



Aryan Age

The Age of Truth

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PG 02	CPM-backed lawyers attacked, Mamata slams BJP	PG 03	Court seeks report from SHO on plaint over Delhi CM's 'Hanuman' remarks	PG 06	Haryana Enforces 'No PUC, No Fuel' Rule in NCR	PG 07	Shubman Gill Backs Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Rules Out Resting Veterans	PG 08	FPIs Pull Out Rs 35,861 Crore From Indian Equities in September
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Supreme Court Steps Into Central Vista Library Row

Top court takes suo motu cognisance after report says historic government library's 8.5 lakh books have no adequate home in redevelopment plan

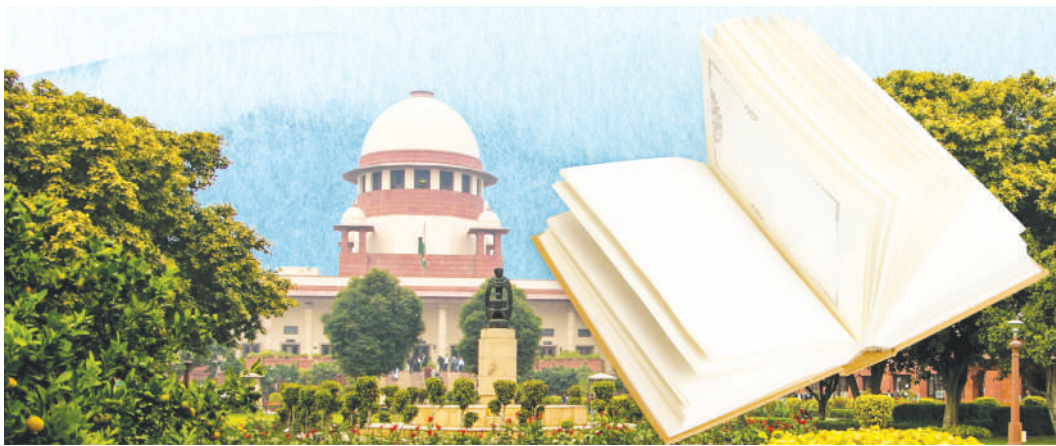
New Delhi : The Supreme Court has taken suo motu cognisance of uncertainty surrounding the future of the Central Secretariat Library, whose vast collection faces relocation as Shastri Bhavan is demolished under the Central Vista redevelopment programme.

The Court has registered the matter on its own motion and will hear it on Monday before a Bench of Justices Sanjay Kumar and Sanjeev Sachdeva.

The library houses approximately 8.5 lakh books and is one of the country's oldest major government libraries.

Concern arose after reports indicated that the redevelopment plan did not provide adequate dedicated space for the collection.

The library currently occupies multiple floors, while the accommodation reportedly identified in



the new complex was considered insufficient for its enormous holdings.

The Supreme Court's intervention does not mean it has reached any conclusion regarding wrong-

doing in the Central Vista project.

The hearing will first examine the issue and the government's arrangements for preserving and relocating the collection.

The Central Vista redevelopment

ment is transforming India's central government district, including construction of new office buildings and demolition or repurposing of older structures.

Such redevelopment creates a

parallel responsibility to preserve historically significant collections and institutions affected by the physical changes. The library's importance extends beyond the age of its books.

Government libraries contain administrative publications, historical documents and reference material that can be difficult or impossible to replace.

Storage conditions, cataloguing and public access are therefore central to any relocation plan. The case is unusual because the Supreme Court itself acted after taking note of media reporting rather than waiting for a conventional petition. Monday's hearing could require the government to explain exactly where the collection will go and how its long-term preservation and accessibility will be guaranteed.

Ayodhya Donation Probe Gets Wider Team

New Delhi/Lucknow : The Uttar Pradesh government has expanded the Special Investigation Team probing alleged theft from donations linked to the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, following suggestions made during Supreme Court proceedings.

The enlarged SIT will be headed by an Inspector General of Police and include a forensic accounting expert, an auditor and additional senior police officers. The team will examine both the alleged physical theft and financial records related to temple offerings.

VHP international president Alok Kumar said the organisation acknowledged that cash had been stolen from offerings and supported a thorough investigation. The probe may compare donation records, bank depos-

its, cash-handling procedures and internal documents.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has questioned the handling of the investigation, while the VHP has said the matter should not be politicised and promised accountability.

The expansion of the probe does not establish guilt against any individual. Investigators will have to determine whether money was stolen, the extent of any loss and how the alleged irregularities occurred.

The case has drawn national attention because of the temple's importance and the large number of devotees contributing donations. The strengthened SIT will now trace both the physical and financial trail and establish the facts through evidence.

Five New Classical Language Centres Approved

Education Ministry creates specialised research hubs for Assamese, Bengali, Marathi, Pali and Prakrit across five major universities

New Delhi : The Union Education Ministry has approved five Centres of Excellence dedicated to Classical Assamese, Bengali, Marathi, Pali and Prakrit, creating specialised institutional hubs for research, preservation and digitisation of India's linguistic heritage.

The centres will be located at five higher-education institutions across the country. Tezpur University in Assam will host the Centre for Classical Assamese, while Visva-Bharati University in West Bengal will house the Bengali centre.

The Centre for Classical Marathi will be established at Deccan College

Post-Graduate and Research Institute in Pune.

The Central University of Odisha will host the Pali centre and the Central University of Gujarat will house the Centre for Classical Prakrit.

The initiative follows the recognition of these languages under India's Classical Language framework and seeks to move beyond symbolic status towards long-term academic infrastructure.

The centres will focus on advanced research, scholarly work and academic engagement. They will also support documentation, preservation and digitisation of manuscripts,

texts and other linguistic resources.

Another objective is wider dissemination of the literary and knowledge traditions associated with the languages.

Digitisation is particularly important because rare manuscripts and older texts can deteriorate physically or remain inaccessible to researchers when held in dispersed collections.

Dedicated centres can also help train a new generation of scholars capable of studying ancient linguistic traditions using modern research methods.

The government says locating the centres in different states will strengthen

regional academic ecosystems while connecting them with the national higher-education system.

The decision has cultural as well as educational significance.

Classical-language recognition creates prestige, but preservation ultimately depends on scholars, archives, teaching programmes and sustained research.

The five new centres are intended to provide that institutional foundation.

The initiative is expected to strengthen the study of India's classical languages and make their rich literary heritage more accessible to future generations.

Centre proposes safety standards, insurance cover, 'right to repair' for assistive devices

New Delhi : The Centre has proposed new safety, quality and consumer protection rules for wheelchairs, hearing aids and other assistive products for persons with disabilities. The proposals are part of the draft Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Amendment) Rules, 2026, issued by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. The government has invited objections and suggestions before finalising the rules.

The draft follows a Supreme Court judgment directing the Centre to establish clear and uniform accessibility standards. Assistive products would be divided into essential, specialised and emerging categories. Essential products include wheelchairs, hearing aids, mobility aids, screen readers and spectacles, while specialised products include prosthetics and cochlear implants. Emerging products would cov-

er AI-enabled devices, robotics and brain-computer interfaces.

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) or another designated authority would prescribe standards for essential and specialised products. Wheel-



chairs would require safety features such as transit-ready securement brackets. Powered mobility devices would also come with a "mobility aid passport" containing details such as dimensions, weight, battery type and

dismantling instructions.

The draft proposes an online Assistive Products Portal for certification, procurement, distribution tracking and complaints. It also seeks repair, replacement, subsidy, reimbursement and insurance support for eligible users. Government schemes and insurance policies would cover initial purchase, repair and replacement costs.

A national toll-free helpline with a 30-day complaint resolution timeline has also been proposed. Voice, text and Indian Sign Language options would be available. The Centre also plans a national database of accidents involving assistive products to improve safety standards and help identify non-standard devices. Suggestions received within 30 days will be considered before the rules are finalised.

Rahul Targets Shah Over Police Allegation

New Delhi : Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi has sought an explanation from Union Home Minister Amit Shah after three women journalists alleged sexual harassment and misconduct by Delhi Police personnel during protests seeking the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.

The complaints were linked to demonstrations at Jantar Mantar over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. Delhi Police has transferred the complaints to its Crime Branch for inquiry.

Gandhi questioned Shah as Delhi Police functions under the Union Home Ministry. Protest groups have also accused police of manhandling women protesters, journalists and lawyers, while heavy security

remained at Jantar Mantar.

Around 150 protesters, including activist Yogendra Yadav, senior advocate Prashant Bhushan and student activists, were detained on Saturday while trying to reach the designated protest site for the second consecutive day.

Opposition parties and activists have alleged irregularities in the SIR exercise, while the Election Commission has rejected claims of partisan manipulation and said the revision aims to maintain accurate voter lists.

The Crime Branch inquiry will determine the facts behind the journalists' complaints, adding another dimension to the growing political confrontation over the electoral-roll revision and protests.

Pharma Blast Toll Rises To Five

Tirupati : The death toll from the devastating boiler explosion at a pharmaceutical manufacturing facility in Andhra Pradesh's Sri City industrial hub has risen to five, as investigators examine why equipment reportedly certified safe only months earlier exploded with lethal force.

The blast occurred at the Tablets India Limited Healthcare facility near Satyavedu in Tirupati district.

Four workers died at or shortly after the explosion, while another worker, Vasu, later succumbed after being shifted for advanced treatment.

The victims included workers from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

A woman employee injured in the incident was

treated and discharged.

A preliminary investigation cited in reports indicated that inadequate water in the two-tonne boiler may have contributed to the explosion, but the final technical cause has yet to be formally established.



The most serious new development concerns the safety inspection.

The boiler had reportedly been inspected in April by a state government safe-

ty inspector and certified fit for operation.

The government has now suspended the inspector while the circumstances surrounding the certification are examined.

The revelation raises questions about industrial

one of India's major industrial zones.

The accident is reported to be the first fatal incident of this nature inside the SEZ in its 18-year history.

Responsibility should not be assigned before the inquiry is completed.

However, the combination of five deaths, a recently issued safety certification and the suspension of an inspector makes the case a significant industrial-safety investigation.

For authorities, the central question is no longer simply what exploded, but whether the disaster could have been prevented.

Authorities are also examining the plant's maintenance records and safety protocols to determine whether any lapses contributed to the tragedy.

inspections, maintenance procedures and whether warning signs were missed before the blast.

