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Lok Sabha introduces Taxation Reform Bill seeking to mordernise India's tax framework



New Delhi: The Lok Sabha on Tuesday introduced the Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, with the government describing it as a key step towards modernising India's tax framework and strengthening the country's digital financial ecosystem. The legislation was introduced amid noisy protests by Opposition members and cleared for introduction through a voice vote.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman moved the Bill for introduction, seeking the House's permission to bring in the Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, which proposes amendments to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, the Income-tax Act, 2025, and the Finance Act, 2026. The Bill seeks to replace the Income-tax (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026, which was promulgated on June 5, 2026, while introducing a broader set of legislative changes aimed at boosting foreign investment, simplifying the regulatory framework for digital payment systems and extending policy support to key manufacturing sectors.

According to the proposed legislation, the amendments are intended to update the legal architecture governing taxation and payment systems in response to the evolving needs of India's economy and its rapidly expanding digital ecosystem. The government has maintained that the reforms are designed to improve the ease of doing business, enhance investor confidence and ensure that India's tax and financial laws remain aligned with technological advancements and changing commercial practices.

The proposed changes are also expected to streamline regulatory processes and create a more investment-friendly policy environment while supporting the country's long-term economic growth objectives.

Veteran educationist, former Governor Padma Shri D. Y. Patil dies at 90

Mumbai: Veteran educationist, philanthropist and former Governor of Tripura, Bihar and West Bengal, Dr Dnyandeo Yashwantrao Patil, died in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, on Tuesday at the age of 90, family sources said.

Fondly known as "Dada", Dr Patil devoted several decades of his life to public service, education, healthcare and social welfare. His death marks the end of a long public career that spanned politics, constitutional responsibilities and the expansion of professional education in Maharashtra and other parts of the country.

Born on October 22, 1935, at Ambap in Kolhapur district, Dr Patil came from an agricultural family. He pursued higher education and obtained an MA, LLB and PhD. He also stood first class first in the law

examination conducted by Shivaji University, according to his official biographical profile.

Dr Patil began his public life at the grassroots level and was elected to the Kolhapur Municipal Council as a Congress candidate in 1957. He subsequently served as an MLA from Panhala in Maharashtra from 1967 to 1978.

His political career was followed by a wider role in public life when he was appointed Governor of Tripura. He took oath as Governor on November 27, 2009, and served in the post until March 21, 2013. During his tenure, he emphasised development, education and improving socio-economic conditions in the northeastern state.

Dr Patil was subsequently appointed Governor of Bihar and

took charge on March 22, 2013. He remained in office until November 26, 2014. He also served as Governor of West Bengal with additional charge from July 3 to July 17, 2014.

A veteran of the Congress for several decades, Dr Patil later joined the Nationalist Congress Party in December 2018.

However, it was in the field of education that Dr Patil left his most enduring imprint.

He established the D Y Patil Group in 1983 with the vision of making quality education accessible to a larger section of society. What began with institutions in professional education subsequently developed into a large network spanning medicine, engineering, management, sports, schools and

other disciplines.

His contribution to social service was formally recognised when he was conferred the Padma Shri in 1991. The official Padma Awards notification lists Dr Dnyandeo Yashwantrao Patil under the field of Social Work from Maharashtra.

Dr Patil was also closely associated with healthcare and charitable initiatives. Hospitals and medical institutions established under his educational vision sought to combine professional medical training with healthcare services, strengthening the link between education and public welfare.

His public career and educational work reflected his long-standing belief that education could serve as an instrument of social transformation. His institutions



expanded opportunities in fields such as medicine, engineering, management, sports and allied professional disciplines.

Dr Patil is survived by his family, including his sons Vijay D Patil, Dr Ajeenkya D Y Patil and Satej Patil, besides other family members.

PM Modi, Rahul Gandhi condole death of D.Y. Patil

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi condoled the death of veteran educationist, philanthropist, Padma Shri awardee and former governor Dr. Dnyandeo Yashwantrao (D.Y.) Patil, who passed away due to old age-related illness today.

PM Modi expressed deep grief over demise of D Y Patil, saying in his condolence message "Shree D Y Patil Ji was at the forefront of serving society through philanthropy and education in particular. He always worked to improve the lives of others, especially the poor. Pained by his demise, my thoughts are

with his family in this sad hour. Om Shanti."

While, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said in his message, "the news of demise of former governor, renowned educationist and social worker D Y Patil is extremely heartbreaking. His contribution in the fields of education and public service will always remain in memories."

"I express my deepest condolences to all the grieving family members," Gandhi added in his condolence message.



Maha Cabinet unleashes major welfare blitz: farmer scheme extended, new courts sanctioned, Municipal billing centralized

Mumbai: In a high-stakes administrative overhaul aimed at grassroots empowerment and judicial expansion, the Maharashtra state cabinet cleared a sweeping package of public-welfare decisions. The cabinet's resolutions inject fresh momentum into agricultural safety nets, administrative transparency, and regional justice delivery across the state.

The state has granted a crucial three-year extension to the vital Gopinath Munde Farmer Accident Security

Concession Expanding its Scheme. Administration Department has greenlit the creation of



umbrella, the government has now formally integrated landless farm laborers and women farmers into the fold, ensuring broader grassroots coverage. To clear massive backlogs and streamline transparency, the General

three new State Information Commissioner posts within the Maharashtra State Information Commission, accompanied by dedicated

In a major administrative cleanup, Mumbai's civic framework will see greater

coordination as all state government offices and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) utility tabs transition to a centralized joint-billing mechanism operated via the BEST undertaking. Bolstering the judicial infrastructure—particularly prioritizing the Marathwada region—the cabinet sanctioned a slew of new courts, tribunals, and public prosecutor offices:

Sillod (Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar): New District and Additional Sessions

Court, alongside a Public Prosecutor's office;

Kinvat (Nanded): District and Additional Sessions Court, Senior Division Civil Court, and a Public Prosecutor's office; Kaij (Beed): A brand new Senior Division Civil Court; Chandwad (Nashik): New Senior Division Civil Court; and Pimpri-Chinchwad (Pune): A dedicated Special Motor Vehicles Court to tackle rising vehicular congestion and accident-related litigation



also claimed that thousands of students in Jharkhand were protesting over examination-related issues, but the Congress had neither spoken, in their support nor appeared to be raising the matter in Parliament. He added that no placards related to the Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC) examination issue had been seen in the hands of Congress leaders because, according to him, "this is selective outrage."

Kejriwal stopped on way to PM's residence during protest against E20 Petrol, stages road sit-in

New Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday was stopped by Delhi Police while leading a march to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence to submit more than 2.33 lakh public petitions demanding the withdrawal of E20-blended petrol.

Accompanied by around 100 people whom the party described as being affected by the fuel policy, Kejriwal staged a sit-in on the road after the delegation was denied permission to meet the Prime Minister. The protest ended after police took custody of the petitions, which the party said numbered 2,33,238, and informed the delegation that the Prime Minister would not meet them. Addressing a press conference later, Kejriwal accused the Centre of ignoring public concerns and alleged that the E20 policy was being implemented under pressure from US President Donald Trump. "PM Modi, what is the point of showing your strength against us? Show the same courage in front of Trump and stop imposing E20 on the country. Otherwise, the nation will once again be compelled to launch a major movement," he said.

In a post on X after the protest, Kejriwal said the delegation had attempted



to meet the Prime Minister with over 2.33 lakh petitions opposing E20 but was stopped by police. He added that all the petitions had now been sent to the Prime Minister.

Kejriwal said the party had sought an appointment with the Prime Minister nearly a month ago to discuss concerns surrounding E20-blended petrol but had received no response. He described the refusal to meet the delegation as evidence of what he called a "dictatorial attitude." Questioning the rationale behind the policy, the former Delhi chief minister claimed that the Centre had acknowledged in Parliament that E20 fuel reduced fuel efficiency and affected certain engine components, particularly rubber parts. He asked why such a fuel was being made mandatory despite these concerns.

"The BJP-led Central Government itself admitted in Parliament that fuel efficiency decreases and engine components are affected. If mileage is reducing and

engines are being damaged, why is it being imposed?" he asked.

Kejriwal further alleged that the policy was intended to facilitate imports of ethanol from the United States rather than benefit Indian farmers. According to him, the government's claims that E20 would save foreign exchange and support domestic agriculture did not stand scrutiny. "It is not Indian farmers who are benefiting but American farmers. We appeal to the Prime Minister to stop buying ethanol from the United States and learn to withstand Trump's pressure," he said. Warning of an intensified agitation, Kejriwal said the party would soon announce its next course of action if the Centre did not reconsider the policy. "If E20 is not withdrawn, the country will once again be compelled to launch a major movement," he said, adding that citizens would have to "come out on the streets on a very large scale" if they wanted relief from the policy.

Kharge demands PM's response on Ram Temple Trust allegations, Opposition targets Amit Shah's absence in Parliament



New Delhi: The Opposition on Tuesday intensified its attack on the Centre over allegations related to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, with Congress President and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge demanding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi respond in Parliament to accusations concerning

alleged irregularities in donations, land transactions and the management of the trust.

Raising the issue in the Rajya Sabha, Kharge said the allegations involving valuable offerings, cash donations, land purchases and the administration of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust were a matter of concern for crores of devotees across the country.

He asserted that the trust had been constituted by the Central government following an announcement made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Parliament and noted that more than 70 acres of land had been handed over to the trust by the Centre. Kharge also pointed out that the Prime Minister had personally participated in every major event associated with the Ram

temple, from the bhoomi puja to the consecration ceremony.

"These allegations concern the faith of crores of devotees. The trust was formed by the Central government, whose creation was announced by the Prime Minister himself in Parliament. The Centre handed over more than 70 acres of land to the trust, and the Prime Minister participated in every important occasion from the bhoomi puja to the pran pratishtha. In such a situation, the Prime Minister cannot escape accountability over serious allegations, including theft of offerings. He should tell the House where agencies like the Enforcement Directorate, the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Income Tax Department are. Those who have looted in the name of Lord Ram should

apologise to the entire country and stop misleading the nation," Kharge said.

