to 2025, the total number of financial frauds complaints on NCRP are more than 6589201, the total amount reported is more than ₹ 55050 Crores, the total amount marked as Lien is more than ₹ 8189 Crores and the number of FIRs registered is more than 195760.

Cyber crime incidents reported on National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal, their conversion into FIRs and subsequent action i.e. filing of chargesheets, arrest and resolution of complaints, thereon are handled by the State/UT Law Enforcement Agencies concerned as per the provisions of the law.

‘Police’ and ‘Public Order’ are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. Accordingly, the States and Union Territories (UTs) are primarily responsible for the prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of cybercrime. The Central Government, through the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), supplements the efforts of States and UTs by providing policy guidance, technological support, capacity-building assistance, and financial resources to strengthen cybercrime management and enforcement capabilities.

The Central Government has taken the following steps to strengthen the cyber crime investigation and coordination among Central and State Governments :

Samanvaya Platform has been made operational to serve as an Management Information System (MIS) platform, data repository and a coordination platform for LEAs for cybercrime data sharing and analytics. It provides analytics based interstate linkages of crimes and criminals, involved in cybercrime



complaints in various States/UTs. The module ‘Pratibimb’ maps locations of criminals and crime infrastructure on a map to give visibility to jurisdictional officers. The module also facilitates seeking and receiving of techno-legal assistance by Law Enforcement Agencies from I4C and other SMEs. It has lead to arrest of more than 29,837 accused and more than 2,33,593 Cyber Investigation assistance request. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has intensified its efforts to strengthen India's cybercrime prevention and investigation framework through a series of initiatives aimed at improving coordination, enhancing law enforcement capabilities, and ensuring faster action against online offences. These measures, implemented under the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), are designed to address the rapidly evolving cyber threat landscape and improve the country's digital security ecosystem.

One of the key initiatives introduced by the ministry is the launch of the ‘Sahyog’ portal, which has been developed to streamline the process of issuing notices to Information Technology (IT) intermediaries. The portal enables the Appropriate Government or its authorised agencies to send notices under Section 79(3)(b) of the Information Technology Act, 2000, seeking the removal or disabling of access to online information, data, or communication links that are being used to facilitate unlawful activities.

The ‘Sahyog’ platform is expected to significantly reduce delays in communication between government agencies and digital intermediaries, thereby enabling quicker action against illegal online content and cyber-enabled offences. The initiative aims to improve compliance while ensuring that digital platforms respond promptly to lawful requests made under the provisions of the IT Act.

To improve inter-state coordination in

tackling cybercrime, the Ministry has constituted seven Joint Cyber Coordination Teams (JCCTs) under the I4C. These teams have been established for cybercrime hotspot regions including Mewat, Jamtara, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Visakhapatnam, and Guwahati, which frequently witness cyber offences involving multiple jurisdictions.

The JCCTs bring together officials from different States and Union Territories to strengthen intelligence sharing, facilitate co-ordinated investigations, and address challenges arising from crimes that span multiple jurisdictions. By integrating state police forces under a common coordination framework, the initiative seeks to improve the efficiency and speed of cybercrime investigations across the country. As part of its capacity-building efforts, I4C has also developed the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) platform known as the ‘CyTrain’ portal. The platform offers specialised online training courses for police personnel, judicial officers, and investigators covering critical areas such as cybercrime investigation techniques, digital forensics, prosecution procedures, and emerging cyber threats. According to official data, as of June 30, 2026, more than 1,63,344 police and judicial officers from various States and Union Territories have registered on the CyTrain portal, while over 1,61,957 certificates have been issued after successful completion of the training programmes. The initiative is helping create a more skilled workforce capable of effectively handling complex cybercrime investigations.

The Ministry has also made significant progress under the Cyber Commando Programme, which was launched by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on September 10, 2024. The programme aims to establish a specialised cadre of cyber commandos equipped

with advanced technical expertise to counter cybersecurity threats and protect the country's critical information infrastructure.

The Cyber Commando initiative envisions the creation of a dedicated national workforce trained to respond to sophisticated cyberattacks, support digital investigations, and strengthen India's cybersecurity preparedness. So far, 281 cyber commandos have successfully completed specialised training at premier institutions including the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs), Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU), and the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU) campuses at Gandhinagar and New Delhi.

Beyond formal training programmes, I4C continues to organise regular knowledge-sharing initiatives such as ‘State Connect’, ‘Thana Connect’, and peer-learning sessions. These platforms enable police officers from different States and Union Territories to exchange best practices, discuss emerging cybercrime trends, and strengthen institutional capacity through collaborative learning.

To support digital investigations, the Ministry has established the National-Digital Investigation Support Centre (NDISC)—previously known as the National Cyber Forensic Laboratory (Investigation). The first centre became operational in New Delhi on February 18, 2019, while a second facility was inaugurated in Assam on August 29, 2025.

The National-Digital Investigation Support Centres provide early-stage cyber forensic assistance to investigating officers from State and Union Territory police forces. These centres offer specialised forensic expertise that helps investigators analyse digital evidence more efficiently and improve the quality of cybercrime investigations. As of June 30, 2026, the New Delhi centre alone has provided forensic assistance in more than 14,064 cybercrime cases.

The Ministry has also extended substantial financial support to States and Union Territories under the Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) Scheme. Financial assistance amounting to Rs. 132.93 crore has been released to strengthen cyber forensic infrastructure, establish cyber forensic-cum-training laboratories, recruit junior cyber consultants, and train law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, and judicial officers. Under the CCPWC scheme, cyber forensic-cum-training laboratories have already been commissioned in 33 States and Union Territories, while over 24,600 law enforcement personnel, judicial officers, and public prosecutors have received specialised training in cybercrime awareness, investigation techniques, digital forensics, and prosecution. The country's cyber forensic infrastructure has also expanded considerably. At present, seven Central Forensic Science Laboratories (CFSLS) and 28 State Forensic Science Laboratories (SFSLS) are operational to support cybercrime investigations.



Briefs :

Local College Host Ends Successful Two Day District Yoga Competition

Yamunanagar : A two-day district yoga championship concluded successfully at a local women's college, bringing together young participants from schools and colleges across the region. Competitors demonstrated physical flexibility, balance, and mental discipline in various yoga categories before a panel of official judges and guest organizers.

During the closing ceremony, chief guests presented medals and certificates to top performers while praising yoga as a timeless practice that builds physical strength, mental clarity, and spiritual well-being. College administrators congratulated all participants and reaffirmed their institution's commitment to encouraging sports, fitness, and health-focused activities alongside standard aca-

Police Academy Launches Green Campaign to Plant One Thousand Trees

Yamunanagar : The state police academy in Madhuban has launched a large-scale environmental drive by planting hundreds of tree saplings across its campus grounds. Senior police leadership and academy staff participated in the opening event, planting traditional shade and fruit-bearing trees including neem, guava, jamun, and mango. The green drive aims to plant at least one thousand new trees before an upcoming national commemoration day.Addressing the gathered personnel, senior officers emphasized that planting trees is vital for reducing stress, cleaning the surrounding air, and conserving local groundwater levels. Officials urged participants to take personal responsibility for nurturing the newly planted saplings so they grow fully, noting that protecting young trees is just as important as planting them to ensure a healthy environment for future generations.

Industrial Training Centers Set to Get Advanced Machines for Better Student Training

Chandigarh : The state department for skill development is speeding up the procurement of modern industrial machinery to upgrade facilities across all government training centers. During a high-level review meeting, officials were instructed to fast-track the purchase of modern equipment so that students receive practical, hands-on experience using current technology rather than outdated tools.

The government emphasized that updating vocational training centers is essential for improving overall student employability in today's competitive market.

By training on the exact machinery used in modern factories and commercial workshops, graduating students will be far better prepared to meet the practical demands of private employers upon finishing their courses.

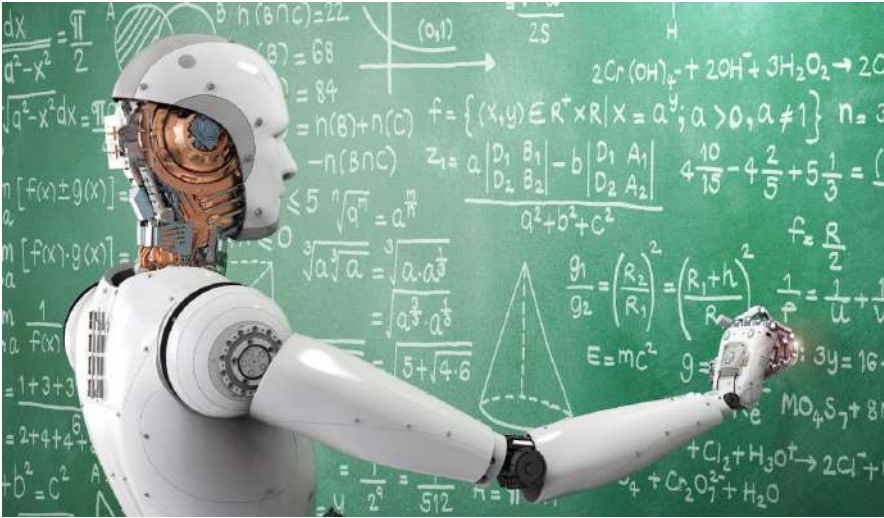
The state department for skill development has announced a major initiative to accelerate the procurement of modern industrial machinery, aimed at comprehensively upgrading facilities across all government training centers.