Sri City houses more than 250 companies and is

India Ends Asian Games With 85 Medals

Late gold rush lifts country to fourth place with 21 titles; campaign delivers India's second-best overall medal haul at continental Games

New Delhi/Aichi-Nagoya : India concluded its 2026 Asian Games campaign in fourth place with 85 medals, including 21 gold, 27 silver and 37 bronze, after a strong late surge across several disciplines.

The final tally represents India's second-best overall medal haul at an Asian Games and included breakthrough performances across traditional and emerging sporting disciplines.

India's final days featured important results in archery, golf, cricket, wrestling and hockey, helping consolidate fourth position in the overall medal standings. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated several Indian medal winners on Sunday, including wrestler Antim Panghal and the women's golf team of Aditi Ashok, Pranavi Sharath Urs and Diksha Dagar.

Trap shooter Neeru Dhandu, who won two gold medals and a sil-



ver, carried the Indian flag at the closing ceremony.

The medal count offers an important benchmark as India seeks to translate Asian-level competitive-

ness into stronger performances at global events, particularly the Olympics.

Asian Games medals do not automatically predict Olympic suc-

cess because fields, disciplines and qualification systems differ.

They do, however, provide evidence of depth across sports and reveal areas where investment is producing results. India's 21 gold medals also matter because medaltable positions are determined primarily by golds rather than total medals. The campaign included both established athletes and younger competitors likely to form the core of future international teams. For national sports administrators, the next step will be identifying which Asian Games performances can be converted into world-level results. For athletes, the closing ceremony marks the end of a major continental campaign.

For India, 85 medals and fourth place provide a substantial result — but also a measure of the gap still separating the country from Asia's leading sporting powers.

Monsoon Exit Brings Fresh Rain Threat

IMD alerts multiple states to heavy rain, thunderstorms and winds up to 65 kmph even as southwest monsoon withdraws

New Delhi : The southwest monsoon may be withdrawing, but unstable weather continues to threaten large parts of India, with forecasts warning of heavy rain, thunderstorms and strong winds across several states. Weather alerts on Sunday covered parts of North, Central, Eastern and Southern India, with winds potentially reaching around 65 kmph in some locations.

Areas under weather watch included Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Jharkhand.

The latest warning comes after an exceptionally uneven monsoon season in which India recorded an overall rainfall deficit while several regions simultaneously suffered destructive short-duration downpours.

That contrast is important. A below-normal national monsoon does not prevent local flooding, lightning or intense storms.

Farmers are particularly exposed at this time of year because standing crops can be damaged by heavy rain, hail or strong winds

close to harvest.

Weather conditions also affect preparations for Rabi sowing. In mountainous states, heavy rainfall can destabilise slopes even after the main monsoon period has ended, increasing the risk of landslides and road closures.

Authorities have also warned fishermen in affected coastal regions to pay attention to marine advisories. The forecasts do not mean every listed state will experience destructive weather.

Rainfall intensity can vary sharply between districts and localities, and residents should follow current official warnings.

The broader significance is that India's transition from monsoon to post-monsoon weather is proving far from quiet. After a season characterised by drought in some areas and deadly floods in others, the final withdrawal phase is still capable of producing disruptive weather.

For disaster-management agencies and farmers, the monsoon calendar may be ending, but the weather risk has not.

2 killed, van torched over cattle theft suspicion near Bengal’s Siliguri

Kolkata : Two men were killed and three others injured after a mob allegedly attacked a group of men suspected of cattle theft near Siliguri in West Bengal during the early hours of Friday. The incident took place in the Matigara and Bagdogra areas and involved a violent chase that ended with the suspected victims being surrounded and assaulted, police said. According to police, the incident occurred between around 2.30 am and 3 am when a crowd began chasing four to five men who were allegedly suspected of stealing cattle. The chase reportedly continued across areas falling under Matigara and Bagdogra police stations before the men were cornered near Dhimal Basti in Bagdogra. The pursuit began around Tarabari in the Matigara area and continued towards Dhimal Basti. During the chase, the group was allegedly intercepted by the mob near the Balason River in the Tarabari area. Police said a pickup van carrying some of the men was stopped and subsequently set on fire. The driver of the pickup van was identified as 45-year-old Md Shahid Akhtar, a resident of Chopra in West Bengal. According to the police, the mob allegedly dragged Akhtar out of the vehicle and assaulted him. He sustained severe injuries and died at the spot. A second man, identified as 28-year-old Shad Mohammad, also known as

Sajjad Mohammad, was among those attacked. He was from Haryana and sustained multiple serious injuries during the incident. He was taken to the North Bengal Medical College and Hospital for treatment but later succumbed to his injuries.



Police personnel reached the area after receiving information about the attack and rescued three injured men from the scene. The injured victims were taken to the North Bengal Medical College and Hospital, where they were provided medical treatment. Their condition and the extent of their injuries are part of the ongoing investigation. One person from the group managed to escape the mob during the attack. According to police, he ran to a nearby police station and sought shelter there. His account is expected to be important to investigators as they attempt to reconstruct the sequence of events and identify the people involved in the assault. The police have registered a case based on a complaint filed by the wife of the deceased Shahid Akhtar. Siliguri Police Commissioner Syed Waqar Raza said investigators were working to identify the ac-

cused persons. He said that no arrest had been made so far. “We are trying to trace the accused. So far, no one has been arrested. The case has been filed based on a complaint filed by the dead person’s wife,” Raza told The Indian Express. Police are now examining evidence and gathering information about the people who were allegedly part of the mob.

The FIR contains several serious charges in connection with the violence. These include murder by mob, voluntarily causing grievous hurt, mischief causing property damage and mischief by fire or explosive substance. The charges reflect both the deaths and injuries as well as the alleged burning of the pickup vehicle. The circumstances leading to the confrontation are also being investigated. Police said the men were allegedly suspected of cattle theft or smuggling in the area. According to investigators, a family member of one of the victims acknowledged that the men had allegedly been involved in cattle smuggling and had visited the area on earlier occasions. However, the alleged involvement of the victims in cattle smuggling does not determine responsibility for the subsequent violence. The police investigation is focused on identifying the people who allegedly attacked the men, caused their injuries and set the vehicle on fire.

CPM-backed lawyers attacked, Mamata slams BJP

Garbeta : A team of lawyers associated with the CPM was allegedly attacked while visiting violence-affected areas of West Midnapore’s Garbeta, triggering a strong reaction from former West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee. Among those allegedly targeted was Calcutta High Court advocate Shamim Ahmed, who was leading the delegation. Banerjee condemned the incident and called for the administration to ensure the safety of lawyers.

The incident took place as a group of around 12 lawyers from the Calcutta High Court and the Midnapore court visited several villages in Garbeta 1 block. The delegation was reportedly conducting an inspection following allegations that CPM workers and supporters had been affected by political clashes in the region.

The lawyers were also visiting areas where families were reported to have been displaced from their homes. The delegation went to the residence of CPM Garbeta area committee secretary Samed Gayen as part of efforts connected with facilitating the return of displaced villagers to their homes.

It was during this visit and the subsequent journey that the lawyers allegedly came under attack.

According to reports, the lawyers’ vehicles were allegedly intercepted in the area and attacked. The lawyers claimed that sticks, bamboo poles and other objects were used during the incident, while several vehicles were reportedly damaged. The allegations have added to concerns over the political tensions surround-



ing the Garbeta region.

Shamim Ahmed was among those allegedly assaulted during the incident. Reports said that the group faced attacks at more than one location while attempting to leave the area. The lawyers were subsequently escorted by West Midnapore police for their safety, but another alleged attack took place near the Salboni police station area.

Some reports said that three male lawyers and two female lawyers were injured in the incidents. There were also allegations that women members of the delegation were harassed during the attack. The lawyers claimed that their vehicles were vandalised, adding another dimension to the incident.

The allegations have led to competing political claims. CPM district secretary Bijoy Pal accused BJP supporters of carrying out attacks on party workers and alleged that the lawyers were targeted because they were visiting people affected by po-

litical violence.

The BJP, however, has denied involvement in the incident. Garbeta MLA Pradeep Lodha maintained that his party had no role in the alleged attack. The competing claims mean that responsibility for the incident remains disputed between the political parties.

Mamata Banerjee strongly reacted to the incident through a post on X. She condemned what she described as repeated attacks on lawyers and accused BJP workers of creating a “culture of intimidation and jungle raj”. She also urged the administration to take firm and impartial action against those responsible.

Banerjee specifically referred to Shamim Ahmed in her post and said she was shocked by the allegation that he had been pressured to alter his complaint after the incident. She further claimed that Ahmed was able to return home safely only after the intervention of the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court.

The former chief minister also stressed that lawyers should be able to perform their professional duties without fear, regardless of their political affiliation or ideology. She said the rule of law should prevail over political violence and called for the administration to ensure the safety and security of advocates.

Banerjee also referred to recent alleged incidents involving lawyers at Bankshall Court and Baraipur Court. She said such incidents were unacceptable and argued that West Bengal should not allow a climate of intimidation to develop.

The incident has gained attention because the lawyers were visiting areas affected by political tensions and were reportedly seeking information about displaced families. Their visit was connected to efforts to assess the situation on the ground and assist in the process of enabling affected people to return to their homes.

The allegations have also brought the safety of lawyers working in politically sensitive areas into focus. Lawyers involved in such visits can come into contact with competing groups and conflicting claims, making security arrangements an important concern during field inspections.

For now, the incident has become another point of political confrontation in West Bengal, with the CPM alleging attacks by BJP supporters and the BJP denying any involvement. The allegations concerning the assault, damage to vehicles and pressure over the complaint will need to be established through the appropriate investigation.

3 years after Umesh Pal murder, UP Police trace wanted accused to Bihar jail

Lucknow : Three years after the killing of advocate Umesh Pal and his two police security personnel in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh Police have traced one of the wanted accused to a jail in Bihar.

Mohammad Arman, who was carrying a reward of Rs 5 lakh on information leading to his arrest, has been found lodged in a jail in Bihar’s Gaya district in connection with an older criminal case.

Police said Arman allegedly had links with the gang of slain Prayagraj mafia figure Atiq Ahmed. His alleged involvement in the murder of Umesh Pal and the two police personnel emerged during the investigation into the February 24, 2023 attack. Since then, Uttar Pradesh Police had been searching for him and had declared a reward of Rs 5 lakh for information leading to his arrest.