The issue also triggered protests by Opposition Members of Parliament in the Parliament House complex, where MPs questioned the absence of union Home Minister Amit Shah from Parliament and raised slogans over the alleged theft of offerings at the Ayodhya Ram Mandir.

Joining the demonstration, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party was losing public support.

"The people of this country are tired of the BJP. People understand everything, and this is only the beginning," Priyanka Gandhi Vadra told reporters in the Parliament complex while participating in the protest.

The protest came amid continued

confrontations between the government and the Opposition during the ongoing Monsoon Session of Parliament, with several contentious issues disrupting proceedings.

Earlier in the day, Congress MP Manickam Tagore submitted an Adjournment Motion notice in the Lok Sabha seeking suspension of the House's scheduled business to discuss the police action during the student protest held at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on July 20, 2026.

Describing the matter as one of "definite urgent public importance", Tagore urged that union Home Minister Amit Shah make a detailed statement in Parliament explaining the circumstances under which force was allegedly used against the protesters.

"I seek leave to move an Adjournment Motion to discuss a matter of urgent public importance concerning the police action during the student protest held at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, on 20 July 2026," Tagore said in the notice.

The Congress has consistently accused the government of using excessive force against students protesting over recruitment delays, examination irregularities and paper leak controversies, while also demanding accountability from the Home Ministry for the police action. Tuesday's protests and parliamentary interventions added to the growing list of issues over which the Opposition has sought discussions during the Monsoon Session, placing the government under sustained pressure both inside and outside Parliament.

MMRDA Metro Network Surpasses 300 Million Passenger Journeys

Mumbai : The public transit system operated by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) crossed a major operational threshold on August 3, 2026, recording over 300 million passenger trips since launching in April 2022.

The milestone covers operations across Metro Line 2A, Line 7, Line 2B Phase 1, and Line 9 Phase 1.

MMRDA reported that the most recent 50 million commuter journeys were completed in only 179 days, representing the fastest expansion phase for the network since its inception. Average daily patronage increased to approximately 2.79 lakh passengers, marking a 3.35 percent rise despite weekend fluctuations and seasonal shifts. Authority officials attributed this sustained growth



to the April 7, 2026 launch of Metro Line 2B Phase 1 and Metro Line 9 Phase 1, which added nine new stations to the transit map and broadened regional connectivity.

The rapid transit network operated under the Mumbai Metropolitan Re-

gion Development Authority (MMRDA) crossed a major operational milestone on August 3, 2026, recording over 300 million (30 crore) passenger journeys since its initial public rollout.

This achievement highlights the expanding role of modern rail infrastructure in

transforming daily mobility across India's financial capital.

Municipal officials and urban transit planners celebrated the landmark as a clear reflection of growing public reliance on high-capacity, climate-controlled transit options.

Mobile Units Deployed for Cancer Screenings in Thane District

Thane : The Public Health Department of Maharashtra has introduced a month-long mobile diagnostic campaign throughout Thane district to enhance early cancer detection and preventive medical care.

A state-of-the-art 'Cancer Van' is scheduled to traverse major municipal sectors throughout August, delivering complimentary screenings, medical consultations, and preliminary checks straight to local residents.

This health drive prioritizes the identification of three widespread malignancies: oral, breast, and cervical cancers.

For oral health, the mobile clinic offers detailed visual checks alongside on-site biopsies for suspicious tis-

sue, lumps, or non-healing sores. Breast health checks involve professional Clinical Breast Examinations (CBE), while cervical screenings utilize private Pap Smear testing facilities built within the specialized vehicle.

The Public Health Department of Maharashtra has deployed a specialized, state-of-the-art 'Cancer Van' across Thane district for a month-long preventive diagnostic campaign throughout August.

The mobile initiative brings complimentary medical checks, direct consultations, and diagnostic screenings straight to urban and semi-urban neighborhoods, eliminating logistical barriers for residents seeking early detection services.

Mumbai Drinking Water Reserves Hold Stable at Nearly 90 Percent

Mumbai : Water levels across the seven primary reservoirs serving Mumbai held at 89.54 percent of total live storage capacity, containing 12,95,982 million liters according to data from the BMC Hydraulic Engineer's Department. Despite a minor drop from the 90.06 percent recorded the previous day, water availability remains secure following moderate pre-

cipitation across catchment zones.

Individual reservoir metrics show Modak Sagar, Vihar, and Tulsi Lake at 100 percent capacity, while Tansa stands at 99.14 percent, Middle Vaitarna at 91.05 percent, Bhatsa at 87.64 percent, and Upper Vaitarna at 80.53 percent. Combined storage across the main Vaitarna system lakes reached 90.96 percent

of capacity. Over the recent 24-hour window, catchment rainfall measurements ranged from 63 mm at Upper Vaitarna to 14 mm at Modak Sagar, bringing the seasonal rainfall cumulative total at the Bhandup Complex to 2,372 mm.

Water levels across the seven primary reservoirs supplying drinking water to Mumbai held steady at 89.54 percent of total live

storage capacity, bringing total available reserves to 12,95,982 million liters according to official data released by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) Hydraulic Engineer's Department. The overall water stock experienced a minor downward adjustment from the 90.06 percent recorded during the preceding 24-hour evaluation period, dropping by

roughly 7,518 million liters as heavy downpours briefly eased across key catchment regions. Despite this slight contraction, civic officials emphasized that the current storage parameters represent a highly secure situation for the metropolis, easily surpassing the water stock figures recorded on the exact same calendar date over the previous two years.

Leaders Across Maharashtra Mourn Passing of Educationist Dr. D. Y. Patil

Mumbai : Prominent political figures across Maharashtra expressed condolences following the demise of Padma Shri Dr. D. Y. Patil, founder of the D. Y. Patil Group and former Governor of Bihar, Tripura, and West Bengal. Political leaders commended his long-standing legacy in expanding higher education, regional healthcare infrastructure, and public development programs throughout his life.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde described his passing as an irreparable loss to the state's academic and civic communities.

BEST Approves Purchase of 1,500 AC Electric Midi Buses

Mumbai : The BEST Committee approved the procurement of 1,500 PM E-Drive air-conditioned electric midi buses to enhance last-mile transit options and expand zero-emission travel across Mumbai.

The fleet upgrade aims to bolster feeder networks connecting to metro stations and support the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs' target of bringing 10,000 public buses to the city by 2027, following earlier authorization from Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on October 30, 2025.

The nine-meter electric vehicles feature a 400 mm ultra-low floor design suitable for wheelchair access and narrow urban corridors.

Each unit is built with Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) battery technology, air suspension systems, fast DC charging capabilities, 360-degree CCTV cameras, Intelligent Transport Management Systems (ITMS), and automated fire detection and suppression tools.

Under the approved rollout, GreenCell Mobility will supply 1,050 EKA buses while Sai Green will deliver 450 Switch EiV9 buses, with deliveries phased across four batches of 225, 375, 450, and 450 units throughout 2026 and 2027 across various BEST depots.

The Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) Committee has formally approved the procurement and induction of 1,500 air-conditioned electric midi buses under the Union Government's PM E-Drive Scheme.

Editorial

New Taxes, New Test

Changes in tax laws are not merely a matter of figures or the budget; they are directly linked to the pockets of every citizen and the future of every industry. In the new era of the digital economy, India has taken a major decision to modernize its tax system. However, the true verdict on whether a law is modern or not is not delivered in Parliament; it emerges from the experience of the ordinary taxpayer. Therefore, the biggest question facing these new tax reforms today is whether they will simplify the system or make it even more complex.

The 'Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026' introduced in the Lok Sabha to give a new direction to the country's digital financial ecosystem and modernize the tax structure must be regarded as a crucial step in India's economic journey. Passed amidst opposition uproar and via voice vote, this bill is not merely a legislative formality but a strategic effort to align with the needs of evolving technology and a rapidly growing digital economy. Through this bill, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has proposed comprehensive amendments to three significant statutes: the 'Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007', the 'Income Tax Act, 2025', and the 'Finance Act, 2026'. Notably, this move aims to convert the 'Income Tax (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026' issued on June 5, 2026 into a permanent law. While replacing the ordinance issued on June 5, the government has clarified that the bill's primary objectives are to boost foreign investment, simplify the regulatory framework for digital transaction systems, and provide strategic support to key manufacturing sectors in the country. Given the rapid transformation of the Indian economy in recent years, reforming tax laws and the financial framework had become an imperative. Considering India's global success in digital payments and the emerging opportunities for foreign investment, it was essential to liberate the economy from the web of archaic and complex regulations. Against this backdrop, the new amendment is welcome, as it aims to foster a business-friendly environment, simplify statutory procedures, and boost international investor confidence in India's economic stability. However, when such significant tax laws with far-reaching consequences are passed amidst parliamentary uproar and without adequate, in-depth deliberation, it raises questions about the quality and inclusivity of parliamentary proceedings in a democracy. The failure to engage in thorough deliberation on legislation capable of reshaping the nation's entire tax system solely due to political discord must be viewed as a significant flaw in the democratic process.

A close examination of the bill's key provisions reveals a clear intent to streamline administrative and regulatory processes. The legislative changes offer much-needed relief to digital-transaction-based businesses and new startups by addressing the legal and administrative hurdles they previously faced. Provisions offering special strategic protection and incentives to the manufacturing sector will provide fresh momentum to initiatives like 'Make in India.' There is no doubt that establishing a more transparent and simplified regulatory framework for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) will help attract international capital to the Indian market. Ultimately, however, the success of these reforms will depend not merely on the laws as written, but on their actual implementation. It has often been observed in the past that laws introduced to simplify the tax system have ended up causing greater inconvenience at the implementation stage due to complex bureaucratic rules. Therefore, the administration must ensure that taxpayers and the business community do not face any undue hardship during the actual implementation of this new law.