University Professor Speaks on Safe and Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence

Rewari : A senior commerce professor from a regional university delivered an educational lecture addressing the ethical and legal challenges surrounding the use of artificial intelligence in higher education. Speaking at a national virtual faculty development program organized by a college in southern India, the academic highlighted both the helpful possibilities and potential dangers of integrating automated tools into teaching, research, and learning.

The presentation focused heavily on maintaining academic honesty, protecting data privacy, and avoiding hidden biases in digital algorithms. The speaker stressed the importance of human supervision and proper source citations when using generated content, reminding educators that technology should be used responsibly to support learning without undermining intellectual integrity.

A senior commerce professor from a regional university in Rewari recently delivered a insightful educational lecture focused on the complex ethical and legal challenges surrounding the



rapid integration of artificial intelligence into higher education.

The presentation provided a thorough examination of the transformative power that automated digital tools hold within academic environments. The speaker emphasized that while modern computational tools offer unprecedented opportunities to enhance pedagogical efficiency, streamline administrative tasks, and personalize learning experiences for students, they simultaneously introduce unprecedented risks that demand careful consideration, robust institutional policies, and continuous ethical scrutiny from academic leadership.

Throughout the session, the professor highlighted the dual nature of artificial intelligence, describing it as a double-edged sword capable of driving immense educational innovation while also posing serious threats to long-term academic standards if left unmonitored. Educators were urged to view these technological advancements with a balanced perspective, appreciating their immense practical benefits while remaining fully

vigilant against the dilution of core educational values, critical thinking skills, and genuine scholarly engagement.

A central theme of the lecture revolved around the pressing need to preserve academic honesty and intellectual integrity in an era where generative tools can effortlessly produce essays, research papers, and complex code in a matter of seconds.

The speaker cautioned that the line between genuine student accomplishment and automated output is becoming increasingly blurred, creating a vital imperative for institutions to establish clear boundaries, updated evaluation criteria, and robust detection mechanisms to safeguard academic work.

The academic devoted significant time to discussing the subtle, yet pervasive issue of hidden algorithmic biases that often exist within automated systems. Because machine learning models are trained on vast datasets reflecting historical human decisions and societal patterns, they frequently inherit and perpetuate existing prejudices.

Two Heartbreaking Incidents Claim Lives of Young Children in State

Fatehabad : Two separate tragic accidents have claimed the lives of young children, prompting official police investigations. In the first incident, a five-year-old girl died after her father, who was reportedly undergoing treatment for mental illness, picked her up from school under false pretenses and threw her into a nearby canal. Local residents and emergency rescue teams searched the waterway for hours before recovering the child's body several kilometers away in a neighboring state border district.

In a separate incident in a neighboring district, a five-and-a-half-year-old boy died after falling out of the rear window of a moving school van while returning home. The child's family alleged that the driver was operating the vehicle recklessly without any supervising helper present to watch the students. Following a formal complaint from the grieving parents, police registered a case against the school management and van driver to determine responsibility for the fatal safety neglect.

In a deeply tragic turn of events, two separate and heart-wrenching incidents across the state have claimed the lives of two young children, sending shockwaves of grief through the local communities and prompting immediate, comprehensive investigations by law enforcement authorities. The distinct tragedies, which occurred within short succession, have drawn widespread attention to the critical issues of mental health support, child protection, and the stringent enforcement of safety standards within school transportation systems.

The first devastating incident unfolded in Fatehabad, where a five-year-old girl tragically lost her life under deeply distressing circumstances involving her own family. According to preliminary reports gathered by mental authorities, the child was picked up from her primary school premises by her father, who had reportedly been undergoing medical treatment and counseling for an ongoing mental illness. The father managed to take custody of the young girl from school authorities under false pretenses before leaving the campus grounds.

Police Seal Twelve Homes in Major Action Against Illegal Drug Trade

Ambala : In a major crackdown on local drug networks, police and city officials jointly sealed twelve residential properties belonging to habitual offenders. The enforcement action took place in a designated neighborhood following formal notices that instructed illegal occupants to clear the premises immediately. To maintain strict public order and prevent any potential security disruption during the enforcement drive, senior officers deployed heavy security forces alongside an appointed duty magistrate.

Authorities confirmed that almost all affected property owners face multiple active criminal cases, primarily registered under anti-narcotics laws and theft charges. One prominent individual targeted during the drive has over forty criminal cases filed against his name. Officials stated that targeting physical properties acquired through the proceeds of illegal drug sales is an essential part of their ongoing strategy to completely dismantle regional trafficking networks.

In a major crackdown on local drug networks, law enforcement agencies and city officials in Ambala jointly

executed a coordinated operation to seal twelve residential properties belonging to habitual criminal offenders. The targeted action took place in a designated neighborhood following the expiration of formal administrative notices that instructed illegal occupants to clear the premises immediately. To maintain strict public order and prevent any potential security disruption during the enforcement drive, senior officers deployed heavy security forces alongside an appointed duty magistrate.

The joint enforcement operation was initiated early in the morning, taking local residents by surprise as police contingents and municipal personnel moved into the area. Officers established a secure perimeter around the targeted streets to ensure the process could proceed without interference. Administrative teams carefully verified each property address against official court orders and municipal notices before proceeding with the formal sealing process.

City officials confirmed that the decision to seal these specific residences came after

Government Plans Special Skill Centers and New Job Training Programs in Rural Areas

Chandigarh : The state government has announced a major new initiative aimed at boosting employment and supporting local businesses across rural areas. As part of a long-term development roadmap, authorities plan to set up specialized skill development centers across one hundred selected rural clusters. These centers will offer practical training tailored directly to the traditional industries of each specific region, such as handloom weaving, pottery, farm equipment manufacturing, and bead making. To ensure that young trainees find stable work after completing their courses, the government is updating industrial training institutes with modern machinery and new study programs. Private companies will step in to adopt dozens of training institutes, helping align the curriculum with real market needs and promising employment for a majority of graduates. The broader plan also includes expanded financial and technical support for new business startups and female entrepreneurs across every district. The state government in Chandigarh has



announced a comprehensive and ambitious new initiative aimed at significantly boosting employment opportunities and supporting local businesses across the region's rural areas.

Formulated as part of an overarching, long-term economic development roadmap, the strategic plan seeks to address rural unemployment at its root by creating sustainable livelihood opportunities directly within local communities. Authorities highlighted that this initiative will transform the socio-economic landscape of the countryside by combining traditional craftsmanship with modern industrial practices. At the core of this state-wide initiative is a plan to establish specialized skill development centers across one hundred carefully selected rural clusters. These clusters have been identified based on their distinct economic profiles, existing local talent pools, and proximity to regional trade hubs. By establishing dedicated training centers directly within these clusters, the administration aims to ensure that high-quality, practical vocational training is easily accessible to rural youth without requiring them to relocate to distant urban centers.

Local Homemaker Turns Saline Land into Millions Through Successful Shrimp Farming

Sirsa : A local woman from a small village has successfully built a highly profitable aquaculture business on land that was previously considered useless due to salty soil and poor water quality.

Facing constant agricultural losses from traditional farming, she turned to modern shrimp farming after receiving technical guidance and financial support under a central government scheme. Setting up her initial project with subsidized funds, she learned scientific water management and modern feeding techniques to maximize her harvest.

Her venture delivered impressive profits in its very first year, encouraging her to expand the farm by adding more cultivation ponds. Today, her business generates tens of lakhs in annual turnover and provides direct and indirect jobs to many local residents.

Her remarkable story has inspired dozens of other farmers in the region to adopt shrimp farming on salty lands, earning her recognition as a top national success story in the fisheries sector.

A local homemaker from a small village in Sirsa has successfully built a highly profitable aquaculture business on land that was long considered unusable due to severe soil salinity



and poor groundwater quality. For years, traditional agriculture on the plot yielded persistent losses, as conventional crops failed to thrive in the harsh, salty conditions. Refusing to let the land remain a burden, she decided to explore alternative agricultural practices, eventually turning her attention toward inland shrimp farming.

Her journey into aquaculture began after she learned about government schemes encouraging non-traditional farming in salt-affected regions. Seeking guidance, she approached the regional fisheries department, where officials provided technical insights into saline water aquaculture. She was introduced to the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, a central government initiative designed to boost the fisheries sector. With technical direction and financial support under the scheme, she secured the necessary capital to transform her barren fields into viable cultivation ponds.