Umesh Pal, an advocate and key

witness in a murder case, was attacked in Prayagraj’s Dhoomanganj area on February 24, 2023.

The attack took place when he was getting out of his car near the entrance to his residence. The assailants opened fire and allegedly hurled bombs at him and his two police security personnel before escaping from the spot.

The attack shocked Prayagraj and triggered a major police investigation. The case involved several accused persons and was investigated as part of the wider probe into the criminal network allegedly associated with Atiq Ahmed. Police subsequently identified several individuals who were allegedly involved in different roles in planning, executing or facilitating the attack.

According to the Uttar Pradesh Police, Arman was allegedly riding the motorcycle used by another wanted accused, Guddu Muslim, who was travelling as a pillion rider.

His alleged presence in the attack and association with other accused made him one of the persons being actively searched for by investigators.

A senior police officer said investigators received information about a week ago that Arman was already lodged in a jail in Gaya district. Police then contacted their counterparts in Bihar and verified the information. The discovery brought an end to the three-year search for Arman, although he remains in custody in connection with the older case.

The Uttar Pradesh Police now plan to formally bring Arman to Prayagraj so that he can be questioned and proceed against in the Umesh Pal murder case. A senior officer said the police would approach the Prayagraj court on Monday seeking a B-warrant for his production in connection with the murder of Umesh Pal and his two security personnel.

Newborn girl strangled at hospital in MP's Ashok Nagar; cops suspect family's role

Bhopal : A newborn girl was allegedly strangled to death inside the Special Newborn Care Unit (SNCU) of a hospital in Madhya Pradesh’s Ashoknagar district, police said on Sunday. Investigators suspect that someone from the baby’s family may have been involved in the death, with police particularly focusing on the child’s mother and grandmother, who were present at the hospital unit.

According to police, the newborn was born at around

11.50 pm on Friday and was admitted to the SNCU shortly after birth. The baby was being treated in the specialised unit when she was found dead between 3 pm and 4 pm on Saturday. The circumstances of her death led hospital authorities and police to suspect that she may have been strangled.

Kotwali police station house officer Ravipratap Singh Chauhan told PTI that an investigation was underway into the death. He said the police were examining

the circumstances inside the SNCU and questioning people who were present around the time the baby died. The exact sequence of events leading to the newborn’s death is still being investigated. The baby belonged to a joint family from Sakra village in the Chanderi area of Ashoknagar district. Police said the newborn was a female child and that her death had brought attention to the circumstances surrounding the birth and the family’s background. Inves-

tigators are now trying to establish what happened inside the hospital between the time the child was admitted and when she was found dead.

The police officer said the baby’s mother and grandmother were present at the SNCU. Their presence has led investigators to focus their initial inquiry on the two women. Police have not said that either woman has been arrested or formally charged in connection with the death, and the investigation is continuing.

Abhishek Banerjee objects to rebel TMC MP’s parliamentary panel chair post

Kolkata : Trinamool Congress national general secretary and Lok Sabha MP Abhishek Banerjee has objected to the appointment of party rebel Kakoli Ghosh Dashtidar as chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Chemicals and Fertilisers. Banerjee has written to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, questioning the decision and seeking clarity over the basis on which Dashtidar was appointed to head the important parliamentary panel. The objection comes after a major reshuffle of several department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees. Under the changes announced on

Saturday, Dashtidar replaced former TMC MP Kirti Azad as chairperson of the Chemicals and Fertilisers Committee. At the same time, the TMC lost another committee chairpersonship, with BJP MP Sudhanshu Trivedi replacing TMC Rajya Sabha MP Dola Sen as chairperson of the Commerce Committee. Banerjee’s main objection is linked to the pending disqualification proceedings against Dashtidar and 19 other Lok Sabha members belonging to the rebel TMC faction. The petitions have been filed under the Tenth Schedule of the Con-

stitution, which contains the anti-defection provisions. The status of the 20 MPs remains under consideration before the Lok Sabha Speaker. In his letter, Banerjee referred to his earlier communications to the Speaker dated September 23. He said he had specifically requested that the MPs facing disqualification proceedings should not be considered for appointments to Department-Related Standing Committees until the petitions against them were decided. Banerjee also said that the TMC had formally requested that it retain the chairmanship of one of the

Standing Committees in the Lok Sabha. According to him, the party had also submitted the name of its existing chairperson for continuation in the post. He argued that the latest appointment disregarded both the party’s objection and its official nomination. The TMC leader has also questioned the parliamentary status under which Dashtidar was appointed. The dispute has its roots in the decision of 20 TMC MPs to break away from the party following the West Bengal Assembly elections and claim a merger with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India.

UCC in 6 months, law against love jihad: Suvendu Adhikari’s Bengal promise

Kolkata : West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari has announced that his government will implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the state within the next six months, following the examples of Uttarakhand and Gujarat.

He also promised to introduce stringent laws against what he described as “love jihad”, “land jihad” and religious conversions after the implementation of the UCC. Adhikari made the announcements while addressing an event organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad



(VHP) in Kolkata on Sunday.

Speaking at the gathering, Adhikari gave a six-month timeline for the proposed UCC, saying that West

Bengal would follow the model of states that have already moved towards a common civil law framework. “After Uttarakhand and Gujarat, UCC will be imple-

mented in West Bengal. Give me six more months,” he said, according to reports. He presented the proposed move as one of the major commitments of his government and said the administration would work towards fulfilling the promises made to voters.

Adhikari further said that the proposed legislation on “love jihad”, “land jihad” and religious conversion would be taken up after the UCC.

He said the government would bring strict and tough laws to address these issues.

'If We've To Bend A Little, We Will': Congress Says It's 'As Flexible As Constitution' On Seat Sharing With SP

Lucknow : Congress on Sunday invoked the Constitution of India to signal its flexibility on seat sharing for the upcoming Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections. Uttar Pradesh Congress in-charge Rajendra Pal Gautam said the party was ready to bend “a little” if required as it negotiates seat sharing with the Samajwadi Party.

Seat sharing between the Congress and the Samajwadi Party is a key issue between the two INDIA bloc alliance partners ahead of the 2027 Uttar Pradesh elections. Both parties have stressed the need to work together against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, but differences over the distribution of seats remain an important issue as preparations for the polls gather pace. “The share and respect should be equal. I have been saying this from the beginning... When it comes to seat sharing, we are as



flexible as the Constitution of India. If we have to bend a little, we will bend,” Gautam told reporters. Gautam also said the seat-sharing arrangement should be finalised in October itself, arguing that candidates need sufficient time to prepare and work in their respective constituencies.

The Congress and the SP have,



meanwhile, traded barbs in recent weeks, underscoring the tensions between the two allies ahead of the polls. The latest friction followed Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav’s launch of the ‘PDA Rath Yatra’ from Raebareli on September 24, marking the beginning of his party’s campaign for the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections.

Akhilesh’s visit to the Congress stronghold triggered a war of words between the allies, with Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Ajai Rai announcing that the grand old party would also visit SP strongholds. “Anyone is free to visit any part of the country. He (Akhilesh) visited Raebareli, and there is nothing wrong with it. We, too, will surely visit places like Varanasi or, for that matter, Etawah, Kannauj and Mainpuri,” Rai told PTI on Friday. The places cited by Rai are all associated with the Samajwadi Party. Akhilesh Yadav represents Kannauj in the Lok Sabha, while his wife Dimple Yadav is the MP from Mainpuri and his uncle Shivpal Yadav is the MLA from Jaswantnagar. Reacting to Rai’s remarks, Shivpal Yadav, a six-term MLA from Jaswantnagar, said the Congress would not gain votes even if it tried to make inroads into SP strongholds.



OUR CITY

Briefs :

NSUI protests at India Gate, seeks CEC's ouster, arrest

New Delhi: The National Students' Union of India (NSUI) on Saturday staged a protest at the India Gate, demanding the resignation and arrest of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over what the student organisation described as concerns regarding the functioning of the Election Commission and the electoral roll revision process. A large number of NSUI members and student activists participated in the protest and raised slogans demanding transparency and accountability in the electoral process, besides protection of citizens' right to vote. The protesters alleged that questions had been raised over the electoral process and electoral rolls and demanded that the Election Commission provide clear answers to the concerns being raised by citizens and opposition organisations. NSUI national media in-charge Ravi Hanuman Pandey said, "The Election Commission is a constitutional institution responsible for safeguarding the democratic right of every citizen to vote. When serious questions are being raised about the electoral process and electoral rolls, the people of India deserve transparency and accountability." "The NSUI demands the immediate resignation and arrest of CEC Gyanesh Kumar and a credible, impartial investigation into the concerns surrounding the electoral process," he said. Pandey said the organisation would continue to raise its voice through democratic means for transparency, accountability and protection of voting rights.

Driver arrested after elderly couple injured in a hit-and-run in Delhi's Kirti Nagar

New Delhi: A 79-year-old man and his 71-year-old wife, who were walking on a road in west Delhi's Kirti Nagar, were seriously injured after an SUV rammed them from behind during their morning walk on Friday, police said on Saturday. The driver of the SUV, a 49-year-old woman, fled the scene in her car but was arrested later. A senior police officer said the accident took place near Arya Samaj Mandir around 9.30am, when the elderly couple, Dayanand Tangra, 79, and his wife Kusum Tangra, 71, were returning to their Kirti Nagar residence after their walk. The accident was captured on CCTV cameras installed in the area.

Delhi teachers' body seeks delay in UPSC recruitment exam over SIR duty, EOC workload

New Delhi :The Delhi (GSTA) has urged the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) to postpone the recruitment examination for the posts of principal and vice-principal scheduled for November 1. The teachers' body has said that a large number of candidates appearing for the examination have been assigned election-related duties, making it difficult for them to prepare for and appear in the test. The association has raised the issue in connection with the (SIR) of electoral rolls being carried out by the authorities. Several teachers and other applicants who are eligible or interested in appearing for the UPSC recruitment examination have reportedly been deployed as booth-level officers and supervisors for the revision exercise. According to the GSTA, the deployment of these candidates for SIR-related duties has created additional responsibilities for them at a time when they are expected to prepare for an important competitive examination.