While adopting this new path of economic reforms, it is equally crucial to assess the broader social and economic implications. In a country like India, characterized by a vast population and significant inequality, the benefits of tax reforms must not remain confined to large industrialists or a select few companies in the digital sector. While technology facilitates easier tax collection and administration, a key question remains: will the country's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) find it easy to adapt to this new framework? As the digital economy expands, challenges such as cybersecurity, data privacy, and digital literacy are becoming increasingly acute. Although amendments to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, claim to bring greater speed and clarity to digital transactions, it is imperative to establish robust legal and technical safeguards to address the system's technical glitches and security risks. While passing legislation amidst parliamentary chaos and opposition boycotts may be politically convenient for the ruling dispensation, it poses a grave threat to the sustainability of the nation's economic policies. Sensitive matters like tax reforms which directly impact the finances of every citizen should ideally be advanced through all-party consensus and in-depth study.

Rather than engaging in opposition for the sake of it, opposition parties were also expected to offer well-researched and constructive suggestions regarding amendments that strengthen the economy. The prevalence of a chaotic atmosphere in Parliament, rather than an objective scrutiny of economic policies, undermines the principles of democratic accountability. Even though the government claims its task is complete after passing the bill, the true test of these legislative amendments will lie in their actual implementation. The value of any law or reform is determined not merely by how modern or appealing it appears on paper, but by the extent to which it offers ease and convenience to the common taxpayer and the most marginalized sections of society. Striking a balance between transparency, accountability, and the fair rights of taxpayers while modernizing the digital financial ecosystem should be the primary duty of any progressive government. While modernizing laws is crucial, it is equally important to ensure that the administrative machinery implementing them becomes more sensitive, transparent, and citizen-centric. The tax system should be designed such that industrialists find it easy to invest, small entrepreneurs do not feel burdened by regulations, and the common taxpayer views the administration with trust rather than fear. Only if these new tax laws instead of serving merely as tools to boost government revenue genuinely foster 'Ease of Doing Business' for the nation's traders, industrialists, and ordinary citizens, can the true objective of these legislative amendments be considered fulfilled. Otherwise, this new legal framework despite its technological veneer risks getting trapped in the same old, oppressive bureaucratic structures, reducing the entire claim of modernization to nothing more than empty administrative paperwork.

On International Clouded Leopard Day, India Strengthens Conservation through Dedicated Conservation Action Plan for the Wild Cat

On the occasion of International Clouded Leopard Day, the Government of India reaffirmed its commitment to protecting one of Asia's most elusive and endangered wild cats by implementing the Clouded Leopard Conservation Action Plan (CAP). Developed under the Government of India-GEF-UNDP initiative, the Action Plan represents a comprehensive roadmap aimed at ensuring the long-term survival of the species through habitat conservation, scientific research, community participation and strengthened wildlife protection measures.

The Conservation Action Plan was formally released during the 91st meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life (SCN-BWL), held in Coimbatore during the second week of July 2026.

The initiative reflects India's growing emphasis on science-based wildlife conservation and integrated landscape management to safeguard vulnerable species across their natural habitats.

The Clouded Leopard is among Asia's most secretive and least-studied big cats, primarily inhabiting the dense forests of Northeast India.

Its survival is closely linked to healthy forest ecosystems, making the protection of its habitat equally

important for conserving the region's extraordinary biodiversity and ecological balance.

The newly launched Action Plan provides a strategic framework for conserving the species through habitat protection, restoration of degraded forests, scientific monitoring, strengthening ecological connectivity and increasing public participation in conservation efforts. It seeks to establish a coordinated approach involving government agencies, researchers, conservation organisations and local communities.

One of the central features of the Action Plan is its emphasis on landscape-level conservation rather than focusing only on isolated protected areas. This approach recognises that Clouded Leopards require large, connected forest landscapes to move, hunt and breed successfully, making habitat connectivity a critical conservation priority.

As part of this strategy, the Action Plan identifies 14 priority conservation landscapes across Northeast India. These landscapes have been selected based on their ecological significance and their importance for sustaining viable Clouded Leopard populations. Conservation efforts in these areas will include habitat restoration and protection of wildlife corridors linking fragmented for-

ests.

Restoring forest connectivity forms another major pillar of the programme. By strengthening ecological corridors between protected areas and adjoining forests, the government aims to reduce habitat fragmentation, improve genetic exchange between animal populations and enhance the long-term

improved coordination among wildlife authorities working to protect the species.

Scientific research and monitoring constitute another key aspect of the Conservation Action Plan. The programme introduces standardised monitoring protocols using modern tools such as camera traps,

combat wildlife crime. Enhanced surveillance, intelligence gathering and coordinated enforcement efforts are expected to reduce illegal hunting and trafficking, which continue to pose serious threats to many wildlife species across the region.

Recognising that front-line forest personnel play a crucial role in conservation, the programme places considerable emphasis on capacity building and skill development. Forest officials and field staff will receive specialised training, while digital tools such as the M-STrIPES (Monitoring System for Tigers - Intensive Protection and Ecological Status) smart application will be used to improve patrolling, monitoring and field-level data collection.

Another important component of the Action Plan is its focus on community-based conservation. The programme acknowledges that local communities living near forests are indispensable partners in wildlife protection. By promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities and encouraging community participation, the initiative seeks to reduce human-wildlife conflict while fostering long-term stewardship of natural resources.

Given that Clouded Leopards are distributed across multiple countries in South and Southeast Asia,

the Conservation Action Plan also highlights the importance of transboundary cooperation. Collaboration with neighbouring range countries will facilitate coordinated conservation strategies, information sharing and joint efforts to protect habitats extending across international borders.

Climate resilience has been integrated into the Action Plan to address emerging environmental challenges. Conservation strategies will incorporate adaptive management practices that help ecosystems and wildlife respond to changing climatic conditions, ensuring that forest landscapes remain resilient in the face of future environmental pressures.

The conservation of the Clouded Leopard extends far beyond protecting a single species. As an apex forest predator and an indicator of healthy ecosystems, its survival is closely connected with the preservation of Northeast India's rich forests, biodiversity and ecological heritage. Through the Clouded Leopard Conservation Action Plan, India is adopting a holistic conservation model that combines habitat restoration, advanced scientific monitoring, technological innovation, community participation and international collaboration to secure the future of this remarkable wild cat and the forests it inhabits.



Dipka OC: Powering India's Growth through Scale, Efficiency and Sustainable Mining



Dipka OCP of South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) stands out as one of the most vivid reflections of the remarkable transformation of India's coal mining sector. From producing barely 1 million tonne of coal in 1992, Dipka OC has evolved into one of the largest coal-producing complexes in the country, recording an all-time high production of 37.5 million tonnes and despatch of 39.43 million tonnes during FY 2025-26. With the recent enhancement of Environmental Clearance to 40 MTPA and a well-defined roadmap towards 60 MTPA, Dipka OC today stands as a strategic national asset, combining scale, efficiency and sustainability in equal measure.

A Strong Start to FY 2026-27

Building upon last year's record performance, Dipka OC has begun the current financial year with equally impressive momentum.

Up to 25 July 2026, the mine has produced 12.66 million tonnes of coal, achieving 104% of the progressive production target. Even more encouraging is the 30.5% year-on-year growth in coal production compared to the corresponding period of the previous year, reflecting substantial improvement in mine productivity and equipment utilisation. Coal dispatch has been equally robust, touching 13.87 million tonnes, exceeding the progressive target by achieving 109%, thereby ensuring uninterrupted fuel supply to thermal power stations and industrial consumers.

The seamless synchronization between coal production and despatch demonstrates Dipka's operational

maturity, where mining, transportation and logistics function as an integrated value chain rather than as isolated activities.

Creating Value Beyond Production

While production remains the principal indicator of mining performance, Dipka's success is equally reflected in its financial contribution.

During FY 2025-26, the mine generated an overall profit of ₹3,230.91 crore, making it one of the strongest profit centres within SECL. Profitability has improved not merely because of higher production but also due to better cost management and enhanced operational efficiency. With profit per tonne increasing to ₹827, the mine has demonstrated that large-scale production can be achieved without proportionate escalation in operating costs. These financial outcomes underline Dipka's growing contribution to Coal India Limited's overall profitability.

Strengthening the Foundation for Future Growth

Behind Dipka's impressive production performance lies a series of strategic initiatives that have strengthened the mine's long-term production capability. Among these, land acquisition and rehabilitation have emerged as the most significant enablers for sustained capacity expansion.

Following the successful possession of Malgaon village, the Area has made substantial progress towards rehabilitation and resettlement of Hardi Bazar, one of the largest and most complex R&R initiatives in the region. Rather than viewing rehabilitation merely as a

statutory obligation, Dipka has adopted a development-oriented approach by initiating development of a well-planned rehabilitation township equipped with essential civic infrastructure, including roads, schools, healthcare facilities, community amenities and public utilities. This participative and transparent approach has facilitated progressive land availability for mining while strengthening stakeholder confidence and social acceptance of the project.

Infrastructure that Supports High Production

Large-scale mining demands equally robust evacuation infrastructure. Dipka possesses one of the most diversified coal evacuation systems in Coal India Limited, comprising MGR-connected silos, First Mile Connectivity (FMC) silos, railway loading facilities and road transport systems. This integrated network provides operational flexibility and enables uninterrupted dispatch to major consumers, including NTPC Sipat and several thermal power stations across western and central India. Efficient evacuation has ensured that increasing production is promptly translated into higher consumer supplies without creating stock accumulation at the pithead.

Technology Driving Productivity

Dipka's remarkable production journey has been powered by sustained investment in technology and modernization.