Setting up her initial project involved digging specialized ponds and equipping them with modern water management infrastructure. She attended formal training programs where she learned scientific pond preparation, optimal stocking densities, and essential biosecurity measures. Additionally, she mastered modern feeding techniques, water aeration methods, and regular salinity testing, ensuring a controlled environment capable of supporting whiteleg shrimp.

Her hard work yielded

immediate results, delivering impressive yields and substantial net profits in her very first harvesting cycle. The successful proof of concept proved that land previously written off as unproductive could generate higher economic returns than traditional crop farming. The initial financial success provided her with the confidence and capital needed to expand her operations further.

Encouraged by the inaugural harvest, she reinvested her earnings to construct additional cultivation ponds on the property. She integrated advanced equipment into the expanded facility, including automated feeders and water monitoring tools, which helped maintain high water quality while minimizing feed waste and disease risks. Over subsequent seasons, her total production grew significantly, turning the modest farm into a major regional enterprise.

Today, her venture generates tens of lakhs in annual turnover and has become a stable economic engine for the surrounding community. Beyond transforming her family's financial standing, the business provides direct employment for farm hands and maintenance staff, as well as indirect opportunities for local transport workers, feed suppliers, and harvest labor.

Lifesaving Tele-ECG Network Helps Detect Early Heart Attacks Across State

Gurugram : A newly expanded digital healthcare network across public health facilities has recorded a massive rise in the early detection of severe heart attacks. Official tracking data shows that emergency cardiac cases identified by the system jumped significantly over recent months. Health authorities clarified that this sharp increase does not mean more people are falling sick, but rather shows that the new diagnostic system is successfully catching heart emergencies that previously went undiagnosed in rural areas.

The high-tech network allows staff at local health centers to conduct tests and receive expert diagnostic reports from specialist cardiologists within less than three minutes. This rapid response allows doctors to begin lifesaving treatments during the crucial first hour following a heart attack. The service has already screened thousands of first-time patients across hundreds of government facilities, effectively connecting remote rural clinics directly with specialized medical advice. The recent deployment and expansion of a state-of-the-art digital Tele-ECG healthcare network across public health facilities in Gurugram and throughout the broader region has marked a monumental milestone in emergency medical care. This

technological initiative has led to a dramatic, unprecedented surge in the early detection of severe heart attacks, providing a vital safety net for communities that historically lacked access to immediate, specialized cardiac diagnostics.

According to official tracking data released by health departments, the number of emergency cardiac cases identified and flagged by the newly integrated system has experienced a massive leap over recent months. Primary healthcare centers, village clinics, and regional community hospitals are now catching critical cardiac events with a degree of precision and speed that was previously unimaginable in the public healthcare sector.

In response to the striking statistics, health authorities were quick to provide essential context regarding the sharp increase in recorded cardiac emergencies. Officials explicitly clarified that the higher figures do not indicate a sudden health crisis or a rising wave of cardiovascular illness among the general population, but rather reflect the remarkable diagnostic efficiency of the newly established digital infrastructure. For decades, countless acute cardiac emergencies occurring in remote and rural areas went entirely undiagnosed or were identified too late due

to a severe shortage of specialized diagnostic equipment and trained medical experts on site. The newly expanded digital healthcare network is successfully closing this historical gap, bringing to light critical medical emergencies that would have otherwise gone unnoticed until tragic outcomes occurred.

At the heart of this lifesaving initiative is a high-tech, cloud-based communications network designed to bridge the physical distance between rural health facilities and top-tier medical specialists. The system empowers local healthcare personnel, including nursing staff and general medical officers, to quickly perform electrocardiograms using portable, user-friendly digital devices during patient visits. Once a test is completed at a local health center, the digital reading is instantaneously transmitted through secure channels to a centralized hub staffed by experienced, specialist cardiologists. This seamless digital transfer eliminates the traditional delays associated with physical patient transit or manual record reviews, transforming how emergency care is delivered at the grassroots level. The turnaround time for receiving expert evaluation under this new framework is nothing short of revolutionary for emergency medicine.

CM Saini hits back at Opposition over Jantar Mantar protest, defends Haryana’s transparent recruitments

Chandigarh : Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Thursday launched a strong counterattack against the Congress and IN-DIA bloc over the student protests at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar, accusing the Opposition of using the aspirations of young people for political gains while asserting that Haryana has established a transparent and merit-based recruitment system.Responding to questions from reporters in Sirsa regarding the alleged police action against protesting students in Delhi, Saini said Haryana’s recruitment process stood in sharp contrast to systems followed in states governed by Opposition parties."Our Common Eligibility Test (CET) was conducted peacefully and not a single complaint was received either from students or their parents. NEET was also conducted smoothly, and the government even arranged transport facilities for



candidates. This reflects our commitment to the welfare of youth," he said.The Chief Minister alleged that instead of addressing the concerns of young people, the Congress and its allies were attempting to mislead and provoke them through “false narratives.””The Opposition is misleading and provoking youth by spreading false-

hoods. Whenever any irregularity comes to our notice, our government takes immediate and strict action. Those raising questions today should first look at their own track record," he said.Targeting previous Congress-led governments, he alleged that recruitment examinations during their tenure were frequently marred by paper

leaks and irregularities, which damaged the confidence of job aspirants.Drawing a comparison with Punjab, the Chief Minister alleged that the recently declared Excise Inspector recruitment results in the neighbouring state had exposed serious anomalies. He claimed that names such as "State Bank of India", "Pho-

to" and other unusual entries had figured in the selection list and alleged that some candidates had been selected against multiple roll numbers.“Those raising questions about Haryana must first answer what happened in Punjab. Is this the respect being given to the hard work of young aspirants?” he asked.Highlighting his government’s recruitment record, the Chief Minister said that more than two lakh youths have secured government jobs in Haryana on the principle of 'bina parchi, bina kharchi' (without recommendation or bribery). He said appointments to key posts, including HCS officers, Tehsildars, BDPOs and Police Inspectors, had been made purely on merit.Saini said Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision is to empower young people by ensuring transparency, fairness and equal opportunity in public recruitment.

Early Pest Threat Puts State Cotton Farmers on High Alert

Sirsa : Agriculture experts have issued an urgent warning to cotton farmers after detecting early signs of the destructive pink bollworm pest in key farming belts. A joint team of central and state agriculture officials inspected fields across the region to check crop health and guide farmers on protective measures. Experts advised farmers to adopt scientific monitoring methods instead of immediately spraying heavy chemicals, as proper monitoring helps manage pest populations without damaging the crops or soil.To help farmers spot the threat early, agriculture departments have installed specialized monitoring traps across several districts.

Experts recommended setting up biological traps to control sap-sucking insects and track pest movements effectively. Farmers were also introduced to a dedicated mobile app that helps identify crop diseases and suggests proper protection methods in real time. Officials urged

farmers to use only government-approved sprays when pest levels become dangerous, especially since cotton crops in the region have already suffered from heavy unseasonal rains this year.

The recent detection of early pink bollworm activity across the key cotton-producing belts of Sirsa and surrounding districts has prompted agricultural authorities to mobilize immediate preventive measures. Following joint field inspections by regional pest management teams and state agricultural officers, experts are advising farmers to focus on early surveillance and integrated pest management (IPM) rather than relying heavily on indiscriminate chemical spraying.To prevent the significant crop losses experienced in recent years, agricultural departments have established field demonstration plots and deployed specialized pheromone traps across major cotton-growing districts, including Sirsa, Fatehabad, Hisar, Bhiwani, and Jind. By

installing four to five pheromone traps per acre, growers can track adult moth populations and accurately gauge infestation levels before larvae cause irreversible internal damage to cotton bolls. In addition to pheromone lures targeting the pink bollworm, experts recommend placing yellow and blue sticky traps across fields to manage sap-sucking pests like jassids and whiteflies. Farmers are also being encouraged to utilize modern digital tools, such as the National Pest Surveillance System (NPSS) mobile app, which allows users to upload images of crop damage to receive rapid, real-time diagnostic advice and recommended threshold levels for chemical interventions. Agricultural officials have emphasized that synthetic chemical sprays should remain a last resort, applied only when pest populations surpass prescribed Economic Threshold Levels (ETL) and using solely Central Insecticides Board-approved formulations.

Consumer Forum Orders Online Seller to Refund Money for Wrong Product

Rohtak : The District Consumer Forum in Rohtak has ordered an online seller to refund the full cost of a wristwatch along with extra compensation to a local woman. The customer had ordered a specific watch online and paid nearly seven thousand rupees, but she received a completely different product inside the box.

When she tried to return the item through the online platform, her request was rejected because she did not record a video while opening the package.

The consumer panel rejected the seller’s argument, stating that there is no law requiring customers to make unboxing videos for every package they open. The panel noted that buyers naturally trust popular online platforms to deliver the right items.