MHI approves 382 sites for EV charging infrastructure in Delhi

New Delhi: The Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) has approved 382 sites for setting up electric vehicle charging infrastructure in Delhi, marking a major step towards expanding the capital's EV network. Delhi Power Minister Ashish Sood announced the development on Sunday and said the approved locations would help create a stronger infrastructure base for the growing number of electric vehicles in the city. According to Sood, the Delhi government's Revenue Department and the Delhi Transport Corporation had initially identified 456 locations for the development of EV charging infrastructure. After an assessment by the Ministry of Heavy Industries, 382 of these sites were approved for further development. The minister said the approved sites have been reassessed under the Delhi EV Policy, which was notified on June 30. The reassessment was carried out over the past three months to determine how the locations could be best used for different categories of electric vehicles. As part of the exercise, the sites have been categorised according to the requirements of two-wheelers, three-wheelers and four-wheelers. The segment-wise assessment is aimed at ensuring that charging facilities are

located and designed according to the actual needs of different types of EV users. Sood said the site-level assessment was also undertaken keeping in mind upcoming statutory requirements under the Delhi EV Policy 2026. The policy has set specific deadlines for increasing the share of electric vehicles in different segments, making the availability of adequate charging infrastructure an important requirement. Under the policy, Delhi is scheduled to move towards 100 per cent electric registrations for three-wheelers and N1 light commercial vehicles from January 1, 2027. The requirement for two-wheelers is scheduled to come into effect from April 1, 2028. The government believes that meeting these targets will require more than financial incentives for consumers. A widespread and reliable charging network will be necessary to support people and businesses shifting from conventional vehicles to electric mobility. Sood said the Delhi government has onboarded KPMG as the Project Management Unit for the charging infrastructure programme. The comprehensive reassessment of the identified sites has now been completed, allowing the government to move towards the next stage of implementation.

Court seeks report from SHO on plaint over Delhi CM's 'Hanuman' remarks

New Delhi: A Delhi court has sought a status report from the Station House Officer of Kashmere Gate police station on a complaint filed against Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta over alleged remarks made during an official government programme in September 2025. The court has asked the police to place the report before it as the matter comes up for further consideration.

The complaint has been filed by Ram Niwas Sharma, who has alleged that certain remarks made by Gupta during the programme were inappropriate and warranted legal action. The complaint relates to an event held at the Kashmere Gate Inter-State Bus Terminal, where new Delhi Transport Corporation bus services between Delhi and Baraut in Uttar Pradesh were launched.

The complainant has approached the court under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). Along with the complaint, an application has also been filed under Section 175(3) of the BNSS, seeking directions for police action in connection with the allegations.

The matter came before the court on Saturday through assignment. During the proceedings, complainant Ram Niwas Sharma appeared before the court along with his counsel, Sanjeet Kumar. The counsel presented the complainant's submissions and drew the court's attention to the material placed on record.

After hearing the submissions and examining the documents avail-



able before it, the court directed the SHO of Kashmere Gate police station to submit a status report. The direction means that the police will now have to inform the court about the complaint and the action, if any, taken on the allegations.

The court also directed that a copy of its order be sent to the SHO along with the complaint and its accompanying annexures. The documents have been forwarded to the police station for compliance with the court's direction. The matter has been listed for October 15 at 11.30 am. The court is expected to consider the police status report on that date and examine the next course of action in the matter. According to the complaint, the alleged remarks were made on September 23, 2025, during

a government programme organised at the Kashmere Gate ISBT. The event was held in connection with the launch of DTC bus services connecting Delhi with Baraut in Uttar Pradesh. The complainant has alleged that Gupta made the remarks while addressing government officials, public servants and members of the public attending the programme. According to the complaint, the comments were made in the presence of a large gathering during the official event. The complaint specifically refers to remarks in which government officials were allegedly compared to "Hanumans". It further alleges that Gupta referred to their powers becoming visible only when their "tail catches fire".

The complainant has argued that

the statements were made in a public forum and were heard by government officials, public servants, programme attendees and members of the public. The complaint seeks legal action based on the alleged remarks and the circumstances in which they were made.

The proceedings before the court, however, are at an initial stage. The court has not made any finding on the allegations against the Chief Minister. Its present order is limited to directing the Kashmere Gate police station to file a status report after receiving the complaint and related documents.

The court's direction also does not by itself establish that any offence has been committed. The police status report is expected to place the relevant facts and the action taken, if any, before the court, after which the matter can be considered further.

The complaint and the accompanying application will now be examined in light of the police response and the material placed on record. The next hearing on October 15 will therefore be important in determining how the court proceeds with the matter. The case comes as a complaint against a sitting Delhi Chief Minister moves through the judicial process following allegations relating to remarks made during an official government function. For now, the court has sought information from the police and has scheduled the matter for further consideration after the status report is filed.

Youth Congress moves Delhi High Court against denial of nod for demonstration

New Delhi: Indian Youth Congress (IYC) national president Uday Bhanu Chib has moved the Delhi High Court challenging the Delhi Police's decision to deny permission for a proposed peaceful demonstration at Jantar Mantar. The organisation has questioned the manner in which its request was rejected and has argued that authorities cannot impose a complete prohibition on a peaceful gathering without examining the specific circumstances of the proposed protest.

The petition challenges a Delhi Police order dated October 1, 2026, through which permission for the proposed demonstration was rejected. According to the IYC, the protest was planned at Jantar Mantar and was expected to have around 100 to 150 participants. The organisation has said it was prepared to comply with all lawful conditions imposed by the au-



thorities. The plea has been filed through Roopesh Singh Bhadauria, national chairman of the IYC Legal Department. The petition argues that the police have the authority to regulate public assemblies in the interest of security and public order, but that such regulatory powers should not automatically be treated as a power to completely prohibit a peaceful demonstration.

According to the peti-

tion, the IYC had submitted its application to the Delhi Police on September 25 seeking permission for the demonstration. The organisation said it had clearly indicated its willingness to follow all lawful requirements relating to security arrangements, traffic management, discipline and maintenance of public order during the programme. The IYC has alleged that it repeatedly followed up with the authorities

regarding its application but did not receive a decision until October 1. The organisation has pointed out that October 1 was also the first proposed date for the demonstration. It has therefore questioned the timing of the police communication and the impact it had on the planned programme. The petition contends that the police should have conducted an individualised assessment of the proposed gathering before refusing permission. According to the IYC, the decision should have considered the size and nature of the demonstration, the conditions offered by the organisers and the possibility of regulating the gathering through reasonable restrictions rather than rejecting it outright. The organisation has specifically challenged what it describes as the mechanical application of guidelines governing protests and public assemblies.

DJB 2026 rules ease tariff, metering norms, documents; individual water connections faster

New Delhi :The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) has approved a new set of water and sewer regulations aimed at making it easier for residents to obtain new connections and regularise existing ones. The Delhi Water & Sewer (Tariff and Metering) Regulations, 2026, will replace the regulations introduced in 2012 and are expected to simplify procedures for consumers while making the connection process faster.

One of the major changes under the new regulations is the provision allowing individual water connections to dwelling units and non-domestic units irrespective of the height of the building. Senior government officials said such connections would be permitted where technically feasible and where applicants meet the prescribed conditions under the new framework.

The new provision is expected to benefit residents of multi-storey buildings, particularly those living in individual flats where separate water connections were earlier restricted. Officials said the new rules seek to make the system more flexible by recognising individual dwelling units rather than placing the primary focus on the overall height of the building.

However, consumers seeking individual connections will have to ensure adequate water storage below 17.5 metres. This condition

has been included as part of the technical requirements for providing individual water connections. The DJB will continue to examine whether the required infrastructure and conditions are available before approving such connections.

Under the earlier 2012 regulations, a maximum of six water connections could generally be sanctioned in a residential building. The new framework removes this numerical restriction for individual flats, subject to the prescribed conditions. Officials said individual connections could now be provided beyond the earlier limit if requirements such as the availability of a kitchen in each dwelling unit are fulfilled.

The new regulations also seek to reduce the time taken to obtain a new water connection. At present, applicants can take around 40 to 50 days to complete the entire process. The existing procedure includes submission of an application, payment of the required fee, a site inspection, issuance of a demand note and activation of the connection after payment.

Under the existing system, a Junior Engineer generally conducts a site inspection within seven to 15 days of the application being submitted. If the site is found suitable, a demand note is issued to the applicant within another three to five days. The applicant then makes

the required payment before the connection is eventually activated.

Officials said activation of a connection can currently take another 15 to 30 days after payment of the demand note. The multiple stages involved in the process can therefore make the overall procedure lengthy for consumers. The DJB now plans to change the sequence of the process to reduce delays.

Under the proposed system, approval for the connection will be issued first, while inspection can be undertaken subsequently. Officials said a system is being developed under which consumers would be able to obtain approval without waiting for the completion of the inspection stage. The change is expected to make the process more convenient and reduce the waiting period.

The new regulations also aim to simplify the documentation required for obtaining water connections. Officials said the new metering provisions seek to reduce the number of documents that applicants have to submit. Aadhaar or PAN will be among the key identity documents that can be used, while officials said three documents would be sufficient for an application under the simplified system.

The DJB has clarified that the new regulations do not propose any change in the existing water tariff, connection charges or application charges.

JNU teachers' panel seeks revocation of 'Professor Emeritus' status granted to a professor

New Delhi: The Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Association (JNUTA) has approached the President of India, in his capacity as the Visitor of the university, seeking the withdrawal of the Professor Emeritus status recently granted to Professor PR Kumaraswamy. The teachers' body has alleged that the decision showed favouritism and raised questions about the procedure followed by the university administration.