The mine has progressively upgraded its mining systems with 42-cubic metre electric rope shovels, high-capacity surface miners, long in-pit belt conveyor systems, advanced silo load-

ing facilities, drone-based mine monitoring and digital mine management platforms. These technologies have significantly improved equipment productivity, optimized mine planning, reduced operational delays and strengthened monitoring of mining activities. As production volumes continue to grow, technology remains one of the strongest differentiators enabling Dipka to maintain high operational efficiency.

Responsible Mining for Sustainable Growth

Dipka has demonstrated that high production and environmental stewardship can progress together.

The Area has implemented an array of initiatives including Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Systems (CAAQMS), fog cannon-based dust suppression, wheel washing systems,

look of the Area.

Looking Beyond 40 Million Tonnes

The recent enhancement of Environmental Clearance (EC) to 40 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) marks a significant milestone in the evolution of Coal India Limited's flagship Dipka Open Cast Mine. Rather than representing the culmination of its development, the expanded clearance lays the foundation for the mine's next phase of growth, positioning it to play an even greater role in meeting India's rising energy requirements.

Backed by a well-defined long-term development strategy, Dipka is now preparing for a substantial increase in production capacity. The mine has outlined an ambitious roadmap to expand its annual production capability to 60 MTPA, reflecting the government's

growth with the welfare of local communities through rehabilitation measures and livelihood support.

Infrastructure development also forms a major component of the expansion strategy. Investments in mine infrastructure, transportation networks, coal handling systems and supporting facilities are expected to improve operational efficiency while enabling the mine to safely manage significantly higher production volumes in the coming years.

With these essential building blocks already in place, Dipka possesses the operational capability required to sustain long-term growth. The combination of resource availability, modern infrastructure, technological advancement and strategic planning provides a strong platform for achieving future production targets. Over the years, Dipka has emerged as one of the country's most successful mining operations through scientific mine planning and efficient resource management. Careful geological assessment, systematic extraction methods and effective production scheduling have helped maximise coal recovery while ensuring safe mining practices. Technological innovation has played a vital role in transforming the mine into a modern, high-performing operation. The adoption of advanced mining equipment, digital monitoring systems, mechanised operations and data-driven decision-making has significantly enhanced productivity while improving workplace safety and operational reliability.



SP and Opposition's conduct in UP assembly is uncivil, unconstitutional, and shameful: CM Yogi

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has strongly criticised Samajwadi Party legislators and other Opposition members in the Legislative Assembly on the second day of the Monsoon Session for their undemocratic and unconstitutional act.

Launching a sharp attack on what he described as the uncivil conduct of SP legislators, he stated, "The conduct of the Samajwadi Party and the Opposition is unconstitutional and shameful. By disrupting the proceedings of the House, the Opposition is playing with the interests of 25 crore people of the state, and every resident of Uttar Pradesh is witnessing it."

He said, "During the Monsoon Session, every member had an excellent opportunity to discuss issues concerning the sentiments and interests of 25 crore people in the House. However, those who have



no faith in democratic values insult and undermine all institutions that strengthen parliamentary democracy. This conduct of the Samajwadi Party and the Opposition is not only unconstitutional but also shameful."

The Chief Minister added that the agenda of the House had already been finalised during the meeting of party leaders and the



Business Advisory Committee.

However, members of the Opposition did not show interest in even a single legislative proposal or supplementary budget-related proposal listed on the agenda. Instead, they are trying to waste the valuable time of the House by raising unnecessary issues.

The Chief Minister stat-

ed, "Even before the House convened, during the meeting of party leaders, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister and I had assured everyone that every proposal brought before the House under the Rules would be discussed, and the government would respond to them. However, the Samajwadi Party and other Opposition parties have no faith in discussion,

constitutional values, or the high traditions of the House. By continuously disrupting the proceedings of the House, they are playing with the interests of the state's 25 crore people."

In his address, the Chief Minister assured the House that the government is prepared to discuss every issue.

He informed, "The government wishes to hold meaningful discussions on every issue that the Chair invites for discussion under the Rules because our government is committed to public welfare."

However, Opposition parties have never believed in democratic values. Instead, they deliberately seek to undermine the dignity of the House and make a mockery of democracy. They are continuously vitiating the atmosphere of the House.

The people of Uttar Pradesh are witnessing this undemocratic conduct of the Samajwadi Party."

No new members for now, says Bengal BJP amid defection buzz

Kolkata: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which recently formed the government in West Bengal after its victory in the Assembly elections, has temporarily suspended its membership drive and ruled out the induction of leaders or workers from other political parties until further notice, party sources said on Tuesday. The decision comes amid growing political speculation over a possible influx of leaders from rival parties, particularly the Trinamool Congress (TMC), into the BJP following the change of government. However, the party's state leadership has made it clear that organisational discipline will take precedence over expansion at this stage. State BJP president Samik Bhattacharya had earlier announced that the enrolment of new members would remain suspended. The same message has also been conveyed by the party's national general secretary and West Bengal in-charge, Sunil

Bansal. According to BJP sources, no new memberships will be issued at any organisational level in the state, including morchas, divisions, or district units, until fresh instructions are received from the central leadership. Even the renewal of existing memberships has been put on hold for the time being. Clarifying the party's stand, BJP state spokesperson Debajit Sarkar said the party follows a well-defined organisational process for granting membership, which is initiated only after approval from the central leadership. "Since the formation of the BJP government in West Bengal on May 4, no fresh membership has been issued in the state. Therefore, anyone claiming to have become a BJP member during this period is not recognised by the party. At present, only those holding valid memberships issued earlier are considered members of the BJP," Sarkar said. He added that district-level committees

constituted by the party are currently reviewing the records of existing members, membership renewals and the framework for future enrolment. The reports submitted by these committees will form the basis of the central leadership's decision on when and how the membership drive will resume. Sarkar also stressed that supporting the BJP does not automatically make an individual a party member. "The BJP is not merely a political party but a large organisational platform working across different sections of society. Many people may support the party, but membership can only be obtained by completing the prescribed organisational process. That process remains suspended at present," he said. The announcement is being viewed in political circles as a clear message that the BJP is unwilling to encourage large-scale defections immediately after assuming office in the state.

Bihar bypoll verdict reflects public anger against BJP government: RJD

Patna: Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) working President and Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Assembly, Tejaswi Prasad Yadav, on Tuesday said the Bankipur Assembly bypoll verdict reflected growing public resentment against the BJP government and Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, alleging that the government led by Choudhary failed to deliver during its 100 to 150 days in office.

Addressing a press con-

ference here, Yadav said the people had lost faith in Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary and the BJP government, claiming the bypoll outcome was a clear expression of public anger against the government's policies. Responding to questions over the RJD candidate forfeiting his security deposit, Yadav said his party fully accepted the people's mandate but maintained that the verdict also exposed widespread dissatisfaction with the BJP-led govern-

ment.

He claimed that within about 150 days of assuming office, the BJP under Samrat Choudhary had suffered defeats in two major electoral contests, including an MLC election and the Bankipur Assembly bypoll. Launching a scathing attack on the Chief Minister, Yadav alleged that Choudhary had failed to undertake a single significant developmental initiative since taking charge. He accused the government of

pursuing "negative politics" rather than governance and development."

The Chief Minister has only indulged in rhetoric. There has been no positive politics or visible governance," Yadav alleged.

The RJD leader further charged that the government was targeting the Opposition instead of addressing public concerns and asserted that its failure to perform had prompted voters to "punish" the BJP in the election.

CM Suwendu Adhikari meets NCPI MPs in Delhi, focuses on development; alliance questions persist

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari held an hour-long meeting with MPs of the Nationalist Congress Progressive India (NCPI) at Banga Bhawan in New Delhi on Tuesday afternoon.

Though questions over the party's equation with the BJP and the NDA continued to surface, the NCPI maintained that discussions centred on development projects for their respective constituencies.

Apart from Deb, all 20 NCPI MPs, who had defected from the Trinamool Congress, attended the meeting.

Sources in the party said that Deb was not present because of a pre-scheduled shooting appointment.

Addressing reporters after the meeting, NCPI MP Satabdi Roy said the discussions were confined to development-related issues.

"We spoke only about the development of our area. The Chief Minister asked us to submit proposals. We will meet him again at Nabanna and place our proposals," Roy said.

Dismissing the speculation that NCPI MPs would



formally join the BJP, Roy said, "There was no discussion regarding this. We are in the NDA, so there should be no confusion," she said.

The meeting was also attended by three BJP Rajya Sabha MPs — Sukhendu Sekhar Roy, Sushmita Deb, and Prakashchik Baraik — who had resigned from the Trinamool Congress before joining the BJP.

Speaking to reporters, Sukhendu Sekhar Roy described the interaction as a courtesy meeting.

"This was only a courtesy call. We are in the BJP, so there is no confusion regarding my presence in the meeting," he said. The meeting came hours after the NDA parliamentary meeting at the

the BJP nor in the NDA, and so we did not attend the NDA meeting. But we will always speak with the Chief Minister because it is about the development of our district and our area," Taher said.

Khalilur Rehman also underlined the group's political position, saying, "We will not support anything that goes against the interest of the Muslim community."

Despite the absence of the three MPs from the NDA meeting, the NCPI leadership sought to play down the issue.

Sudip Bandopadhyay said the MPs might have their own constraints and that the party respected their position.

"They might have some issues and we honour that. The Chief Minister is also aware of their limitations. They attended the meeting with him and spoke about the development of their areas. Their proposals were taken seriously," Bandopadhyay said.

"We need to understand that at the ground level there are still negotiations to be held. There is nothing wrong with that," he added.

Manipur CM urges NIT graduates to lead nation

Imphal: Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Tuesday reaffirmed the State Government's commitment to establishing a permanent campus for NIT Manipur.

He said the Government is actively working towards finding a suitable place while attending the 13th Convocation of the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Manipur at the City Convention Centre, here.