Since the seller failed to prove that the correct item was dispatched, the forum declared the service faulty. The seller has now been ordered to refund the original amount with annual interest, pay additional money for causing mental stress, and cover the customer’s legal expenses.

Furthermore, the forum noted that the primary responsibility rests on the seller and its logistics partners to establish undeniable proof that the correct item was properly inspected, packed, and dispatched to the customer’s address.

Because the seller failed to provide conclusive evidence demonstrating that the correct wristwatch was actually packaged and handed over for delivery, the panel found the seller guilty of gross deficiency in service.

Local Public Hospital Struggles as Heavy Doctor Shortage Hits Patients

Panipat : The main government civil hospital in the district is facing a severe shortage of medical staff, leaving thousands of daily patients waiting in long lines for basic treatment. Official records show that out of nearly two hundred sanctioned posts for medical officers, dozens remain completely vacant. The problem is made worse by the fact that several listed doctors have either resigned or taken extended leaves, meaning the actual number of working doctors on duty is far lower than required.The acute shortage has put immense pressure on the remaining healthcare workers, with individual doctors often examining up to three hundred patients a day. Crucial senior

administrative positions and specialist roles, including radiologists, remain mostly empty, causing long delays for emergency accident victims and pregnant women waiting for essential scans. Additionally, a major multi-storey mother and child care wing project has missed multiple deadlines and seen its construction budget double, though local health officials assure that technical work is finishing soon to help reduce the heavy patient load.The main government civil hospital in Panipat is currently grappling with a severe shortage of medical personnel, creating tremendous hardship for thousands of local residents who rely on the facility for daily medical care. Long queues, ex-



tended waiting times, and overburdened staff have become routine features at the district’s premier public healthcare institution as administrative challenges continue to stall necessary re-

cruitment and infrastructure expansion.Official administrative records reveal a stark imbalance between the hospital’s required medical workforce and its current staffing levels. Out of nearly

two hundred sanctioned positions for medical officers across various departments, dozens of posts remain completely vacant. The structural deficit has severely restricted the hospital’s operational capacity, leaving critical units understaffed during peak outpatient hours.Compounding the problem of unfulfilled vacancies is the ongoing issue of existing doctors taking extended leaves or leaving their positions altogether. Several listed medical officers have resigned, while others are away on prolonged study or personal leave. Consequently, the actual number of working doctors present on campus on any given day is far lower than official numbers sug-

gest, creating a severe operational bottleneck.

The extreme shortage of doctors has placed an unbearable workload on the remaining healthcare staff who report for duty each day. Individual medical officers in busy outpatient departments are frequently forced to examine as many as three hundred patients during a single shift. This intense volume forces medical staff to work under immense stress while attempting to provide thorough care to every individual in line.The human impact of the staffing crisis is felt most acutely by the thousands of patients who arrive at the hospital early every morning from surrounding urban neighborhoods and rural villages.

Political Parties Launch Widespread Protests Over Student Treatment

Sonepat : Political opposition parties have launched aggressive protests across various parts of the state against recent police action on peaceful student demonstrations in the national capital. Protesters gathered in multiple districts, burning effigies and submitting formal complaints addressed to the top leadership of the country. Opposition leaders demanded the immediate resignation of the central education minister, holding the government responsible for ongoing exam paper leaks and the unfair treatment of protesting students.Different political groups and student bodies organized independent rallies to show solidarity with the youth. Protesters stated that repeated paper leaks have broken the trust of young job seekers who spend years preparing for competitive exams. Senior political leaders condemned the use of



police force against peaceful marchers, calling it an attack on democratic rights. One youth leader also started an indefinite sit-in protest in his home district, calling upon young people across the state to raise their voices until their demands for fair exams are met.Political opposition parties and youth organizations in Sonepat and across vari-

ous parts of the state have launched aggressive, widespread protests against recent police action taken against peaceful student demonstrations in the national capital. The agitation marks a significant escalation in public anger, bringing thousands of demonstrators onto the streets to protest against systemic failures in the conduct

of national competitive examinations and the subsequent treatment of student activists.

The escalating wave of outrage follows growing dissatisfaction among students, parents, and educational bodies regarding recurring operational irregularities and paper leaks in major recruitment and entrance exams. What began as localized student grievances has rapidly transformed into a major state-wide movement, drawing active support from major political parties, civil society organizations, and local community leaders who view the situation as a critical crisis affecting the future of the nation’s youth.Protesters gathered in massive numbers across multiple district headquarters, turning public squares and administrative complexes into sites of intense political demonstration.

Police Stop Opposition Leaders Across State to Prevent Planned March

Panipat : Authorities took widespread action across several districts to stop political leaders from traveling to the national capital for planned protests. Police detained key youth representatives and placed senior party members under house arrest early in the morning. These security measures were taken after opposition parties called for demonstrations regarding recent examination paper leaks and police actions against protesting students. Security personnel were stationed outside the homes of several leaders to restrict their movement throughout the day.

Despite the heavy police presence and unexpected home visits, a few leaders managed to evade security teams by changing their transport and routes. In areas where leaders avoided detention, local party workers gathered outside govern-

ment offices to submit formal complaints addressed to top national authorities. Protesting groups and local legal associations also held peaceful marches to express solidarity with affected students, demanding strict accountability and administrative reforms from the central government.

In a widespread crackdown, law enforcement and administrative authorities across several districts of the state executed a series of preventative actions aimed at stopping opposition political leaders and youth representatives from traveling to the national capital to participate in a planned large-scale demonstration.

The restrictive security measures commenced in the early hours of the morning, with police teams arriving at the residences of prominent party leaders, key student organizers, and senior political functionaries. Multiple

youth leaders were taken into preventive detention, while several senior figures were placed under effective house arrest to restrict their movement.The sudden intelligence-led police operation was launched in response to a joint call by opposition parties and student organizations to hold a major protest rally in the capital. The planned demonstration was organized to voice anger over recent examination paper leaks and to protest against previous police actions taken against agitating students. To enforce the restrictions effectively throughout the day, heavy contingents of police personnel were deployed outside the residential compounds and party offices of key figures. Security teams established checkpoints along major highways leading toward the state borders, strictly monitoring vehicles to prevent coordinated group

travel by political cadres.Despite the extensive security blanket and unexpected early morning home visits, several resourcefulness political leaders managed to evade police contingents. By frequently changing their modes of transportation, switching vehicles, and utilizing lesser-known rural bypass routes, a few representatives successfully bypassed security cordons to continue their mobilization efforts.In districts where senior leaders managed to avoid preventive detention, local party workers and youth activists rallied to organize localized demonstrations outside municipal and district administrative headquarters.

Demonstrators gathered peacefully to voice their grievances and formally submit detailed memorandums addressed to top national authorities and institutional heads.

High Political Drama Outside Gurugram Hospital Over Detained Activist

Gurugram : Heavy political drama broke out outside a major private hospital in Gurugram when police stopped several opposition leaders from meeting a well-known climate activist. The activist had been admitted to the intensive care unit following a twenty-five-day hunger strike related to student exam issues. When opposition leaders arrived at the hospital, police blocked their entry, leading to heated arguments. In response, the politicians sat down outside the hospital gates to register their protest.

The activist’s wife joined the protesting leaders and appealed to the government to consider her husband’s demands regarding fair support for affected students.

The standoff lasted for nearly an hour until the med-

ical team came out to explain the situation. Doctors informed everyone that the activist was stable in the intensive care unit, where strict rules only allow immediate family members to visit. Following the medical update, the political leaders ended their sit-in, though some later accused the government of trying to keep the activist isolated.

High political drama broke out outside a major private hospital in Gurugram as law enforcement authorities stepped in to restrict several high-profile opposition leaders from gaining entry into the facility.

The political figures had arrived with the intention of visiting a well-known climate activist who was recently admitted to the intensive care unit following a

prolonged twenty-five-day hunger strike linked to ongoing student examination issues.

Upon their arrival at the hospital premises, the visiting political delegation was met with a strong police presence stationed at the entry gates.

Security personnel blocked the leaders from proceeding into the building, citing patient privacy and hospital visitation protocols, which immediately led to intense arguments between the opposition representatives and the officers on duty.

Refusing to leave the site without meeting the activist, the political leaders staged an impromptu sit-in directly outside the main gates of the hospital to register their strong protest against the access restrictions.

Shocker in Gurugram Custody: Man Forced to Pick Slips to Decide His Physical Punishment

Gurugram : The Haryana Human Rights Commission has stepped in after shocking reports came out about police brutalizing a man in Sohna. According to reports, officers forced a detained man to pick folded pieces of paper to decide how he would be tortured. The paper slips had terrible options written on them, including death, getting shot, breaking a bone, or receiving a cash reward. The man unfortunately drew the slip that said fracture. Following this, officers allegedly placed his leg between two bricks and smashed it with a heavy object.