Kumaraswamy retired from Jawaharlal Nehru University on September 30, 2026. Shortly before his retirement, the university administration conferred the title of Professor Emeritus on him. The honour is generally given to retired professors in recognition of distinguished academic contributions and significant service to the institution. JNUTA, however, has questioned the decision and called for an independent inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the conferment. In a statement dated October 3 and signed by JNUTA president Syed Akhtar Husain, the teachers' association appealed to the President to immediately revoke the status given to Kumaraswamy. The association also sought a time-bound and independent inquiry into what it described as allegations of corruption and procedural irregularities that have been raised in the public domain. JNUTA has

argued that the title of Professor Emeritus is not a routine post-retirement designation at JNU. According to the teachers' body, it has been awarded only to a small number of professors over

introduced during an emergency meeting of the university's Executive Council on September 30, the day Kumaraswamy retired. According to the association, the proposal was placed under



the years. The association said that the university's list of Professors Emerita and Emeritus had only 15 names as of July 15, 2025. The official JNU website lists academics including Romila Thapar, Zoya Hasan and Sukhadeo Thorat among those holding the distinction. The teachers' body has therefore questioned why the honour was conferred on Kumaraswamy at the time of his retirement. JNUTA described the decision as an unprecedented conferment and alleged that it did not meet the standards that, according to the association, should apply to such a selective academic honour. The association has also raised questions about the procedure followed for approving the appointment. JNUTA alleged that the proposal was

the "Any Other Item" category after the Vice-Chancellor informed the council that she had received a nomination from the Dean of the School of International Studies. JNUTA has further alleged that the procedure prescribed under Rule 32 of JNU's Academic Rules and Regulations was not followed. It claimed that the necessary supporting documents were not circulated with the agenda papers and were also not reflected in the minutes of the Executive Council meeting. The association has said these issues require examination through an independent inquiry rather than being settled only through an internal administrative process. The teachers' association has also referred to complaints that it says were earlier submitted by its

executive committee to the Central Vigilance Commission and the JNU Executive Council. According to JNUTA, these complaints sought an inquiry into allegations concerning Kumaraswamy and included claims relating to faculty recruitment and promotion processes. The association has argued that these allegations should have been examined before the university conferred one of its highest academic honours on him. JNUTA has also raised questions about Kumaraswamy's earlier administrative roles at the university. He had served as a professor at the Centre for West Asian Studies in the School of International Studies and had also held administrative responsibilities, including as director of the university's Internal Quality Assurance Cell. The teachers' body has alleged that his association with the administration made the timing and manner of the honour particularly significant. The controversy has consequently focused not only on the conferment itself but also on questions of transparency and institutional procedure. JNUTA has alleged that several senior faculty members who retired in earlier years were not given a similar recognition. It has used this comparison to question whether consistent criteria were applied while selecting Kumaraswamy for the distinction.

 Editorial

Where Will History Go?

New government offices worth thousands of crores of rupees can be erected in the national capital; however, if the government struggles to find space to house 8.5 lakh books, the issue transcends mere space it becomes a question of our priorities. Buildings can be demolished and rebuilt, and halls can be redecorated; but a legacy of knowledge accumulated over 135 years, once disrupted, cannot simply be bought back with money. The fact that the Supreme Court had to take suo motu cognizance of the future of Delhi's Central Secretariat Library signifies that this is not merely the story of a single library; it raises an unsettling question about exactly how much space remains for books in the development of modern India. The Central Secretariat Library is no ordinary government reading room. It was established in 1891 in Calcutta as the 'Imperial Secretariat Library.' When the capital shifted from Calcutta to Delhi, the library moved as well, and it has been functioning from Shastri Bhawan since 1969. Today, it operates under the Union Ministry of Culture and stands as one of the central government's largest libraries, second only to the National Library in Kolkata. The library houses approximately 8.5 lakh printed and non-printed documents. Its collection includes rare books, government reports, gazettes, reference works, and numerous significant documents chronicling India's administrative journey. Much of this material is not merely for reading; it constitutes a vital part of the collective memory of the Indian state. This collection serves as a crucial reference resource for various ministries, government officials, scholars, and researchers. Now, Shastri Bhawan is slated for demolition as part of the redevelopment of the central administrative complex. Consequently, relocating the library has become inevitable. There is no reason to oppose development. Modernizing aging government buildings in the capital, providing enhanced office facilities for various ministries, and boosting administrative efficiency are indeed essential. The question is not whether redevelopment should take place; rather, the issue is whether the redevelopment plan gave due and serious consideration right from the outset to an institution of knowledge spanning 135 years. Currently, the library is spread across four floors, covering an area of approximately 5,500 square meters. The Ministry of Culture had indicated a requirement of about 5,466 square meters for the library in the new Central Secretariat. However, reports emerged at one stage suggesting that only two rooms, totaling around 300 square meters, were being proposed in the new building. The Ministry of Culture clarified that this space was woefully inadequate for housing the entire collection and accommodating the library's operations. Allocating just two rooms for 8.5 lakh books is not merely a farcical calculation of space; it reveals a serious disconnect in the planning process. Following the ensuing controversy, the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs clarified that space has been allocated for the library within the Kartavya Path redevelopment scheme and that the necessary construction work is underway. This is a welcome development. Consequently, it would be premature to conclude that the library is destined to be left permanently homeless.

The Supreme Court, too, has not yet reached any adverse conclusion against the government; the Court has taken *suo motu* cognizance of the reports, and the government's precise plan will become clear during the hearings. However, the mere assurance of space allocation does not resolve the entire issue. Relocating books is not the same as simply moving office chairs and cabinets from one building to another. Each aspect the accurate inventory and sequencing of 8.5 lakh books, secure packing, transportation, control of temperature and humidity, preservation of rare materials, protection against fire and water, pest control, re-classification at the new location, and, most importantly, uninterrupted access for readers requires dedicated planning.

This debate raises another fundamental question: why has our definition of development become so focused on buildings? A grand building is visible, allowing for an inauguration ceremony; a new road is visible, leading to published photographs. Yet, its value to the nation's collective memory is no less than that of a magnificent building. One might ask why space is needed for so many books when everything is available in digital format today. While this argument appears attractive on the surface, it is misleading. Not every rare book or document has been fully digitized; even if one has been, the historical value of the original document remains undiminished. The correct approach is to safeguard the original copy while simultaneously making a digital version accessible to everyone. Instead, this relocation process should be leveraged to catalog and digitize the entire collection using modern methods. There should be a public record detailing the location and condition of each book, the availability of a digital copy, and the procedure for researchers to access it. Furthermore, the collection should be verified by independent experts both before and after the relocation. This would minimize the risk of a rare document going missing amidst the chaos of the move. The Court has neither halted the redevelopment project nor ruled that the government is at fault. Consequently, there is no reason to view this intervention through the lens of a conflict between the government and the judiciary. Instead, this should be viewed as a necessary constitutional safeguard a measure to ensure that a historic institution is not overlooked amidst a massive public project. The government now has the opportunity to turn this controversy into a positive example.

It should provide adequate, permanent premises for the library, make the relocation plan public, appoint an expert committee to oversee the safety of the books, expedite the digitization of the collection, and ensure that researchers retain access as much as possible during the transition.

If these steps are taken, judicial intervention will prove to be an opportunity to improve planning rather than an obstacle for the government. A new Parliament, new offices, new roads, and modern government complexes will indeed symbolize a new India; yet, if the knowledge preserved by the India of the past is not safeguarded within them, that modernity loses its meaning. The 8.5 lakh books require more than just a roof over their heads; they need safety, dignity, and readers. After all, a nation's stature is defined not merely by the grandeur of its buildings, but by how well it preserves its history and knowledge within them. By all means, demolish an old building for the sake of development, but take care to ensure that the nation's collective memory is not buried beneath the rubble. Otherwise, a new complex will rise, but history will keep asking: there was space for buildings, so why wasn't there space for books?

ICAR Institutes Promote Cleanliness and Sustainable Waste Management

As part of the nationwide Swachhata Hi Seva activities, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) organised a series of awareness and cleanliness initiatives aimed at promoting responsible waste management and environmental protection following Ganesh Visarjan. The programmes were conducted at ICAR institutions with a focus on maintaining clean public spaces, protecting water resources and encouraging community participation in sanitation and cleanliness efforts.

The initiatives were designed to spread awareness about the environmental impact of waste generated during Ganesh Visarjan and to encourage people to adopt safer and more sustainable practices. Through these activities, ICAR emphasised that cleanliness should not be limited to the period leading up to festivals but should also remain a priority after religious and community events. The programmes encouraged citizens and participating communities to take collective responsibility for keeping their surroundings clean.

One of the major activities was an awareness programme on post-Ganesh Visarjan cleanliness organised at a local Ganesh pandal. Participants were sensitised about the importance of choosing environmentally friendly materials for religious celebrations. Special emphasis was placed on the use of eco-friendly clay idols, which can help reduce the environmental burden associated with idol immersion.

During the awareness programme, participants were advised against immersing Plaster of Paris idols and idols containing harmful chemical colours in drinking water tanks. Such practices can adversely affect water quality and create additional challenges for maintaining clean and safe water resources. The programme therefore encouraged devotees and organisers to follow environmentally responsible immersion practices.

Participants were also encouraged to use designated immersion sites instead of immersing idols directly in natural water bodies. The initiative highlighted the need to protect rivers, lakes, ponds and other water resources from pollution caused by idols and materials used during religious ceremonies. People were



advised to avoid immersing idols and Puja Samagri in natural water bodies and to follow the arrangements made by local authorities for safe immersion.

The programme further focused on the proper collection and disposal of flowers and other Puja Samagri generated during Ganesh celebrations. Participants were encouraged that religious offerings should not simply be discarded in public places or water bodies. Instead, such materials should be collected separately and processed through appropriate waste-management systems wherever facilities are available.

Plastic, thermocol and other decorative materials used during the celebrations were also highlighted as important components of post-festival waste. Participants were encouraged to ensure that these materials were collected and segregated rather than being left at immersion points or surrounding public areas. Proper segregation at the source can make waste management more efficient and also reduce the quantity of material reaching landfills and water bodies.

The awareness activities also stressed the importance of maintaining cleanliness at Ganesh immersion sites. Festival-related gatherings can generate significant quantities of waste, particularly when large numbers of devotees visit immersion locations. Keeping these areas clean requires cooperation from organisers, participants, volunteers and local authorities, and the ICAR initiative underlined the importance of collective action.

Safety precautions near water bodies were another important aspect of the programme. Participants were encouraged to follow designated routes and immersion arrangements and to avoid unsafe practices around water bodies. The focus on safety was linked with the broader objective of ensuring that religious celebrations and their concluding activities take place in a clean, organised and environmentally responsible manner.

Following the awareness programme, the areas surrounding the local Ganesh pandal were cleaned as part of the Swachhata Hi Seva activities. Garbage generated in and around the area was collected and segregated to facilitate safe and responsible disposal. The cleanliness drive demonstrated how awareness programmes can be combined with practical action to create cleaner public spaces.