Addressing the graduating students, the Chief Minister congratulated them on successfully completing their academic journey and wished them success in their future endeavours.

He said that NIT Manipur has a vital role to play in the development of both the State and the Nation.

He also acknowledged the support of Rameshwar Singh, MLA of Kakching Assembly Constituency, to facilitate land for the permanent campus at the earliest.

Highlighting the importance of technical education in achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, Khemchand said that graduates from disciplines such as Civil Engineering, Computer Science and Engineering, Electronics and Communication Engineering, Electrical Engineering and Mechanical En-

gineering will play a significant role in nation-building.

He expressed confidence that institutions like NIT Manipur would contribute immensely towards realising the Prime Minister's vision of Viksit Bharat.

Describing NIT Manipur as one of the emerging premier technical institutions in the North Eastern Region, the Chief Minister urged the graduating students to strive for excellence, become future administrators, innovators and leaders, and dedicate their knowledge and skills towards the progress of Viksit Bharat and Viksit Manipur.

MMU raises concern over demolition threat to Jauhar University

Srinagar: Mutahida Majlis-e-Ulema (MMU), the largest amalgam of religious, educational and social organisations in Jammu & Kashmir, on Tuesday expressed serious concern over recent developments affecting Muslim students and educational institutions, particularly the threat of large-scale demolition at Mohammad Ali Jauhar University in Rampur Uttar Pradesh.

The MMU headed by Kashmir's chief cleric and Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said that re-

ports of the proposed demolition of 38 out of 40 buildings of Mohammad Ali Jauhar University, where nearly 3,000 students are pursuing their education, were deeply disturbing.

"While the demolition order has reportedly received interim relief, the continuing uncertainty over the future of the institution remains a matter of grave concern," MMU said in a statement.

The MMU said that Kashmiri students studying at the university approached them regarding the matter, directly affecting them and

their future, and the future of their families who send them to outside institutions for education.

The MMU said that whatever legal or regulatory violations may be alleged against an institution, there are established legal and administrative mechanisms to address them.

"The future of thousands of innocent students cannot be bulldozed along with university buildings. Students have no role in such disputes and must not be made to pay the price for them," the statement said

Odisha Police ink five-year pact with NFSU to bolster cyber policing

Bhubaneswar : The CID-Crime Branch of Odisha Police on Tuesday signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU), Bhubaneswar, to enhance capacity in cybercrime investigation and digital forensics.

The MoU was signed by Crime Branch DGP Vinaytosh Mishra and NFSU Bhubaneswar Campus Director Dr. Purabi Pokhariyal while

Odisha Director General of Police (DGP) Yogesh Bahadur Khurania inaugurated the first training programme on "Cyber Crime Investigation and Digital Forensics."

Describing the partnership as a significant step in the modernisation of Odisha Police, Khurania said the collaboration would strengthen institutional capacity to tackle evolving cyber threats through advanced training, forensic expertise, joint research and technical

cooperation. Highlighting the changing nature of crime, the DGP said digital evidence has become central to almost every criminal investigation, while cyber offences such as mule account frauds, online investment scams and "digital arrests" are increasing rapidly.

With the new criminal laws placing greater emphasis on forensic science, he stressed the need for every police officer to be proficient in the seizure, preservation

and handling of electronic evidence. Odisha has already established 20 Cyber Crime and Economic Offences Police Stations and equipped police stations across the state with modern cyber investigation hardware and software worth nearly Rs 15 crore. The new partnership with NFSU, he added, would ensure that police personnel are adequately trained to use these resources effectively.

Besides the training, the collaboration will also cover

crime scene management, higher education, forensic infrastructure development, joint research and technical consultancy.

Crime Branch DGP Vinaytosh Mishra, speaking on the occasion, said the initiative would facilitate specialised technical training for police personnel at all levels.

By January 2027, a total of 480 officers and personnel from all 34 police districts and the Crime Branch will be trained in 16 batches.

DP World PGTI tournament put Kashmir back on India's golf map: Omar

Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said the DP World Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) tournament at the Royal Springs Golf Course (RSGC) marked an important milestone in putting Kashmir, particularly the Srinagar course, "back on India's golf map".

He said golf tourism was an important component of the government's overall tourism promotion strategy and expressed hope that the DP World PGTI would become an annual fixture.

The Chief Minister described the golf tournament as an important milestone.

"This year we have seen even without active promotion of golf tourism, we have

seen the beginnings of what we actually want, which is people is flying into Srinagar for a long weekend of golf.... And this tournament is an important milestone in putting Kashmir and particularly RSGC back on India's golf map. We have more than 100 professional golfers who have come as part of the DP World PGTI. We have more than 10 overseas entries as well," Omar told reporters in Srinagar after inaugurating the J&K Open 2026 on Tuesday. Omar also unveiled the trophy.

The four-day DP World PGTI tournament features a strong field of leading Indian professionals, including Saptak Talwar, Veer Ahlawat, Om Prakash Chouhan,



Manu Gandas, defending champion Shaurya Bhat-tacharya and Angad Cheema, among others.

The tournament also carries a prize purse of Rs 1 crore, double the Rs 50 lakh offered in the previous edition. The Chief Minister said the government's endeavour was to make the tournament an annual event rather than a

one-off affair.

"There has been a long gap between the previous such effort and this tournament. So this is the beginning. From here we hope to scale up both the prize money as well as the participation and ensure that it is a regular feature of the calendar for at least the next five years," he said.

On promoting local golfers, Omar said the government wanted to provide greater exposure to young talent through tournaments and proposed setting up a golf academy.

"We want to start a golf academy here, so that we can groom young golfers at a very young age, so that they can represent India at a national level," he said.

He said local amateurs were already getting opportunities to play alongside foreign professionals through Pro-Am tournaments, while local competitions were also being organised.

Asked whether the abrogation of Article 370 had contributed to the revival of

golf tourism, Omar rejected the suggestion that such tournaments were a new phenomenon.

"We organised such tournaments before 2014 as well. And on a large scale," he said, recalling that before the onset of militancy in the 1980s, Jammu and Kashmir had hosted some of the country's biggest golf tournaments.

On concerns that golf courses could become loss-making government assets, Omar said their value should not be measured solely in terms of direct profits.

"Golf course will not be a profit centre in itself. But in terms of promotion, there is no competition for it," he said.

H-FAST seizes 25 tonnes of adulterated spices, arrests three in Hyderabad crackdown

Hyderabad: Hyderabad Police Commissioner V C Sajjanar on Tuesday announced that the Hyderabad Food Adulteration Surveillance Team (H-FAST), in coordination with the GHMC Food Safety Department, conducted a major crackdown on spice trading and processing units, leading to the seizure of over 25 tonnes of adulterated spices and the arrest of three persons.

Addressing a press conference, Sajjanar said that 13 spice trading and processing establishments were inspected following public complaints.

Three criminal cases were registered at Mailardevpally and Balapur police stations, and the accused were identified as Rahul Bhati, Vishal Panwar, and Dulichand Kachhawar.

Officials found spices such as jeera, ajwain, mustard, cloves and shahjeera adulterated with industrial dyes, synthetic colours, talcum powder, rice bran oil and other hazardous chemicals to enhance their appearance and weight. Samples have been sent for laboratory analysis, and legal action has been initiated under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

Sajjanar warned that consumption of such adulterated food could lead to liver and kidney damage, cancer, gastrointestinal disorders, allergic reactions and long-term health complications.

Highlighting H-FAST's performance, he said that within 140 days of its formation, the team conducted 659 raids, registered 202 FIRs, and seized 246 tonnes of adulterated food.

Don’t be afraid of rejection, learn from it: Kranti Prakash Jha

Mumbai: Actor Kranti Prakash Jha, who has earned widespread appreciation for his performances in films and OTT projects, has spoken candidly about the struggles that defined his acting career. Reflecting on his journey in the entertainment industry, the actor said that rejection is an unavoidable part of life and should never discourage aspiring artists from pursuing their dreams. Instead, he believes every setback offers an opportunity to learn, improve and move closer to success.

Known for his powerful performance in the crime drama series Raktanchal, Jha said the road to recognition was anything but smooth. Long before audiences recognized him for his acting talent, he spent years facing repeated disappointments, financial uncertainty and countless auditions. Those experiences, he said, ultimately shaped both his personality and his career.

Speaking about the realities of the entertainment industry, Jha remarked that rejection is a universal truth that everyone must face. According to him, no one can completely avoid failure or disappointment, regardless of the profession they choose. He believes accepting rejection with the right mindset is the first step towards achieving long-term success.

The actor explained that every unsuccessful audition strengthened his determination instead of weakening it. Rather than dwelling on missed opportunities, he chose to focus on



improving his craft and preparing himself for the next chance. This attitude helped him remain motivated during some of the most difficult phases of his career. Recalling his early days in Mumbai, Jha painted a vivid picture of the challenges he encountered while trying to establish himself in the film industry. He revealed that he frequently travelled by local train from Goregaon to Mahalaxmi studios to attend auditions, often navigating overcrowded compartments and long commuting hours in the city.

Because the crowded train journeys would leave him drenched in

sweat before auditions, he developed a routine of carrying an extra set of clothes. Upon reaching the studio, he would change into fresh attire before facing the casting directors. For Jha, maintaining a professional appearance despite difficult circumstances was essential, and he considered it part of the discipline required to survive in the industry. The actor also recalled that landing a role in the biographical sports film M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story did not immediately transform his career as many people expected. Although the film became a major success and received appreciation from audiences across

the country, the breakthrough he had hoped for did not arrive right away.

Jha revealed that the period following the film’s release turned out to be one of the toughest phases of his professional life. For nearly two years after appearing in the movie, he struggled to secure meaningful acting assignments. Despite positive feedback about his performance, offers remained scarce, leaving him frustrated but determined.