The truth came to light when the accused man could not walk into the courtroom. The police claimed he got

hurt after jumping off a fly-over while trying to escape. However, the man told the judge during a video call that the officers deliberately broke his leg and threatened to kill him if he told the truth. Hearing this, the judge personally went to the hospital late at night to record the victim’s statement without any police pressure. Taking strict action, the Human Rights Commission has now directed the state police chief to set up a high-level inquiry team. Authorities have also been ordered to save all security camera footage from the police station and hand over complete medical records before the upcoming hearing.

In a deeply shocking incident that has raised grave concerns over custodial safe-

ty and police conduct, the Haryana Human Rights Commission has stepped in following horrifying reports of severe police brutality in Sohna, Gurugram. According to reports detailing the ordeal, law enforcement officers allegedly forced a detained man to pick folded paper slips from a container to determine the specific form of physical torture he would endure while in custody.

The detailed allegations reveal a terrifying setup inside the police facility, where the paper slips had extreme outcomes written on them. The options reportedly ranged from receiving a cash reward to severe physical harm, including getting shot, being killed, or suffering a broken bone. Under extreme

duress, the detained man drew the paper slip that had the word "fracture" written on it, effectively sealing his fate at the hands of his captors.

Following the draw, police officers allegedly proceeded to carry out the written punishment with brutal precision. Reports state that officers forced the victim’s leg between two heavy bricks to keep it immobilized before striking it forcefully with a heavy object. The violent blow deliberately broke the man’s leg, causing severe physical trauma while he remained completely helpless under police control.

The appalling truth behind the man’s injuries came to light during his scheduled court appearance, when he

was completely unable to walk into the courtroom to present himself before the presiding magistrate. The stark physical condition of the accused immediately raised serious questions regarding his treatment while in police custody, prompting a direct judicial intervention.

In an effort to explain away the severe physical trauma, the police initially presented a dramatically different narrative to the court. Officers claimed that the accused had sustained his leg injury independently while attempting to flee from custody.According to the official police account, the man had jumped off a nearby flyover during a transport attempt, resulting in an accidental fracture during his alleged escape

Hockey India Junior Women Academy Championship begins in Gwalior on Today

Gwalior: The 4th Hockey India Junior Women Academy Championship 2026 (Zone A & B) is set to commence on July 24 here in Madhya Pradesh, bringing together some of the country's finest junior women's hockey academies to showcase the next generation of Indian hockey talent.

The 11-day tournament will conclude on August 3, with the top teams from both pools competing for the championship title.

A total of 12 academy teams have been divided into two pools of six teams each, with every team playing the others in its respective pool during the league stage. The top two teams from each pool will qualify for the semi-finals, scheduled for 2 August, followed by the third-place playoff and the final on 3 August.

Pool A comprises Raja Karan Hockey Academy, Khalsa Hockey Academy (Amritsar), Sports Authority of Gujarat – Hockey Academy, Hockey Family Badkhalsa NCR Hockey Society, Tamil Nadu Hockey Academy, and Pritam Si-



wach Hockey Academy, Sonepat.

Pool B features Ritu Rani Hockey Academy, Vadipatti Raja Hockey Academy, Bhai Behlo Hockey Academy Bhagta, Mumbai Schools Sports Association, Adyar Hockey Academy, and Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy.

The tournament will follow a league format during the pool stage, with teams earning three points for a win, one point for a draw, and no points for a loss. In classification

matches where a winner is required, tied contests will be decided by a shoot-out in accordance with the FIH Tournament Regulations.

Speaking ahead of the championship, Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey said, "The Junior Women Academy Championship has become an important platform in our efforts to strengthen the grassroots development pathway for women's hockey in India."

"The tournament provides young players with an opportunity to compete

against some of the best academy talent in the country while gaining valuable experience in a highly competitive environment. We are confident that this championship will help identify future stars who will go on to represent India at the highest level," he said.

Hockey India Secretary General Bola Nath Singh added, "Academies play a vital role in nurturing young players and preparing them for the next stage of their hockey journey. Championships like these not only

promote healthy competition but also provide exposure to talented athletes from across the country. We wish all participating teams the very best and look forward to witnessing exciting hockey over the coming days."

Action on the opening day will begin with Raja Karan Hockey Academy taking on Khalsa Hockey Academy (Amritsar) at 7:30 AM, followed by Sports Authority of Gujarat – Hockey Academy facing Pritam Siwach Hockey Academy, Sonepat, at 9:00 AM.

Hockey Family Badkhalsa NCR Hockey Society will then play Tamil Nadu Hockey Academy at 10:30 AM. In Pool B, Ritu Rani Hockey Academy will face Vadipatti Raja Hockey Academy at 1:30 PM, while Mumbai Schools Sports Association will take on Adyar Hockey Academy at 3:00 PM.

The final match of the day will see Bhai Behlo Hockey Academy Bhagta take on hosts Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy at 4:30 PM.

Pinki, Rupa begin Bowls campaign with thrilling tiebreak win over Malta

New Delhi: India's women's pairs team of Pinki Singh and Rupa Rani Tirkey made a winning start to their Commonwealth Games 2026 campaign, defeating Malta in a dramatic tiebreak in their opening Group Play match on Thursday.

Playing in the indoor version of the sport, now officially known as Bowls at the Commonwealth Games, the Indian pair overcame sisters Rebecca Louise Rixon and Connie-Leigh Rixon after a contest that went down to the final bowl.

India started strongly and took control early in the first set. Pinki and Rupa built a steady lead, with Pinki producing some accurate deliveries to help India move ahead 2-0. Malta reduced the gap in the next end, but India quickly regained control as Pinki delivered another crucial bowl to extend the advantage.

The Indian pair continued to dominate, adding more points before sealing the opening set 7-1. Rupa played a key role in the closing stages, while Malta's attempt to recover with an aggressive drive ended up



working against them.

The second set was much tighter. India again moved ahead early after Pinki's well-placed bowl shifted the jack in their favour, but Malta fought back immediately to level the scores.

The two teams exchanged leads through the remainder of the set. Pinki once again came up with an important bowl to win a close measurement and keep India in front, but the Rixon sisters responded brilliantly in the closing ends to level the set and force a tiebreak.

Malta made the better start to the shootout and looked set for victory after placing two bowls closer to the jack.

Rupa improved India's position with her final bowl, leaving Pinki with the responsibility of deciding the match.

Her first attempt brought India closer, while her second narrowly missed changing the outcome. With everything riding on the final delivery, Pinki held her nerve and produced a superb bowl to edge India ahead and seal a memorable victory.

Terzic keeps tabs on Athletic's World Cup trio

Madrid: Athletic Bilbao head coach Edin Terzic said he has remained in regular contact with the club's three World Cup winners as he prepares for the new La Liga season.

The former Borussia Dortmund coach replaced Ernesto Valverde this summer, taking on the challenge of succeeding the man who led Athletic across three spells spanning 10 years.

Athletic has enjoyed a positive start to preseason, winning its first three warmup matches against lower-division opponents despite the absence of Spain internationals Nico Williams, Aymeric Laporte and Unai Simon, who all played key roles in the country's World Cup triumph.

The trio has been granted

three weeks' vacation before returning to the club, but Terzic said he is

in no hurry to have them back after watching his side win 2-0 at fourth-tier Sestao River. "We hope that in the



future we can have more champions. For us as a coaching staff and for the club, it is very important," he said. "We're very proud that these players are part of our group and our dressing room." Terzic said he had stayed in touch with all the club's World Cup partici-

pants, including Ghana captain and Athletic skipper Inaki Williams, according to Xinhua.

"I'm in contact with all the players who participated in the World Cup. It's important that we build a connection and that there's communication so they understand the message," he said. Terzic also dismissed speculation linking Laporte with a move to Barcelona. The Spain defender returned to Athletic, where he began his professional career, at the start of last season, and reports of Barcelona's interest come after the Catalan club's unsuccessful pursuit of Nico Williams over the previous two summers. "It's a story that is repeated constantly, although the name might change," Terzic said.

Sindhu loses to Chen Yufei as India's China Open campaign ends

Changzhou: India's campaign at the China Open 2026 badminton tournament came to an end on Thursday after PV Sindhu, Lakshya Sen, and Ayush Shetty suffered defeats in their respective matches at the BWF Super 1000 event in China.

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu was eliminated in the women's singles round of 16 after a closely fought encounter against home favourite Chen Yufei. The Indian shuttler fought back strongly but eventually lost 16-21, 22-20, 21-18 to the fourth-ranked Chinese player.

The match marked the second meeting between Sindhu and Chen Yufei in as many weeks on the BWF World Tour. Sindhu had de-

feated the Tokyo 2020 Olympic champion in the semi-final of the Japan Open last week before going on to win the title.

The opening game saw Chen Yufei make a dominant start as she built a 12-6 advantage. However, Sindhu displayed her trademark fighting spirit and gradually clawed her way back into the contest, levelling the score at 16-16.