The initiative also highlighted the importance of community participation in maintaining cleanliness after major public and religious events. While government institutions and local authorities can provide infrastructure and waste-management systems, sustained cleanliness depends significantly on the participation of citizens. The programme

ICAR-CIRB Organises Swachhata Samvad to Promote Cleanliness and Jan Bhagidari

As part of the ongoing Swachhata Hi Seva 2026 campaign being organised under the theme "Swachhta Mein Sahbhag – Swachh Bharat, Viksit Bharat," the Indian Council of Agricultural Research–Central Institute for Research on Buffaloes (ICAR-CIRB), Hisar, organised a Swachhata Samvad on September 24, 2026. The initiative focused on creating greater awareness about cleanliness and hygiene while encouraging active participation among contractual staff and Young Professionals (YPs) at the institute.

The Swachhata Samvad was organised with the objective of strengthening the culture of cleanliness at the workplace and encouraging employees and young professionals to adopt responsible and sustainable practices in their daily lives. The programme sought to move beyond routine cleanliness activities by creating an opportunity for participants to discuss practical challenges and identify simple solutions that could be followed consistently.

The activity was conducted in accordance with the Day-VIII action plan under the Swachhata Hi Seva campaign. The action plan envisages Swachhata Samvad as a platform for dialogue, discussion and exchange of ideas on cleanliness-related issues. Such interactions are intended to increase participation in sanitation initiatives and create greater awareness about hygiene, waste management and environmentally sustainable practices.

Around 20 participants took part in the interactive programme organised at ICAR-CIRB, Hisar. The participation of contractual staff and Young Professionals provided an opportunity to bring together people from different roles and responsibilities and encourage them to discuss cleanliness from their own experiences. The programme was designed to ensure that every participant could contribute to the conversation.

Unlike a conventional lecture-based awareness programme, the Swachhata Samvad adopted an interactive approach. Participants were en-



couraged to openly share their experiences, observations and suggestions regarding cleanliness in their homes, workplaces and surrounding areas. This approach allowed the discussion to focus on practical issues that people encounter in their everyday lives.

During the interaction, participants discussed the problem of littering and the need to develop responsible habits to prevent waste from accumulating in public and workplace areas. They emphasised that maintaining cleanliness requires regular individual effort and cannot depend only on sanitation personnel. Avoiding littering at the source was identified as one of the simplest measures that individuals can adopt to keep their surroundings clean.

Responsible disposal of waste was another important issue discussed during the Samvad. Participants exchanged views on the need to dispose of different types of waste through appropriate channels and avoid throwing garbage in open spaces. Proper disposal, they noted, can help prevent unhygienic conditions, reduce pollution and contribute to healthier surroundings.

The participants also discussed the need to reduce unnecessary use of plastic. The interaction highlighted how excessive dependence on single-use and disposable plastic items can increase the volume of waste and create difficulties in disposal. Participants were encouraged to make more responsible choices, reduce avoidable

plastic consumption and use alternatives wherever practical.

Waste segregation was also highlighted as an important component of sustainable cleanliness. Participants discussed the importance of separating different categories of waste at the point of generation so that recyclable, biodegradable and other materials can be handled appropriately. Effective segregation can improve waste processing and reduce the quantity of waste that ultimately requires disposal.

The discussions also focused on the importance of adopting sustainable cleanliness practices as a regular part of everyday life. Participants were encouraged to ensure that the principles discussed during the programme were not confined to the workplace but were also followed in their homes, neighbourhoods and communities. The interaction stressed that cleanliness should be viewed as a continuous responsibility rather than an occasional activity undertaken only during special campaigns or cleanliness drives.

Participants highlighted that small and consistent changes in daily habits can make a meaningful difference to the cleanliness and hygiene of the surrounding environment. Practices such as keeping personal and common areas clean, avoiding unnecessary waste generation and disposing of garbage responsibly were discussed as simple measures that can gradually become part of routine behaviour. The participants also emphasised the im-

portance of setting positive examples for others, particularly within their families and local communities.

The interaction reinforced the message that cleanliness is not merely a sanitation-related responsibility but a shared social responsibility involving individuals, institutions and communities. Maintaining clean surroundings requires cooperation and participation at every level. Participants discussed how individual actions, when adopted collectively by a larger group, can contribute significantly to improving overall cleanliness, hygiene and environmental conditions.

The programme placed particular emphasis on Jan Bhagidari, or public participation, as an important element of the Swachh Bharat initiative. The discussions highlighted that government programmes and institutional cleanliness campaigns can achieve greater and more sustainable results when citizens actively participate in them. Public involvement also helps create a stronger sense of ownership, encouraging people to take responsibility for the cleanliness of the areas in which they live and work.

Participants further discussed the importance of behavioural change in achieving sustainable cleanliness. They identified several simple practices, including avoiding littering, reducing unnecessary use of plastic, segregating waste at the source and ensuring its proper disposal.

Such measures may appear

small at the individual level, but their consistent adoption by communities can help reduce waste generation, improve sanitation and contribute to healthier surroundings.

The discussion also highlighted the need to develop a responsible approach towards the use and disposal of plastic. Participants were encouraged to avoid unnecessary consumption of plastic products and to consider reusable alternatives wherever possible. Proper segregation and disposal of plastic waste were also discussed as important steps towards preventing waste from accumulating in public spaces and causing environmental problems.

Waste segregation emerged as another important aspect of the interaction. Participants discussed the benefits of separating biodegradable, recyclable and other forms of waste at the point where waste is generated. Proper segregation can make subsequent collection, processing and disposal more effective while also increasing the possibility of recycling and recovery of useful materials.

The interactive nature of the Swachhata Samvad provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on their own cleanliness practices and identify areas where improvements could be made. Rather than simply receiving instructions, participants were encouraged to share their personal observations and experiences. This open exchange of views helped create a more participatory atmosphere and encouraged individuals to think about practical steps that could be implemented in their daily lives.

The dialogue-based format also helped underline the importance of collective responsibility. Participants discussed how cleanliness initiatives can become more effective when people work together rather than treating them as the responsibility of a particular department, institution or group of workers. The interaction encouraged participants to recognise that every individual has a role to play in maintaining clean, hygienic and environmentally responsible surroundings.

Briefs :

Mehta Unanimously Elected Himachal Bar Council Chairman

Shimla : IN Mehta has been unanimously elected Chairman of the Bar Council of Himachal Pradesh, marking another milestone in a legal career that began more than three decades ago.

Mehta entered the legal profession in 1992 after enrolling as an advocate with the Bar Council of Himachal Pradesh. He went on to become vice-president of the Shimla Bar Association in 2004.

In 2005, he contested the Himachal Pradesh Bar Council election for the first time and has since been continuously elected as a member of the state Bar Council. Mehta has also served as Vice-Chairman of the Bar Council of Himachal Pradesh. He was later elected as the Member-Representative of the state Bar Council to the Bar Council of India.

Five Haryana Residents Held With Heroin in Palampur

Palampur : Police have arrested five people, including a woman, and allegedly recovered 7.92 grams of chitta, or heroin, from a hotel in the Lohana area of Palampur in Kangra district.

According to the police, all five accused are residents of Sirsa in Haryana and were staying at a hotel in the area.

A case has been registered against them under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Kangra Superintendent of Police Kulbhushan Verma confirmed the arrests and said the district police had intensified its campaign against the illegal drug trade.

Regular inspections are being carried out at hotels, homestays and other tourism establishments at various locations across the district.

Himachal Police Targets Mule Accounts in Cybercrime Crackdown

Shimla : The cyber cell of the Himachal Pradesh Police has begun scrutinising suspicious bank accounts suspected of being used as mule accounts by cyber criminals as part of an intensified drive against online fraud.

Mule accounts are bank accounts used by fraudsters, particularly digital scammers, to route illegal transactions, sometimes without the actual account holder being aware that the account is being misused.

During the verification exercise, police will examine the KYC details of account holders as well as the volume and nature of transactions carried out through the accounts.

Following investigation, accounts identified as mule accounts may be frozen, while legal proceedings, including registration of FIRs against account holders, will also be initiated.

The police have urged people to immediately inform authorities if they notice any suspicious transactions in their bank accounts.

Citizens have also been warned not to disclose personal or financial information, including OTPs, passwords and contact details, to anyone

People who become victims of cyber fraud have been advised to immediately call the free cybercrime helpline at 1930.

Bara Bhangal Gets Natural Farming Panchayat Status

Dharamsala : Bara Bhangal, one of Himachal Pradesh’s most remote settlements, has officially been designated a “Natural Farming Gram Panchayat”, giving formal recognition to its traditional chemical-free agricultural practices.

An e-Gazette notification issued by Agriculture Secretary C Palrasu has declared the Bara Bhangal area of Baijnath development block in Kangra district a natural farming panchayat with immediate effect. The notification prohibits the import, sale, distribution and use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers for agricultural and horticultural crops in the area. The restrictions also cover animal and poultry feed.

Departments including Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry and Rural Development, along with state marketing boards and agriculture and horticulture universities, have been instructed to take the necessary



steps to support the initiative.

The decision follows an announcement made by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu during his two-day visit to Bara Bhangal in June. At that time, he had said the area would be given natural farming panchayat status and that a branding initiative would be launched for

its naturally cultivated rajmah, or kidney beans. He had also encouraged farmers to diversify into walnut and chestnut cultivation.Bar

Bhangal lies deep in the Dhauladhar mountain range and remains inaccessible for several months during winter. Reaching the village generally requires strenuous multi-day treks over high

mountain passes, including the 4,800-metre Thamsar Jot. It can also be reached through difficult trails from neighbouring Chamba district. Another route is available from Manali through the 4,850-metre Kalihani Pass, although it is less frequently used because of the demanding trek.The region’s isolation and difficult terrain

have helped preserve traditional agriculture and livestock-based livelihoods. Apart from rajmah, farmers cultivate barley, potatoes, cauliflower, cabbage and coarse cereals. Last year, the state government declared the tribal Pangti valley a natural farming subdivision, making it the first region in Himachal Pradesh to receive that designation.Meanwhile, efforts are being made to improve mobile connectivity in Bara Bhangal. Kangra Deputy Commissioner Hemraj Bairwa, during a meeting earlier this week, directed BSNL to restart the process of installing a telecommunications tower based on a feasibility survey conducted in 2024.