Financial difficulties added to the pressure during that period. The actor admitted that there were times when he had neither regular work nor a stable source of income. While people praised his acting abilities, those compliments did not immediately translate into professional opportunities. Nevertheless, he refused to let temporary setbacks define his future.

Reflecting on those years, Jha said he never allowed success or praise to influence his attitude. He emphasized that he never considered himself a star simply because he had acted in a successful film. According to him, his parents instilled values of humility and simplicity, lessons that have continued to guide him throughout his professional journey.

The actor believes remaining grounded is just as important as achieving fame. In an industry where success can be unpredictable, he feels humility helps performers stay focused on their craft instead of becoming distracted by recognition or public attention.

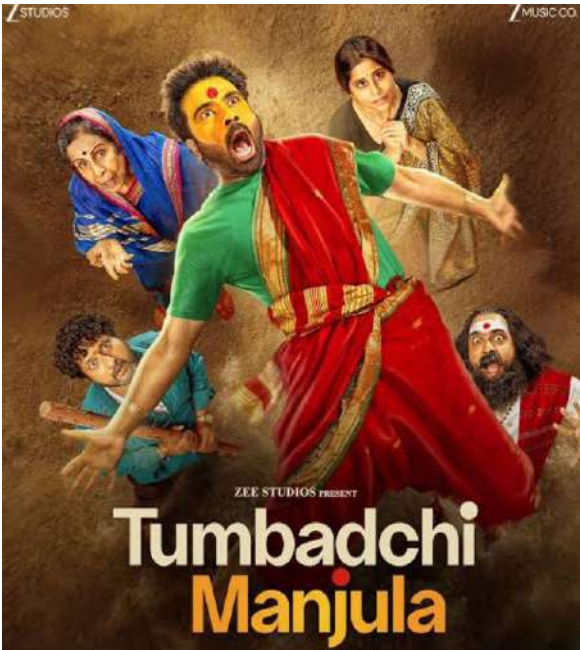
‘Tumbadchi Manjula’ to stream on Marathi Zee5 on Aug 7

Mumbai: Marathi horror-comedy Tumbadchi Manjula, one of the most talked-about Marathi releases of 2026, is all set to reach a wider audience with its digital premiere. After earning appreciation from moviegoers and critics during its theatrical run, the film will begin streaming on ZEE5 in Marathi from August 7, giving viewers another opportunity to experience its unique blend of horror, comedy and social commentary.

Directed by Vividh Korgaonkar and produced by Zee Studios, the film features a talented ensemble cast led by Jitendra Joshi, Om Bhutkar, Makarand Anaspure, Sai Tamhankar and Usha Nadkarni. Their performances received praise during the film’s theatrical release, contributing significantly to its positive reception.

Following its successful run in cinemas, the makers are optimistic that the OTT release will introduce the film to a much larger audience. With the growing popularity of Marathi cinema on digital platforms, the streaming premiere is expected to help the film reach viewers who were unable to watch it on the big screen.

At the heart of the story is Keshav, a young man whose harmless prank unexpectedly



changes the course of life in his village. In a moment of mischief, Keshav falsely claims that he has been possessed by the spirit of a woman named Manjula. What begins as a joke soon spirals into a series of strange and unpredictable incidents.

As rumors spread rapidly across the village, fear and superstition begin to take hold of the residents. The fabricated story gains credibility with every passing day, creating confusion and panic among the villagers. The nar-

rative explores how easily misinformation can influence communities when driven by deeply rooted beliefs and social conditioning.

Blending elements of horror and comedy, the film keeps audiences entertained while also presenting an engaging social message. Rather than relying solely on supernatural scares, the story cleverly uses humor and suspense to highlight the consequences of blind faith, gossip and irrational beliefs that continue to exist in society.

Mrunal Thakur warns of legal consequences over AI deepfake misuse: “Stop immediately”

Mumbai : Mrunal Thakur has issued a strong public warning against the misuse of artificial intelligence to create deepfake content using her identity. Taking to Instagram on Tuesday, the actress made it clear that any unauthorised use of her likeness through AI-generated content would not be tolerated and could lead to legal action. Although Mrunal did not reveal the specific incident that prompted her statement, she described the post as a formal notice and urged those responsible to stop such activities immediately. In her message, she wrote, “Creating or sharing deepfake content using my likeness is illegal and unacceptable. Consider this your formal notice to stop immediately. Any further misuse of my identity will result in legal action.” Her statement comes at a time when concern over AI-generated deepfakes and identity misuse have been growing across the entertainment industry. Several prominent actors have already approached courts to safeguard their image, personality and identity rights against unauthorised AI-generated content. Among those who have sought legal protection are Akshay Kumar, Varun Dhawan, Anil Kapoor, Shilpa Shetty, Preity Zinta, Kartik Aaryan and Suniel Shetty. The issue has also been highlighted by Rashmika Mandanna, who has previously spoken about the harmful misuse of artificial intelligence, particularly in creating vulgar and misleading content targeting women. In December last year, she wrote on X, “When truth can be manufactured, discernment becomes our greatest defense.” She further added, “AI is a force for progress, but its misuse to create vulgarity and target women signals a deep moral decline in certain people. Remember, the Internet is no longer a mirror of truth. It is a canvas where anything can be fabricated. Let us rise above misuse and use AI to build a more dignified and progressive society. Choose responsibility over recklessness. If people cannot act like humans, then strict and unforgiving punishment must be meted out to them.” Earlier, authorities had arrested an individual for allegedly circulating deepfake content involving Rashmika Mandanna, underscoring the growing legal scrutiny surrounding AI misuse. On the work front, Mrunal Thakur is currently attached to the upcoming action drama Raaka, directed by Atlee Kumar. The film also stars Allu Arjun, Deepika Padukone and Rashmika Mandanna in key roles. While the makers are reportedly aiming for a December 2027 release, an official confirmation regarding the release schedule is still awaited.

Shooting of ‘Tera Sai’ wrapped, film to release in 2027

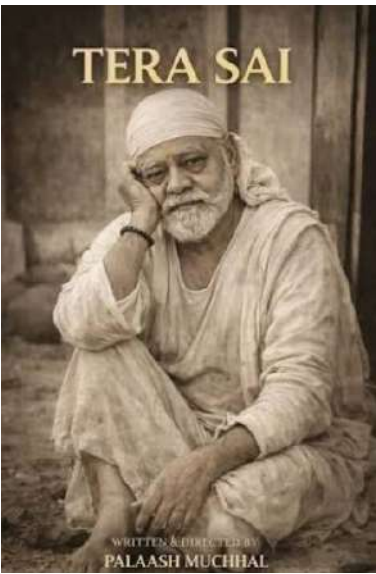
Mumbai: Singer, composer and filmmaker Palash Muchhal has completed the shooting of his upcoming spiritual drama Tera Sai, a film inspired by the life, teachings and timeless legacy of Sai Baba of Shirdi. With filming now wrapped up, the project has officially entered its post-production phase ahead of its planned theatrical release in 2027.

Presented by Red Eye Studios, Tera Sai has been written and directed by Palash Muchhal, marking another significant milestone in his journey as a filmmaker. The film seeks to bring the spiritual philosophy and humanitarian message of Sai Baba to audiences through an emotionally engaging cinematic experience.

Inspired by the life of Sai Baba, the film explores his teachings of love, compassion, equality and selfless service. Rather than presenting only historical events, the narrative aims to highlight the enduring relevance of his message in today’s world, emphasizing values such as faith, hope, kindness and humanity.

The makers have described the project as an emotional and spiritually uplifting story that celebrates the universal principles preached by Sai Baba. Through powerful storytelling and meaningful performances, the film hopes to inspire audiences while encouraging reflection on compassion, unity and the importance of helping others.

National Award-winning actor Sanjay Mishra plays the central role of Sai Baba in the film. Known for his versatili-



ity and ability to portray emotionally layered characters, Mishra is expected to bring depth and authenticity to the revered spiritual figure.

The ensemble cast also features Sayaji Shinde, Manoj Joshi, Omkar Das Manikpuri, Avika Gor and Rohan Mehra in important roles.

The diverse cast is expected to add strength to the narrative through their performances.

Speaking after the completion of filming, Palash Muchhal said Tera Sai has been much more than a film project for him. He described the experience as

a deeply personal and spiritual journey that allowed him to connect with the philosophy and teachings of Sai Baba while bringing the story to life on screen.

Muchhal shared that every scene was filmed with complete sincerity, dedication and respect for the subject. He expressed gratitude to the cast and crew, acknowledging that the entire team worked tirelessly to translate his creative vision into a meaningful cinematic experience.

The filmmaker emphasized that the story revolves around faith, humanity and hope—values that transcend religion and cultural boundaries. He expressed confidence that audiences from different backgrounds would emotionally connect with the film and its inspiring message.

With principal photography now complete, the production has moved into post-production, where editing, background score, visual enhancements and other technical work will shape the final version of the film before its release. The makers are focused on ensuring that the spiritual drama delivers a visually rich and emotionally impactful experience.

According to the production team, Tera Sai will showcase Sai Baba’s life not merely as a historical account but as a timeless source of inspiration. The film intends to portray his compassion, unconditional love, service to humanity and spiritual wisdom in a way that resonates with contemporary audiences.

Shantanu Maheshwari continues Campus Beats: The Game of Love promotions despite ankle injury

Mumbai : Actor Shantanu Maheshwari, who has been receiving praise for his portrayal of Ishaan in Campus Beats: The Game of Love Season 7, recently suffered an ankle injury during a promotional event in Pune. Despite the unexpected setback, the actor chose to continue with his scheduled appearances, demonstrating his commitment to the series and its promotional campaign.

The incident occurred during a college visit in Pune, where Shantanu was interacting with students as part of the promotional tour for the latest season of the show. The event witnessed an enthusiastic response from students, who welcomed the actor with loud cheers and excitement. The lively atmosphere soon turned into an impromptu celebration, with Shantanu joining the students on stage for a dance performance.