The Indian then shifted momentum in her favour by winning five of the next six points to close out the opening game 21-16. Sindhu appeared to be in control as she continued her aggressive approach in the second game.

Sindhu maintained her lead throughout much of the second game and moved



within touching distance of victory after earning four match points at 20-16. However, Chen Yufei produced a remarkable comeback under pressure.

The Chinese shuttler saved all four match points and went on to win six consecutive points, forcing the contest into a deciding third game and keeping her hopes alive in front of the home crowd.

In the final game, Sindhu started strongly and held an

early advantage, but Chen Yufei gradually regained control. The Chinese player raised her level during the crucial closing moments to seal the match after a marathon battle lasting one hour and 29 minutes.

The defeat marked Sindhu's ninth loss to Chen Yufei in 16 career meetings. Despite the setback, Sindhu's recent performances, including her Japan Open triumph, have shown signs of a strong return on the international circuit.

Later in the day, India suffered two more setbacks in the men's singles competition as Ayush Shetty and Lakshya Sen were knocked out in their second-round matches.

World No. 23 Ayush

Shetty endured a heartbreaking defeat against Irish shuttler Nhat Nguyen, ranked 24th in the world. Shetty lost 21-15, 13-21, 20-22 after failing to convert a significant advantage in the deciding game.

The Indian had appeared to be in control of the third game after taking a 19-15 lead, but Nguyen held his nerve during the closing stages to win seven of the next eight points and complete a dramatic comeback victory.

Lakshya Sen, ranked 14th in the world, also exited the tournament after losing to Canada's eighth-ranked Victor Lai in straight games. Sen went down 21-19, 21-11 despite having a strong start in the opening game.

SA20 Season 5 to begin with repeat of last year's final

New Delhi: Defending champions Sunrisers Eastern Cape will launch their title defence against Pretoria Capitals when the fifth edition of the SA20 league gets underway on January 17, 2027, with the opening fixture set to recreate last season's thrilling championship clash. Cricket South Africa (CSA) on Thursday announced the complete schedule for the 2027 edition of the tournament, which will run from January 17 to February 21. The competition is expected to once again feature some of the world's leading cricketers and continue the league's growing popularity.

The opening match will be played at St George's Park in Gqeberha, where fans will

witness a rematch of last season's final. In the previous edition, Sunrisers Eastern Cape defeated Pretoria Capitals in a memorable title clash to secure the championship.

Sunrisers Eastern Cape will enter the new season aiming to retain their crown and continue their impressive run in the tournament. The franchise has established itself as one of the strongest teams in the competition through consistent performances in recent editions.

Meanwhile, Pretoria Capitals will be looking to go one step further after finishing as runners-up last season. The team heads into the new campaign with renewed optimism following an im-

pressive run to the final under the leadership of head coach Sourav Ganguly and captain Keshav Maharaj.



The tournament schedule has been designed to maximise fan engagement, with four Saturday double-headers scheduled for January 23, January 30, February 6, and February 13. The

weekend fixtures are expected to attract large crowds and provide fans with two matches on each of those

days. SA20 League Commissioner Graeme Smith said the announcement of the fixtures marked the first major milestone in preparations for the new season and signalled the beginning of another exciting chapter for the tournament.

"Announcing the SA20 fixtures is always a big moment for us; it's the first major milestone ahead of the new season and it means the wheels are in motion for us as we build towards an incredible month of cricket," Smith said.

Highlighting the opening fixture, Smith said there could be no better way to begin the fifth season than with a repeat of one of the league's most memorable finals.

"There is no better way to start Season 5 than with a repeat of one of the most thrilling finals in our history. Sunrisers Eastern Cape and Pretoria Capitals served up a classic in Cape Town last

season, and it's fitting that they're the two teams out in the middle when the season gets underway in Gqeberha on January 17, 2027," he added.

The knockout phase of the tournament will begin with Qualifier 1 at Boland Park in Paarl on February 16, marking the first occasion that the venue will host an SA20 playoff match. The decision reflects the league's effort to spread marquee fixtures across its host cities.

The Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg will stage the Eliminator on February 17 and Qualifier 2 on February 19, before attention shifts to Newlands in Cape Town, which will host the SA20 final on February 21 for the second consecutive year.

Mandaviya leads 'Cheer 4 Bharat' campaign to back Indian athletes at CWG 2026

New Delhi: Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Thursday participated in a cycling event organised by members of the Indian diaspora in Glasgow as part of the 'Cheer 4 Bharat' campaign, an initiative aimed at boosting the morale of Indian athletes competing in the 2026 Commonwealth Games while promoting the importance of fitness and healthy living.

The event brought together members of the Indian community living in Scotland, who cycled alongside the Union Minister to express their support for Team India ahead of the country's campaign at the Commonwealth Games. The initiative also highlighted the role of sports in encouraging healthier lifestyles and fostering community participation.

India is competing in its 19th Commonwealth Games

with a 124-member contingent, featuring athletes across eight able-bodied sports and five para-sports. The Indian campaign at the Games begins with the lawn bowls competition, marking the start of the country's quest for medals. Addressing participants during the cycling event, Mandaviya said the 'Cheer 4 Bharat' campaign was not only about encouraging Indian athletes but also about spreading awareness regarding the importance of physical fitness among citizens across the world. He said the campaign symbolised the Indian diaspora's unwavering support for the country's sports persons while carrying a broader message that good health and fitness are essential for individuals irrespective of where they live. "To support Indian athletes participating in the 2026 Commonwealth

Games, the Indian diaspora organized the 'Cheer 4 Bharat' initiative to boost their morale. Through this, we sent a message that fitness is essential for every citizen of the world. In India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Fit India Movement, and our diaspora remains deeply connected to this cause," Mandaviya said.

The minister emphasised that the strength and prosperity of any nation are closely linked to the health of its people. According to him, a physically fit population forms the foundation of a productive and progressive society. "For any nation to prosper, its citizens must be fit. Fit citizens build a healthy society, and only a healthy society can construct a prosperous nation," Mandaviya said while urging people to actively participate in fitness-related activities.

Lovlina assures India of first medal even before before CWG action begins

New Delhi : India have secured their first medal at the 2026 Commonwealth Games even before the opening ceremony in Glasgow.

Olympic bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain is assured of at least a bronze medal after receiving a direct entry into the semifinals of the women's 75kg boxing event.

The Commonwealth Games officially begin late on Thursday in Glasgow, Scotland, with the opening ceremony scheduled for the early hours of July 24 (IST). However, India's medal tally is already guaranteed because of the draw in Lovlina's weight category.

Only five boxers are competing in the women's 75kg division, which means three athletes received byes to the semifinals. Along with Lovlina, Australia's

Emma-Sue Greentree and Tuvalu's Tarona Khanum Badi Pasoni Taafaki also advanced directly to the last four. England's Mary-Kate Smith and Nigeria's Patricia



Mbata will contest the only quarterfinal, with the winner taking on Greentree in the semifinals.

Lovlina will face 20-year-old Taafaki in the semifinals on July 31. It will be the Tuvalu boxer's first appearance at a major international event. Her brother, Pasoni Taafaki, is also competing at the Games in the men's 70kg boxing event.

The Indian boxer will also be looking to make amends for her disappointing campaign at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, where she was knocked out in the quarterfinals of the 70kg event.

Lovlina had suffered a narrow 3-2 split-decision defeat to Wales' Rosie Eccles in a closely fought contest. Although the judges awarded her the opening two rounds by split decisions, she was docked a point in the second round for holding. Eccles dominated the final round to edge the contest and end Lovlina's medal hopes.

This time, however, the Assam-born pugilist has already ensured India a place on the podium and will now aim to upgrade the guaranteed bronze into a silver or even gold.

Anahat storms into World Junior Squash c'ships quarterfinals

New Delhi : Top seed Anahat Singh continued her impressive run at the World Squash Junior Individual Championships, defeating Malaysia's Doyce Ye San Lee in straight games to book her place in the women's quarterfinals.

The Indian, who won a bronze medal at last year's edition, was in complete control as she beat the 13/16th seed 11-4, 11-8, 11-3. She will now face Egypt's 5/8th seed Habiba Rizk for a place in the semifinals.

Rizk reached the last eight after defeating USA's Charlotte Sze in four games. Belgium's Savannah Moxham also advanced, coming from a game down to beat Hong Kong China's Ena Kwong 3-1.

Another Egyptian, Malika Elkarakasy, secured her quarterfinal spot with a win over USA's Diya Yadav.

In the men's draw, top seed Mohamad Zakaria de-

feated Pakistan's Nauman Khan to move into the next round, while France's Amir Khaled-Jousselin and Hong Kong China's Helen Tang also progressed with straight-game victories.

India, however, suffered a setback in the men's event as Aryaveer Dewan crashed out in the pre-quarterfinals. The reigning Asian Under-19 champion and 5/8th seed was beaten 11-4, 11-1, 11-5 by USA's Yaseen Shalaby in straight games.