BSNL has been asked to prepare a detailed cost estimate covering the logistics involved in transporting the tower, equipment and other material by helicopter. The proposal will then be sent to the state government for approvals and funding.

Sukhu Announces Rs 2 Crore for Remote Village School

Shimla : Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has announced Rs 2 crore for a new school building at Kasha Pat village in Shimla district’s Rampur Assembly constituency and said the government was working to introduce a bus service connecting the remote village with Rampur through Takleeh.

Sukhu visited Kasha Pat under the state government’s ‘Sarkar Gaon Ke Dwar’ programme and stayed overnight at the residence of local resident Supan Das. Villagers welcomed him with traditional musical instruments and traditional attire. Cultural programmes were organised during the visit, with the Chief Minister also joining residents in the traditional Nati dance.

Announcing the Rs 2-crore allocation for the school building, Sukhu said efforts were also being made to start a bus service from Kasha Pat to Rampur via Takleeh.

He said the government was committed to ensuring that children were not deprived of education or faced difficulties in travelling to school. The proposed bus service, he said, was being pursued with the same objective.

Sukhu said development of remote and far-flung areas had been given special importance so that people living in such regions did not remain excluded from the state’s overall development.He pointed out that road construction in Himachal Pradesh often requires clearance from the Forest Department. Nearly 68 per cent of the state’s geographical area is covered by forests, creating several challenges in building roads in remote locations. Despite these constraints, he said, the government was continuously working to improve road connectivity and provide basic facilities in distant areas.

The Chief Minister also announced Rs 5 lakh each for the construction of buildings for Mahila Mandals. Those Mahila Mandals that already have buildings would receive an additional Rs 1 lakh each for purchasing essential equipment and other requirements.

Damtal Police Take Over Frozen Assets of Drug Peddler

Nurpur : Damtal police in Nurpur have taken physical possession of immovable properties belonging to alleged drug trafficker Balwinder Singh alias Billa and his wife Urmila Devi, in a move aimed at targeting the financial assets linked to narcotics trafficking.

The action was carried out on Friday after the Competent Authority-cum-Administrator (NDPS), New Delhi, issued an order on October 1 authorising the SHO of Damtal police station to take possession of and manage the frozen properties.

The properties include a hotel-cum-restaurant and eight shops situated at Toki near National Highway-44. The action has been taken under the Smugglers and Foreign Exchange Manipulators (Forfeiture of Property) Act, 1976, and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985.Nurpur SP Ilma Afroz said district police had approached the Competent Authority-cum-Administrator seeking permission to

take control of and manage the frozen properties of the alleged drug peddlers.

The Damtal SHO was subsequently authorised under Section 68-G of the NDPS Act to implement the order issued by the authority. Afroz said the action reflected a shift towards attacking assets allegedly accumulated from drug trafficking rather than restricting enforcement to arrests and narcotics seizures.She said targeting “narco-wealth” under Chapter V-A of the NDPS Act would play an important role in weakening the financial network of the interstate drug mafia.According to the SP, three NDPS cases have been registered against Balwinder Singh at Damtal police station and two at Indora police station. She said Singh had been convicted in one of the cases and was currently lodged in judicial custody at Dharamsala jail.The Competent Authority had ordered the freezing of assets valued at approximately Rs 3.32 crore on September 9. Police subsequently froze the prop-

erties on September 12 by placing notices and signboards at the sites.

The latest action is being viewed by the police as a step towards dismantling the financial infrastructure allegedly supporting drug trafficking.In a significant operational development aimed at neutralizing the financial backbone of illicit narcotics syndicates operating within the region, the Damtal police under the Nurpur police division have successfully taken physical possession of extensive immovable properties belonging to an alleged drug trafficker, Balwinder Singh, locally known by the alias Billa, alongside his wife, Urmila Devi.This decisive law enforcement measure marks a calculated escalation in local anti-narcotics enforcement strategies, reflecting an aggressive push by authorities to target and systematically dismantle the financial assets directly linked to organized drug trafficking networks operating across district and state borders.

Tourist Rush Returns to Dharamsala and Bir-Billing

Dharamsala : Tourist arrivals have risen sharply in Kangra district after the monsoon rains subsided, with Dharamsala, McLeodganj and Bir-Billing witnessing a strong weekend influx during the long holiday period.

Hotels in Dharamsala and nearby areas are reporting occupancy levels between 80 and 90 per cent. Deputy Director of Tourism Vinay Dhiman said the region had attracted a significant number of visitors from different parts of the country during the long weekend.

He said the presence of the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, in Dharamsala had also contributed to the increase in tourist activity, with visitors continuing to arrive in McLeodganj and surrounding areas.

Ashwani Bamba, president of the Kangra Hotel and Restaurant Association, attributed part of the current rush to the holiday season in



major tourist markets such as Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

Bamba said hotels were operating at around 80 to 90 per cent occupancy and noted that this was also the period when educational tours from several North Indian states visit the region.

He expressed optimism about tourist arrivals remaining strong in the coming months.

The Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association’s International Cricket Stadium has emerged as another attraction, drawing hundreds of tourists every day.

The increase in visitor numbers has led police to strengthen traffic management and security arrangements at major tourist locations.

Kangra Superintendent of Police Kulbhushan Verma

said additional personnel had been deployed in McLeodganj, Dharamkot and Bhagsu to handle the increased movement.

Verma said SHO- and DSP-level officers were personally supervising traffic arrangements on roads in busy tourist zones. Special arrangements had also been made for visitors heading towards the popular Triund trek.

Lawrence School Marks 179th Founder’s Day With Alumni Return

Solan : The Lawrence School, Sanawar, one of the world’s oldest co-educational residential schools, began its three-day 179th Founder’s Day celebrations on Saturday with a programme combining sports, alumni activities and cultural events involving students, parents, staff and Old Sanawarians.

The opening day began on the sports field with a girls’ basketball match between Old Sanawarians (OS) and Present Sanawarians (PS), followed by a boys’ match at Peaces-tead. The games gave former students and current pupils an opportunity to reconnect through sporting competition and camaraderie.

A particularly emotional event was the Special Assembly held at the school chapel for the Old Sanawarian Jubilee Batches of 1956, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1996 and 2001. The alumni later gathered for group photographs at the Golden Staircase.



Former students who returned to their alma mater after decades reunited with classmates and friends, turning

the occasion into a celebration of memories, friendships and the enduring connection with Sanawar.

Kasauli Awaits New Development Plan Five Years On

Solan : Residents of Kasauli are still waiting for a new development plan five years after the previous Kasauli Development Plan (KDP), prepared by the Town and Country Planning Department to regulate construction, expired.

In the absence of a fresh plan, commercial activity has expanded rapidly across the Kasauli Planning Area, which covers 35 revenue villages and 1,911

hectares. Numerous tourism establishments have come up across the area without sufficient consideration for the carrying capacity of the fragile hill environment.

Residents are particularly worried about the growing number of hotels along major roads without adequate parking facilities. The shortage of parking has resulted in vehicles being parked haphazardly

and has contributed to persistent congestion on routes such as Dharampur-Kasauli and Dharampur-Sanawar.

The problem becomes especially severe on weekends, when motorists can take nearly an hour to travel the 15-km stretch between Dharampur and Kasauli.Although the Kasauli area is also covered by a regional plan notified by the Town and

Country Planning Department in January this year, its implementation on the ground remains limited, reducing the effectiveness of the notification.The regional plan was prepared following directions from the state High Court and was intended, among other objectives, to identify “No Development Zones” to conserve areas in their natural condition, particularly sensitive hill regions.

Kullu-Manali Cinema Festival Opens With 100-Plus Films

Mandi : The four-day Kullu Manali International Cinema Festival began at Paddal Ground in Mandi on Saturday as part of the Shakh Mandi Utsav, bringing more than 100 films from different genres and backgrounds to the event.

Presented by the Society for Himachal Art and Culture, the festival was inaugurated by Additional Deputy Commissioner Priyanshu Khatri, who formally opened the event by lighting the ceremonial lamp.

Festival Director Ram Pal Malik and members of the organising committee welcomed Khatri and presented him with a memento during the opening ceremony.

The festival began with the screening of “End of the Beginning”, a short film directed by Ram Pal Malik. The film focuses on the social evil of female foeticide and highlights the consequences of gender discrimination.

tion and practices that threaten the survival of the girl child.

The film’s cast and crew include Yadav, Balakrishnan Sharma, Chitra, Vikram Thakur, Ranjit Singh Kanwar, Rajesh, Pushp Raj and Rishi Sharma. Shiv K Garg is its Director of Photography.

Presented by Sirmaur Films and Tribhuvan Films, the film has been produced by Anil Sharma, Gajender, PS Gulati and Dinesh Thakur.

The Kasheri nullah has posed a serious threat to residents in the past as well. A cloudburst in 2018 caused extensive destruction in the area, while the stream again caused widespread damage in 2025.

Despite repeated incidents and years of appeals, construction of the much-needed Bailey bridge at the location has progressed very slowly.

Local residents have expressed frustration over the delay and alleged that repeated requests to the area MLA have not produced results. One villager said residents were tired of approaching the MLA because nothing appeared to be happening.



Briefs :

SHO Injured While Rescuing Youth in Ambala

Ambala : Inspector Suresh Kumar, Station House Officer of the Naggal police station, was injured when he allegedly confronted a group of youths while attempting to rescue a young man being attacked near a restaurant in Matheri village on Friday night.

According to an Ambala police spokesperson, the incident took place around 9.30 pm when Suresh Kumar was travelling in his private vehicle.

He reportedly noticed four to five miscreants assaulting a youth and stopped to intervene.

The attackers allegedly turned on the police officer and assaulted him with knives and bricks. Inspector Kumar sustained injuries to his

Five-Lakh Rewardee Held in Abohar Murder Case

Fazilka : The Haryana Special Task Force has arrested Abohar resident Shakti Kumar in connection with the broad-daylight killing of cloth showroom owner Sanjay Verma, nearly two weeks after the arrest of two alleged shooters in Jodhpur.

Shakti Kumar, who had a reward of Rs 5 lakh announced by the Punjab Police, was apprehended from Hisar on Saturday, according to sources. Acting on specific information, an STF team intercepted him near the bypass flyover on Rajgarh Road in Hisar.