Known for his exceptional dancing skills, Shantanu enthusiastically became part of the celebration, matching the students’ energy with his signature moves. The spontaneous performance added to the excitement of the event and created



memorable moments for the audience gathered at the college.

However, during one of the energetic dance moves, the actor accidentally twisted his ankle. According to sources, the injury occurred after he made a large jump towards the crowd while dancing. The awkward landing caused pain in his ankle, forcing him to briefly deal with the unexpected injury in the middle of the event.

Although he was visibly uncomfortable, Shantanu did not allow the injury to interrupt the day’s schedule. Instead of cancelling the remaining promotional activities, he decided to continue fulfilling all his commitments, determined not to

disappoint the fans who had gathered to meet him across different locations in Pune.

A source close to the promotional team revealed that Shantanu’s enthusiasm to dance with the students ultimately led to the accident. Despite experiencing considerable pain, he remained aware of the packed itinerary planned for the day and chose to carry on with every scheduled appearance.

According to the source, the actor attended each promotional event despite the discomfort, interacting with audiences and promoting the series with the same enthusiasm.

His determination ensured that the campaign continued without disruption, allowing fans at every venue to meet him as originally planned.

The source further stated that Shantanu displayed remarkable professionalism throughout the day. Even while managing the pain caused by the injury, he maintained a positive attitude, completed interviews, participated in promotional interactions and remained fully engaged with the campaign.



The Movie’s first song ‘Do Numberi’ unleashed

Mumbai: The makers of “Mirzapur: The Movie” on Monday unveiled the film’s first song, ‘Do Numberi’, offering audiences a glimpse into the gritty and power-driven world of the much-awaited big-screen adaptation of the hit web series. The song also marks the Bollywood debut of Haryanvi rapper Dhanda Nyoliwala, who has written, composed and sung the track. With powerful Haryanvi beats and an energetic style, the song gives a glimpse of the film’s world of crime, power struggle and bullying.

The makers say that the song effectively brings out the atmosphere of the film and the bold image of the characters. The makers announced that the official trailer for the film is set to release on August 11. The teaser, re-

leased earlier this month, received a positive response from audiences, leading to growing anticipation for the film. “Mirzapur: The Movie” brings the story of the popular web series “Mirzapur” to the big screen for the first time. The film stars Ali Fazal, Pankaj Tripathi, and Divyenndu in lead roles. Abhishek Banerjee, Rasika Duggal, Mohit Malik, Sheeba Chaddha, Rajesh Tailang, Pramod Pathak, Shriya Pilgaonkar, Harshita Shekhar Gaur, Shweta Tripathi, and Sonal S. Chauhan also play pivotal roles. Directed by Gurmeet Singh and written by Puneet Krishna, “Mirzapur: The Movie” has been produced by Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar under with Kassim Jagmaga and Vishal Ramchandani serving as co-producers.

Bhumi Pednekar defends teenage protester facing rape threats online; says, “We cannot bully a young girl”

Mumbai: Actor Bhumi Pednekar has strongly condemned the online abuse and alleged rape and death threats directed at a teenage protester, urging people to reject harassment and engage in respectful dialogue even when opinions differ. Her statement comes days after she faced criticism on social media for condemning the use of abusive language against Prime Minister **Narendra Modi> during a students’ protest at Jantar Mantar. The controversy began after a video of 15-year-old Ruchika Singh, who participated in the protest, went viral on social media. In the widely circulated clip, the teenager was seen using coarse language while expressing her views during an interview. The video sparked intense online debate, drawing both criticism and support from different sections of social media users. Following the circulation of the video, Singh allegedly became the target of widespread online harassment. According to Bhumi, the teenager has been subjected to repeated rape threats and death threats, with abusive messages also being directed at her family members, including her mother. Sharing a video message on Instagram, Bhumi expressed concern over the emotional condition of the young protester. She said she had watched a recent video

in which the teenager appeared visibly distressed and shaken by the barrage of online abuse she had received since the earlier clip went viral. She stressed that disagreement in a democracy should never escalate into threats, bullying or attempts to create fear in someone’s mind. People may disagree with an individual’s views or conduct, but expressing those disagreements through intimidation, abuse or threats crosses the boundaries of civil discourse. She also highlighted the broader issue of harassment faced by women, particularly in online spaces. Bhumi remarked that women are often subjected to personal attacks and abuse simply for expressing opinions, making the digital environment increasingly hostile for many.

Drawing from her own experiences as a public figure, the actress said she understands the emotional toll that online harassment can take. She revealed that she too has experienced targeted abuse on social media.



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
78,428.95	-0.27%	24,614.90	-0.64%	23,690.15	-0.47%	74,210.55	-0.53%	25,719.15	0.62%	57,907.20	-0.58%	63,491.60	-0.29%
Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open
78,639.03	79,132.97	24,774.30	24,703.90	23,802.85	23,771.45	74,608.70	74,551.50	25,880.45	25,816.80	58,247.95	58,068.95	63,679.30	63,739.90
High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
79,143.15	78,211.87	24,703.90	24,427.95	23,771.45	23,573.60	74,667.20	74,037.15	25,816.80	25,553.40	58,068.95	57,352.65	63,679.30	63,278.95

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Apollo Hospital	9,050.00	2.61
Hindalco	1,020.00	2.52
Trent	3,107.70	1.89
Jio Financial	265.00	0.76
ITC	289.00	0.70

Top Losers

Company	Current	%Loss
Grasim	3,138.00	-3.74
HDFC Life	535.95	-3.10
Bajaj Auto	11,600.00	-2.16
Reliance	1,290.90	-2.13
Max Healthcare	1,077.00	-2.13

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Aug 05	141,998.00	903.00 0.64
Silver Sep 04	219,480.00	2,734.00 1.26
Crudeoil Aug 19	7,639.00	-6.00 -0.08
Naturalgas Aug 26	262.00	-2.40 -0.91

Stock markets end lower with Nifty below 24,700

Mumbai : Indian stock markets on Tuesday ended lower, snapping a four-session winning streak. The markets responded as investors booked profits amid weekly derivatives expiry.

At the time of close, Sensex was down 210.08 points or 0.27 per cent at 78,428.95, and the Nifty was down 159.40 points or 0.64 per cent at 24,614.90. Nifty midcap index shed 0.3 per cent, while smallcap index was up 0.2 per cent.

Indian rupee ended marginally lower at 95.38 per dollar on Tuesday compared with the previous close of 95.34.

Among the sectors, most of the indices remained largely negative. Nifty Realty emerged as the top loser, declining 2.4pc. It was followed by Nifty Oil & Gas (-1.1pc), Nifty FMCG (-0.9pc), Nifty Private Bank (-0.7pc), Nifty IT (-0.8pc), Nifty Bank (-0.6pc), Nifty Con-



sumer Durables (-0.7pc), Nifty Infra (-0.9%), Nifty Auto (-0.4pc).

Further, on the gaining side were Nifty Media, advancing 2pc, Nifty Metal, which gained 0.9pc. Around 150 stocks touched 52-week high. These included Ather Energy, Deepak Fertilisers, Gabriel India, Siemens, Sai Life Sciences, Gland Pharma, Welspun Corp, RBL Bank, Balrampur Chini Mills, Nestle India, Bajaj Auto, Pidi-

lite Industries, United Spirits, Dr Lal PathLab, Sona BLW, TVS Motor, Titan Company, Craftsman, Federal Bank, among others.

On Nifty, the gainers included Hindalco, Trent, Apollo Hospitals, Jio Financial and Eternal, while on the losing end were Grasim Industries, HDFC Life, Max Healthcare, Bajaj Auto, and Reliance Industries.

Market participants are closely tracking geopolitical

developments in the Strait of Hormuz and the outcome of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) ongoing monetary policy meeting, as both factors are expected to play a crucial role in determining the near-term direction of domestic financial markets, according to Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments Limited.

Nair said investors continue to keep a close watch on the evolving situation in the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most strategically important oil shipping routes. Any improvement in geopolitical stability in the region could significantly reduce concerns over disruptions in global crude oil supplies and help restore confidence across international markets. According to him, greater clarity regarding developments in the region would likely ease upward pressure on crude oil prices.

Hyundai strengthens EV ownership confidence with assured buyback prog for CRETA Electric

Chennai: Passenger car makers Hyundai Motor India Limited (HMIL) today announced introduction of its Assured Buyback Program for the CRETA Electric, offering customers 60% assured buyback value till 3-years/up to 45,000 kms.

The initiative addresses one of the key considerations influencing EV purchase decisions i.e. future resale value and further reinforces Hyundai's commitment to making electric mobility more accessible, convenient and confidence inspiring, a company statement said.

Commenting on the announcement, HMIL MD and CEO Tarun Garg said "The next phase of electric vehicle adoption in India will be driven equally by advancements in vehicle technology and by greater customer confidence. Hyundai CRETA Electric



has been engineered to deliver an exceptional ownership experience backed by Hyundai's global EV expertise and the trust of the iconic CRETA brand. Our Assured Buyback Program, offering 60% assured buyback value, reflects our confidence in the product's outstanding quality, reliability and long-term value."

"Together with our Battery-as-a-Service initiative, expanding charging infrastructure and future EV roadmap, we are building one of India's most comprehensive EV ecosystems, enabling customers to embrace electric mobility without compromising on convenience, confidence or peace of mind", he said.