Elsewhere, Malaysia's Whitney Wilson defeated Brazil's Laura Silva, while Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Alnasfan edged past England's Dylan Roberts in a five-game thriller to reach the quarterfinals.

The individual competition at the World Squash Junior Championships runs until July 25, after which the men's and women's team events will be held from July 26 to 31.

LPL removes Jaffna Kings owners amid financial & match-fixing storm

New Delhi: The organisers of the Lanka Premier League (LPL) have terminated the franchise agreement with the owners of Jaffna Kings, with Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) and tournament rights holder IPG taking full control of the team to ensure the tournament continues without disruption. The move comes just days after Jaffna Kings co-owner and former India Under-19 batter Manjot Kalra was arrested by Sri Lanka Police's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) for the Prevention of Offences Relating to Sports on suspicion of match-fixing on the opening day of the 2026 LPL. Kalra had joined entrepreneur Mayank Goel

as co-owner of the franchise. However, IPG clarified that the franchise agreement was terminated because the owners failed to meet their financial obligations. Following the termination, all rights to the Jaffna Kings franchise have reverted to IPG, which is now running the team jointly with Sri Lanka Cricket. The organisers confirmed that there will be no impact on the ongoing tournament. Jaffna Kings will continue to play under the same name, with no changes to the squad, fixtures or competition format. "The termination follows the franchisee's inability to fulfil its financial obligations under the terms of the franchise agreement.



MARKET

BSE Sensex		Nifty 50		Nifty 500		Nifty Next 50		Nifty 100		Nifty Bank		Nifty Midcap 100	
Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change
76,391.39	-0.47%	23,869.60	-0.53%	22,982.40	-0.70%	71,840.45	-0.63%	24,932.50	-0.55%	56,592.00	-0.94%	61.685.00	-0.99%
Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open
76,755.05	76,515.10	23,996.25	23,904.80	23,145.05	23,069.10	72,296.65	72,040.90	25,069.65	24,975.35	57,126.80	56,796.95	62,300.60	62,134.30
High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
76,726.66	76,151.98	23,990.75	23,807.20	23,148.90	22,937.75	72,606.60	71,634.60	25,083.80	24,867.10	56,930.15	56,374.75	62,285.40	61,549.95

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Bajaj Auto	11,283.50	2.59
SBI Life Insura	1,853.50	2.59
M&M	3,229.70	1.71
TCS	2,242.90	1.57
Eicher Motors	7,721.50	1.17

Top Losers

Company	Current	%Loss
Adani Enterpris	3,010.00	-4.37
Shriram Finance	1,025.80	-3.12
Nestle	1,447.90	-3.06
Adani Ports	1,778.50	-2.25
Bajaj Finance	1,039.80	-1.93

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Aug 05	144,201.00	-1,479.00 -1.02
Silver Sep 04	223,075.00	-3,923.00 -1.73
Crudeoil Aug 19	8,735.00	325.00 3.86
Naturalgas Jul 28	286.20	2.80 0.99

Sensex falls 364 pts, Nifty below 23,900

Mumbai : Indian equity benchmark indices extended their losing streak for a fourth consecutive trading session on Thursday as escalating tensions in West Asia pushed global crude oil prices sharply higher, dampening investor sentiment across domestic markets.

The benchmark BSE Sensex ended the day 363.66 points, or 0.47 per cent, lower at 76,391.39, while the NSE Nifty 50 declined 126.65 points, or 0.53 per cent, to close at 23,869.60, slipping below the 23,900 mark.

The weakness persisted throughout the trading session, with investors remaining cautious amid concerns that surging crude oil prices could increase inflationary pressures and negatively impact corporate earnings as well as India's import bill.



During intra-day trade, the Sensex fell as much as 603.07 points, or 0.78 per cent, to touch a low of 76,151.98 before recovering part of its losses by the close.

The decline marked the fourth straight session of losses for both benchmark indices, reflecting sustained selling pressure as global uncertainties continued to influence investor

behaviour.

A sharp rise in international crude oil prices remained the primary factor weighing on market sentiment. Traders monitored developments in West Asia, where heightened geopolitical tensions triggered concerns over possible disruptions to global energy supplies.

Brent crude, the international benchmark for oil prices,

surged 4.52 per cent to \$98.32 per barrel, significantly increasing concerns about inflation and the potential impact on oil-importing economies such as India. Higher crude oil prices generally increase input costs for industries, widen India's current account deficit, and put pressure on inflation, making investors cautious about sectors sensitive to rising energy costs.

Among the Sensex constituents, Adani Ports, Bajaj Finance, InterGlobe Aviation, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, and Tata Steel emerged as the major losers, dragging the broader market lower.

Shares of InterGlobe Aviation, the parent company of IndiGo, came under pressure as rising aviation fuel costs are expected to impact airline profitability if crude prices remain elevated.

Mercedes Benz expands PHEV portfolio, launches AMG E 53 Hybrid 4MATIC, ties up with Indian Padel Tour for 2026-27 season

Chennai: Expanding its PHEV portfolio by pursuing a 'powertrain agnostic' strategy for India, Luxury car makers Mercedes-Benz India today launched the Mercedes-AMG E 53 HYBRID 4MATIC , the first sedan in the E-Class portfolio, while announcing a multi-year tie up with Indian Padel Tour as its title sponsor for 2026-207 season. A company statement said AMG E 53 is available in two exciting editions- Performance and Racing Editions which Racing Editions are priced at Rs. 1.45 crores and Rs. 1.48 crores respectively (ex-showroom, all-India). Company MD and CEO Santosh Iyer said "the E-Class has been the longest running nameplates in the Indian automotive industry and the AMG E 53 HYBRID 4MATIC underlines performance, practical usability and electric efficiency, making the E-Class portfolio truly unmatched. This performance sedan combines

genuine AMG performance with plug-in hybrid's efficiency, balancing an AMG customers need of racetrack performance with practicality of daily usage, perfectly. The AMG E53 Hybrid furthers our 'powertrain agnostic' strategy for India, where customers decide the powertrain of their choice, suiting their requirement."

The company also announced a multi-year partnership with the Indian Padel Tour, becoming the Title Partner for the 2026-27 season, featuring 19 tournaments across 10 cities, including 10 City Opens, five Grand Slams and four Special IP events. The season will commence in Mumbai in August and culminate with the season finale in Bengaluru in June 2027. Jigar Doshi, Co-Founder, Padel Park India said the Indian Padel Tour was created with a simple ambition: to build the competitive ecosystem that every great sport needs.

Wipro eyes more acquisitions after 17th buy

Bengaluru: Wipro Consumer Care & Lighting on Thursday signalled an aggressive acquisition-led expansion strategy, saying it is actively scouting for more acquisitions in India and overseas even as it announced the acquisition of the Good Home and Eva brands from TTK Healthcare Ltd for Rs 256 crore.

The acquisition of the two brands, Wipro Consumer Care's 17th so far, is part of a broader strategy to strengthen its presence in fast-growing consumer categories, with the company identifying home care, personal care, fragrances, foods and digital-first brands as key areas for future acquisitions. "Since

we've announced two acquisitions in the last two days, clearly acquisitions are on our radar both in India and international markets," Kumar Chander, CEO of Wipro Consumer Care & Lighting and Managing Director of Wipro Enterprises, told reporters. However, he said acquisitions would continue to be pursued selectively, noting that transactions succeed only when valuations meet the expectations of both buyers and sellers. India will remain Wipro Consumer Care's highest-priority market, although the company will also continue evaluating opportunities across other developing economies. Chander said the acquisition of Good Home and Eva positions

Wipro to capitalise on rapidly expanding consumer segments, particularly fragrances, where he believes India has only begun to realise its potential. "India is just scratching the surface. This category is going to grow quite a lot," he said, adding that the domestic fragrance market could expand to Rs 5,000-10,000 crore over the next decade. Good Home has a portfolio spanning air care, odour removers, scrubbers and drain cleaners, while Eva is among India's pioneering deodorant brands with offerings including body sprays, no-gas perfumes, underarm roll-ons and talcum powders. Together, the brands generated revenues of Rs 148 crore in FY26.

UCO Bank Reports Strong First Quarter Growth

Mumbai : The UCO bank has reported strong financial performance for the first quarter of the financial year 2026-27, with healthy growth in business, deposits, advances and profitability. As of June 30, 2026, the bank's total business reached Rs. 6,05,083 crore, registering a year-on-year growth of 15.53 percent. Gross advances rose 21.18 percent to Rs. 2,72,768 crore, while total deposits increased 11.28 percent to Rs. 3,32,315 crore.

The bank's CASA deposits grew 12.34 percent to Rs. 1,16,136 crore, with savings deposits rising to Rs. 1,00,870 crore and current



deposits increasing to Rs. 15,266 crore. The CASA ratio stood at 36.94 percent. Retail, Agriculture and MSME (RAM) advances recorded a strong 25.27 per-

cent growth to Rs. 1,57,745 crore, driven by 27.32 percent growth in retail loans, 30.01 percent growth in agriculture loans and 18.79 per-

cent growth in MSME lending.