Quick TV to invest Rs 100 crore in AI-powered microdrama production

Bengaluru: ShareChat-owned Quick TV on Tuesday announced India's first dedicated AI-powered microdrama slate, unveiling six original AI-assisted series and committing to invest up to Rs 100 crore over the next year to expand AI-driven content production and strengthen its artificial intelligence capabilities. The announcement builds on the launch of *Main Amar Hoon*, which the company described as one of India's first AI-assisted microdrama series. The production used a hybrid pipeline combining live-action filmmaking, motion capture, advanced visual effects and generative AI to create cinematic fantasy set-

tings while preserving actors' performances. Quick TV said the approach is designed to augment, rather than replace, human creativity. Mohalla Tech, the parent company of ShareChat and Moj, said the planned investment will be directed towards scaling AI-generated entertainment, expanding production capacity and building AI talent as demand for premium short-form content continues to grow. The company said its AI-generated microdramas have recorded Episode-20 completion rates of around 50 per cent, indicating strong viewer engagement with the format. Leading the August slate is *Pashu Samrat*, an epic

fantasy about a farmer who discovers divine powers. Other titles include *Badshah Benaqab*, a royal action drama; *Port Ka King*, a rags-to-riches story of a Goan fisherman; *Odiyan*, inspired by Indian folklore; *Jadugar Rajkumar*, a fantasy adventure centred on a prince with magical powers; and *Hamari Lucky Jia*, a family drama about a young girl with healing abilities. Quick TV said the six originals span fantasy, action and family genres but share a common AI-assisted production workflow that combines traditional filmmaking with advanced digital tools to deliver mobile-first entertainment.

Sitharaman tables Tax Amendment Bill to ease rules for offshore investment funds

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday introduced the Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 in the Lok Sabha, proposing sweeping changes to India's tax framework aimed at attracting overseas capital, simplifying rules for offshore investment funds and strengthening the country's position as a global fund management destination.

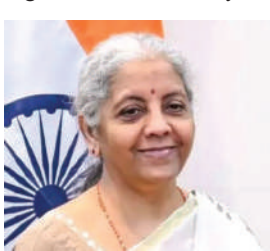
The proposed legislation seeks to replace the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026, promulgated on June 5, which had granted tax exemptions on interest income and capital gains earned by foreign portfolio

investors (FPIs) from investments in government securities.

A key feature of the Bill is the significant relaxation of eligibility conditions for Eligible Investment Funds (EIFs) managed from India. The government has proposed removing several existing requirements that offshore funds currently need to satisfy to claim tax exemption on their global income.

If enacted, eligible offshore funds will no longer have to meet conditions such as maintaining a minimum of 25 investors, limiting a single investor's participation to 10 per cent, restricting investments in a single entity

to 25 per cent of the corpus, avoiding investments in associate entities, or maintaining a minimum monthly average corpus of Rs 100 crore.



The government believes these changes will make India a more attractive location for global fund managers by reducing regulatory complexity and creat-

ing a more competitive investment ecosystem.

The Bill also proposes tax incentives for foreign companies engaged in electronics manufacturing supply chains. Under the proposal, foreign entities storing and selling electronic components through customs-bonded warehouses for supply to Indian manufacturers will receive tax exemptions, a move aimed at supporting domestic manufacturing and improving supply chain efficiency.

In another measure to promote India's gem and jewellery sector, the Bill seeks to exempt income earned by eligible foreign

companies from the sale of rough diamonds through notified special trading zones in India. The benefit will remain available until March 31, 2041, providing long-term policy certainty for global diamond traders.

The Statement of Objects and Reasons accompanying the Bill says additional taxation measures are required to comprehensively achieve the objectives that were initially addressed through the June ordinance. It adds that evolving global economic conditions warrant a timely legislative response to facilitate foreign capital inflows and improve India's investment climate.

India's data breach cost hits record Rs 25.5 crore: IBM

Bengaluru: India's average cost of a data breach rose to a record Rs 25.5 crore in 2026, a 15.9 per cent increase from Rs 22 crore last year, as cyberattacks became more sophisticated with growing use of artificial intelligence (AI), according to IBM's 2026 Cost of a Data Breach Report released on Tuesday.

The report said the average number of compromised records per breach also increased to 39,500 in 2026 from 38,200 in 2025, highlighting the growing scale of cyber incidents.

It found that 26 per cent of malicious breaches in India were AI-generated, reflecting the increasing use of AI



by cybercriminals to launch faster and more scalable attacks.

However, AI adoption in cybersecurity remains limited. Only 32 per cent of Indian organisations reported extensive use of AI and security automation, while 36 per cent had limited deployment and 32 per cent reported no use at all.

According to the report, organisa-

tions without AI and security automation suffered the highest average breach cost of Rs 31.6 crore, compared with Rs 21.3 crore for organisations with extensive deployment. Breaches also took significantly longer to identify in organisations without AI-enabled security, averaging 236 days compared with 175 days for those with extensive automation.

Shadow AI, referring to unauthorised use of AI tools within organisations, added an average Rs 1.79 crore to the cost of a breach, making it one of the leading cost-increasing factors along with regulatory non-compliance and cloud migration.

FSSAI orders Dabur to halt sale of products carrying '100 Percent' claims

New Delhi: Dabur India has been directed by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to immediately stop selling a range of food products carrying "100 per cent" claims, with the regulator stating that such descriptions are ambiguous, cannot be independently verified, and may mislead consumers.

The order covers multi-product products, including honey, apple cider vinegar, virgin coconut oil, sesame oil, cow ghee, coconut water, and coconut milk that were

marketed using claims such as "100 per cent Natural", "100 per cent Pure", "100 per cent Purity Guaranteed", "100 per cent Organic" and "100 per cent Tender Coconut Water".

According to FSSAI, these claims violate the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards (Advertising & Claims) Regulations, 2018, which govern how food products can be advertised and labelled.

The regulator clarified that its action is related to product labelling and adver-

tising practices and should not be interpreted as an indication that the products are unsafe or adulterated.

FSSAI noted that it had already issued an industry-wide advisory in May 2025 asking food business operators to avoid using "100 per cent" claims on labels, packaging, and promotional material.

The regulator had said the phrase is not defined under existing food safety regulations and may create an inaccurate impression of absolute purity or superior

quality.

Apart from the marketing claims, FSSAI also raised concerns over the use of the Jaivik Bharat logo on Dabur Himalayan Organic Apple Cider Vinegar and Dabur Organic Honey, stating that the products were displaying the certification mark without a valid FSSAI organic endorsement.

The Jaivik Bharat logo is intended to identify certified organic food products that comply with India's prescribed organic certification standards.

FRAI warns against growing illicit trade, market distortion in India's online retail ecosystem

Chennai: Leading retailers, trader associations and policymakers on Tuesday flagged the alarming rise of illicit trade and the increasing prevalence of unfair market practices in India's online retail ecosystem. At a seminar organised by the Federation of Retailers Association of India (FRAI) Tamil Nadu State Chapter on "Confronting Illicit Trade in Modern Markets" retailers, trader associations and policymakers together deliberated on two rapidly growing threats impacting India's retail ecosystem — the alarming rise of illicit trade and the increasing prevalence of unfair market practices. The participants expressed serious concern over the growing circulation of counterfeit

products, illegal distribution channels and non-compliant goods across markets, while also highlighting how predatory pricing, deep discounting and unchecked expansion of certain quick commerce and e-commerce models are creating severe imbalances for small retailers and traditional businesses. The seminar highlighted that both illicit trade and unfair market practices are adversely affecting genuine businesses, government revenues, consumer trust and the livelihoods of lakhs of small traders across the state. In his address, FRAI TN Chapter President C.Chelladurai said "Illicit trade is no longer merely a commercial issue; it has become a serious threat to consumer safety,

fair competition and the livelihoods of millions of honest retailers. Counterfeit and illegally sourced products not only expose consumers to substandard and unsafe goods but also undermine the credibility of legitimate businesses that operate within the law. We remain committed to working closely with the government, law enforcement agencies and industry stakeholders to strengthen enforcement, raise consumer awareness and build a transparent retail ecosystem where genuine businesses can thrive." Retailers further highlighted that while quick commerce and e-commerce platforms are rapidly transforming the retail landscape and making products in-

stantly accessible to consumers, the same ecosystem is also creating serious concerns around the rapid spread of illicit trade and counterfeit



products. Participants also stated that flash sales, unrealistic discounting, aggressive pricing strategies and the constant push for ultra-fast delivery have created an environment where consumers are often unable to differ-

entiate between genuine and counterfeit products. They also pointed out that today almost everything — from food products, groceries and

personal care items to skincare products, electronics and even premium mobile phones worth thousands of rupees — is being delivered within minutes through quick commerce and e-commerce platforms. However,

this extreme accessibility and race for cheaper prices are also opening dangerous entry points for banned, illegal and counterfeit products to penetrate the market at an unprecedented scale. According to the retailers, illicit traders and unethical sellers are increasingly exploiting these rapidly expanding digital platforms to push counterfeit and non-compliant products into the market, taking advantage of weak monitoring mechanisms and the growing consumer obsession with deep discounts and instant availability. Retailers warned that consumers are gradually becoming more price-sensitive than quality-conscious, creating fertile ground for illicit trade to flourish unchecked across

digital commerce channels. While the rapid rise of such platforms is adversely impacting consumers through the circulation of low-quality and potentially unsafe products, it is equally devastating for genuine offline retailers who spend years building trust, ensuring product authenticity and serving their local communities with accountability. Retailers emphasised that unfair market practices, uneven competition and aggressive pricing structures are making it increasingly difficult for traditional traders to survive despite working tirelessly for 14 to 18 hours every day to sustain their businesses, educate their children and support their families. Participants

stressed that this is no longer merely a business issue, but a serious social and livelihood concern affecting millions of honest small retailers across the country. During the seminar, participants highlighted that the rapid expansion of platform-driven retail models and the growing circulation of counterfeit and non-compliant products are creating serious challenges for traditional businesses. Retailers said while small traders operate with limited margins and high accountability, several large platforms continue to dominate markets through aggressive discounting and rapid expansion strategies, while cautioning that illicit trade and counterfeit goods are harming genuine businesses.