Operating profit jumped 79.84 percent to Rs. 2,810 crore during the quarter, while net profit increased

8.05 percent to Rs. 656 crore from Rs. 607 crore a year earlier. Global Net Interest Margin improved to 3.05 percent and domestic NIM to 3.24 percent. Gross NPA declined to 2.08 percent and Net NPA fell to 0.25 percent. The Capital Adequacy Ratio stood at 19.03 percent, Credit-to-Deposit Ratio improved to 82.08 percent and Provision Coverage Ratio reached 97.85 percent, reflecting the bank's strong financial position and improved asset quality.

Future real estate sentiment stays neutral in Q2; Office market remains resilient: Knight Frank-NAREDCO

New Delhi: India's real estate sector entered a phase of stabilisation during the April-June quarter of 2026, with future sentiment holding steady despite global economic uncertainties, according to the latest Knight Frank-NAREDCO Real Estate Sentiment Index. The report said while the current sentiment remained subdued, the sharp deterioration witnessed in the previous quarter has levelled off, supported by resilient office demand and strong domestic economic fundamentals. The 49th edition of the sentiment index showed the Current Sentiment Score slipped marginally to 48 in Q2 2026 from 49 in the previous quarter, remaining below the neutral mark of 50. However, the Future Sentiment Score stayed unchanged at 50, indicating that industry stakeholders expect market conditions to stabilise over the next six months rather than deteriorate further. According to the report, sentiment continues to be weighed down by geopolitical tensions, volatile energy prices and inflationary pressures.



neutral threshold, while non-developer stakeholders—including banks, financial institutions and private equity investors—turned more optimistic. Their sentiment score improved to 53 from 50 in the previous quarter, reflecting greater comfort with prevailing market conditions.

The residential market continued to moderate after several years of strong growth. Housing sales across the top cities rose just 1 per cent year-on-year in the first half of 2026, signalling a transition towards a more stable growth cycle. The re-

port noted that fewer stakeholders now expect residential demand to weaken, while a larger share believes market conditions will remain unchanged, suggesting stabilisation rather than a downturn. Developers also appeared less pessimistic about new project launches, although concerns over construction costs, labour availability and financing conditions continue to weigh on supply decisions. Despite these challenges, 74 per cent of respondents expect residential property prices to either remain stable or increase over the next six months, supported by elevated input costs. The office segment remained the strongest-performing asset class. Office transactions touched 48 million square feet in the first half of 2026, down only 2 per cent year-on-year despite a high base, with demand continuing to be driven by (GCCs), technology firms and diversified occupiers.

Nearly 74 per cent of stakeholders expect office leasing activity to remain stable or improve over the next six months.

Foreign investment revival signals renewed confidence in Indian economy: RBI

New Delhi: A revival in foreign investment flows indicates that global investor confidence in the Indian economy is strengthening, according to an article published in the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) July Bulletin.

The article said higher foreign direct investment (FDI), the return of foreign portfolio inflows and improving external sector indicators reflect India's resilience despite ongoing global uncertainties.

The article, State of the Economy clarified that the views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the central bank's official position.

According to the article, both gross and net FDI inflows during April-May 2026 exceeded the levels recorded in the corresponding period last year. Net FDI rose to \$6.5 billion during the two-month period, compared with USD 2.5 billion a year ago.

The report also high-

lighted a turnaround in foreign portfolio investment (FPI) flows. After witnessing sustained outflows earlier in the financial year, FPIs turned net buyers in June and continued to invest in July, aided by supportive policy measures and easing geopolitical tensions.

Indian equity markets also reflected the improving investor mood. The bulletin noted that equities rallied during June and the early part of July following the ceasefire agreement between the US and Iran, moderation in crude oil prices and renewed foreign investor buying. However, markets corrected after geopolitical tensions resurfaced in West Asia and oil prices climbed again, before settling into a range-bound movement.

Despite the recent recovery, overseas investors remain net sellers of Indian equities so far in the current financial year, having withdrawn USD 13.28 billion. In contrast, they have invested \$7.8 billion in the



domestic debt market.

The article said recent policy initiatives by the RBI and the government have helped improve foreign investor sentiment. These included measures to expand overseas investors' access to government securities, relax investment norms for foreign portfolio investors and provide tax support for investments in sovereign bonds.

The RBI also pointed to strong inflows under its recently introduced foreign currency mobilisation measures. Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) invested USD 17.41 billion through Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) [FCNR(B)] deposits under the special incentive scheme.

In addition, the central

bank received USD 1.97 billion through overseas foreign currency borrowings and USD 1.34 billion via external commercial borrowings.

According to the article, the concessional swap facility introduced for fresh FCNR(B) deposits has played a key role in boosting foreign currency inflows and strengthening India's external position.

On global financial markets, the bulletin noted that the US 10-year Treasury yield remained elevated and volatile during June, hardening further in early July before easing after softer-than-expected US inflation data. The US Dollar Index strengthened in June but gave up part of its gains in July as inflation concerns eased. Foreign investors also trimmed exposure to emerging market equities during June, although debt inflows partially offset the outflows.

The authors observed that the global economy continues to grapple with

geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions and an uncertain trade environment. Against this backdrop, they said India's economy has remained resilient, supported by healthy domestic demand and steady performance across the industrial and services sectors.

On inflation, the bulletin noted that headline retail inflation edged higher in June, primarily due to food and fuel prices, while underlying core inflation—excluding precious metals—remained subdued. It also said liquidity conditions have improved, supporting robust credit growth. The article added that India's external sector remains stable and its outlook continues to improve, aided by stronger foreign investment inflows.

It also reiterated that India remains among the world's fastest-growing major economies and has sustained economic momentum despite an increasingly uncertain global environment.

SHG digitisation India's next UPI moment: Women's World Banking

Bengaluru: Digitising the credit history of nearly 10 crore women associated with self-help groups (SHGs) could become India's "next UPI moment", unlocking access to formal finance for millions of women entrepreneurs and accelerating inclusive economic growth, Kalpana Ajayan, Women's World Banking (South Asia Regional Head), said on Thursday.

In an interview with UNI on the sidelines of the Fintech Fusion Festival here, Ajayan said SHGs represent one of India's biggest untapped financial assets, but years of borrowing and repayment by women within these groups remain invis-

ble to the formal banking system because the transactions are not digitally recorded.

"We keep talking about the next UPI moment. I believe the digitisation of SHG lending history can become that moment. Nearly 10 crore women have built repayment discipline over many years, but banks cannot see it because there is no digital credit footprint," she said.

She said women in SHGs typically receive loans of around ₹25,000 through inter-group lending mechanisms, but many are unable to graduate to larger enterprise loans despite having demonstrated financial

discipline over the years.

"From the banking system's perspective, these women appear to have no credit history. But they have actually been borrowing and repaying loans for 10 to 15 years. If this credit behaviour is digitally captured, millions of women will become visible to formal lenders," Ajayan said.

She said creating such a digital record would enable banks to assess borrowers beyond conventional credit scores and significantly expand access to affordable institutional finance.

According to Ajayan, formal recognition of SHG credit history could support the government's efforts to



promote women entrepreneurship, including initiatives such as the Lakhpati Didi programme.

"Employment generation is a challenge. Entrepreneurship offers a sustainable solution, but women need both capital and capacity building. Our experience shows that when a woman

entrepreneur succeeds, she often creates livelihoods for three to five other women. The multiplier effect is significant," she said.

Ajayan said Women's World Banking estimates that nearly 200 million women in India own smartphones and have internet access but remain outside the formal fi-

nancial system despite the country's rapid digitalisation.

"The challenge today is no longer access but usage. India has made tremendous progress through the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile architecture, but financial inclusion must now translate into active participation in savings, credit, insurance and digital financial services," she said.

She stressed that financial institutions also need to rethink the way they assess women entrepreneurs.

"Traditional collateral-based lending excludes many women because property is rarely in their names. Credit underwriting should

increasingly be based on enterprise activity, business cash flows, supply chains and repayment capacity rather than physical collateral," she said.

Ajayan also highlighted the shortage of women banking correspondents, describing them as critical to last-mile financial inclusion.

"Women often feel more comfortable transacting with women banking correspondents. Although women account for nearly 55 per cent of Jan Dhan account holders, only around 13-14 per cent of banking correspondents are women. Increasing their participation can significantly improve financial access," she said.

She said Women's World Banking works with banks, fintech companies, NBFCs, insurance firms, government departments and regulators to design commercially sustainable financial products for women, adding that financial inclusion should extend beyond credit to include insurance, savings and digital financial services.

Ajayan also noted that lack of awareness remains a major barrier, with many women entrepreneurs unaware of collateral-free lending available under the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) and several government support schemes.