Police allegedly recovered an illegal .32-bore pistol and three live cartridges from his possession. Investigators suspect Shakti of helping the two shooters escape after they allegedly shot Verma. The showroom owner was killed in broad daylight on July 7, 2025.

Verma had stepped out of his car and was walking towards his showroom when the attackers opened fire before fleeing the spot.

The murder caused widespread shock in Abohar.

Five Haryana Residents Held With Chitta in Palampur

Palampur : Police have arrested five people, including a woman, and allegedly seized 7.92 grams of chitta, or heroin, from a hotel in the Lohana area of Palampur in Kangra district.

According to the police, all five accused are residents of Sirsa in Haryana and were staying at a local hotel.

A case has been registered against them under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Kangra Superintendent of Police Kulbhushan Verma confirmed the arrests and said the police had intensified their campaign against the illegal drug trade in the district.

He said regular inspections were being carried out at hotels, homestays and other tourism establishments at different locations in Kangra.

The checking drive would continue as part of efforts to stop the supply and consumption of chitta.

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Haryana Enforces ‘No PUC, No Fuel’ Rule in NCR

Chandigarh : The Haryana Transport Department has ordered petrol pump operators and retail fuel outlets in the state’s National Capital Region districts to check for a valid Pollution Under Control Certificate (PUC) before supplying fuel. The move comes as part of intensified measures to tackle air pollution in the Delhi-NCR region.

The directive follows Direction No. 101 issued by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), under which the “No PUC, No Fuel” requirement came into force across Delhi and the NCR from October 1, 2026.

The Haryana Government is also stepping up enforcement of vehicle emission norms, including the installation and use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras at petrol pumps in NCR districts.



Petrol, diesel and CNG stations have been instructed to refuse fuel to vehicles that do not have a valid PUC. Once operational, ANPR cameras will verify vehicle registration numbers against the online PUC database.

Until ANPR systems are fully installed and functional across all NCR districts, petrol pump owners have been asked to ensure that employees manually check the PUC of every vehicle. If a driver cannot produce a valid certificate, fuel must be refused immediately and the vehicle registration number recorded for official action.

Vehicles without a valid PUC must also be directed to the nearest authorised PUC testing centre, either at the outlet or nearby, so that the certificate can be obtained before refuelling.

All petrol pumps have further been ordered to display clearly visible bilingual warning boards in Hindi and English at entry points and fuel dispensing areas.

Wanted Miscreant Shot in Sonapat Police Encounter

Sonapat : Rohit alias Budha, who was wanted in cases involving the firing at Haryanvi singer Diler Kharkiya’s Range Rover and the murder of a toll plaza manager, sustained bullet injuries in both legs during a police encounter in Sonapat district on Saturday night.

The operation was conducted in the Barota-Chhatchra area following a tip-off and involved the Sonapat STF and Crime Branch of the Delhi Police.

Police identified the accused as Rohit alias Budha, a resident of Ladpur village in the Rai area. He was subsequently admitted to Civil Hospital, Sonapat. Police said more than half a dozen criminal cases, including loot, attempt to murder and murder, are registered against Rohit. Sonapat STF Inspector Ajay Dhankar said

Rohit was wanted in the murder of toll plaza manager Sanjay Shukla and in the case concerning firing at singer Diler Kharkiya’s Range Rover in Kharak Kalan village of Bhiwani district.

The firing incident was reported on the night of September 17. According to police, a youth riding a motorcycle fired at the singer’s vehicle before escaping. CCTV footage of the incident later circulated widely on social media. A social media account in the name of Anil Pandit also claimed responsibility for the attack.

During the investigation, Rohit’s name emerged in connection with the firing, following which police began searching for him. Police said Rohit opened fire at the police teams during the encounter, prompting retaliatory firing.

MDU Clears 92 Delayed Teacher Promotions

Rohtak : Maharshi Dayanand University (MDU) has approved 92 long-pending promotion cases of teachers working in government-aided colleges under the Career Advancement Scheme (CAS), following completion of document scrutiny, screening, evaluation and interviews.

Of the 92 teachers, 14 have been promoted to Academic Level-11, 39 to Level-12, 36 to Level-13A and three to Level-14. Several of the cases had remained pending since 2021, 2022 and 2023.

The three oldest cases involving Level-14 promotions had been pending since January 1, 2016.

Based on the due dates, the cases included two from 2021, six from 2022, 17 from 2023, 18 from 2024, 40 from 2025 and six from 2026. The teachers concerned include Assistant Professors, Associate Pro-

fessors, Professors and Librarians.

Screening-cum-Evaluation/Selection Committee meetings were conducted on June 25, July 16, September 25, September 26 and October 1 this year. The pending cases were cleared after the prescribed scrutiny, evaluation and interview process was completed.

MDU Public Relations Officer Pankaj Nain said Prof Rajesh Punia, who is serving as Dean of the College Development Council, played an important role in monitoring and pursuing the delayed cases.

Punia worked with the concerned colleges to collect records, examine documents and prepare for the committee meetings, with support from the College Branch team.

The teachers promoted under the process belong to a wide range of disciplines, including Mathematics, English, Chemistry, Physics, Commerce, Economics, Physical Education, Geography, Sanskrit, Psychology, Political Science, History, Hindi, Computer Science, Zoology, Education and Public Administration.

Teachers from affiliated government-aided colleges in Rohtak, Sonapat, Palwal, Jhajjar, Ballabgarh, Bahadurgarh and Kalanaur have benefited from the promotions.

Nain said the disposal of the long-pending cases would allow eligible teachers to receive career progression benefits under CAS.

He added that the university authorities had thanked the Director and Additional Chief Secretary of the Haryana Higher Education Department for their cooperation in completing the process.

Rao Seeks MSP-Assured Bajra Procurement in Haryana

Rewari : Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh has raised concerns over the difficulties being faced by bajra growers in southern Haryana and asked Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini to ensure that government agencies procure the crop at the officially fixed price.

Rao contacted the Chief Minister on Saturday after expressing concern that government agencies were allegedly refusing to purchase bajra while farmers were facing harassment in mandis. He told Saini that officials were finding faults with farmers’ produce, creating problems in the procurement process.

Before speaking to the Chief Minister, Rao obtained reports on bajra procurement from the Deputy Commissioners of Rewari and Mahendragarh, according to an official statement. He subsequently directed the Deputy Commissioners to address the farmers’ grievances. The



Union Minister pointed out that southern Haryana is a major bajra-producing area and that a large number of farmers depend on the crop for their livelihood. Any disruption in procurement, he said, could cause financial losses to growers. Rao stressed that every grain produced by farmers should be purchased at the government-declared price. He said the procurement system needed to function smoothly and efficiently so that growers were not forced to sell their produce to private traders at lower rates. He also specifically

urged the Chief Minister to give priority to the concerns of bajra-producing farmers in the southern parts of the state. Saini, according to the statement, assured Rao that effective measures would be taken to address the issue.

Meanwhile, Haryana Congress president Rao Narendra Singh also questioned the state government over the procurement situation. He said farmers put in considerable effort to grow their crops but were being made to face difficulties when they brought their produce to mandis.

Singh said the government had announced that bajra growers would receive Rs 2,900 per quintal under the Bhavantar Bharpai Yojana, but delays in procurement were preventing farmers from getting the assured price. He claimed that farmers had reported selling bajra to private buyers for around Rs 2,200 to Rs 2,300 per quintal, considerably below the government-announced rate of Rs 2,900. He asked the government to explain when farmers would actually receive the price it had promised.

The Congress leader also highlighted complaints regarding fertiliser shortages, delayed payments and inadequate remunerative prices. He said the government must ensure that farmers were not forced to move from one mandi to another in search of buyers and that they received a fair return for their crops without unnecessary delay.

Congress Plans Haryana-Wide ‘Save Vote’ Marches

Chandigarh : The Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee has announced district-wide protests on October 8 under its ‘Save Vote-Save Nation’ campaign, with the party saying the initiative is aimed at strengthening the democratic system.

HPCC president Rao Narendra Singh said the week had been dedicated to strengthening democracy and that, in coordination with INDIA Alliance partners, protests would be organised throughout Haryana on October 8.

Singh said the INDIA Alliance held a meeting at the Constitution Club of India in New Delhi on September 30, where issues concerning the electoral process



and voter lists were discussed in detail.

The meeting also considered allegations involving the Chief Election Commissioner, claims of “vote theft” and the alliance’s future joint action plan. As part of a wider public-awareness and outreach programme, the alliance decided to observe ‘Save Democracy Week’ from October 2 to 8, 2026.

The Haryana Congress

Bobby Kataria Denies Death Rumour After Instagram Hack

Gurugram : Social media influencer Bobby Kataria has denied reports of his death after hackers allegedly used his old Instagram account to upload a series of posts announcing that he had passed away.

The false claim appeared through Kataria’s official Instagram account in Gurugram and quickly led followers to post condolence messages.

Several users flooded the comments with “Rest in Peace” messages after seeing the posts.

Kataria later released a video through a new social media account and said he was alive, urging people not to believe the rumours.

He stated that his account had been hacked

and that false information had been posted from it.

According to Kataria, the old Instagram account had been managed by another person and was subsequently compromised.

He alleged that the hackers were attempting to create confusion and fear among his followers.

The compromised account uploaded 12 consecutive videos claiming that Kataria had died.

The posts included gym photographs and older videos carrying messages such as “Miss You Bhai” and “RIP”. One gym-related post had crossed 2.3 million views. The account has around 32,700 followers.

A total of 214 posts have so far been uploaded from the Instagram ID

used to publish the fake death claim.

The account also follows Kataria’s main profile, which is mentioned in its bio.

Kataria said his technical team was working to regain control of the hacked account.

He warned those responsible to delete the fake material immediately and said failure to do so would lead to strict legal action.

Kataria has previously been involved in controversies. In 2022, cases carrying serious charges were registered against him after videos circulated online showing him smoking a cigarette inside an aircraft and consuming alcohol while sitting in the middle of a road in Uttara-

DLF’s Aureva Sold Out at Rs 1,985 Crore

Gurugram : DLF has announced the complete sale of The Aureva, its newly launched senior-citizen retirement housing project in Sector 63, Gurugram, with sales reaching around Rs 1,985 crore.

The luxury development comprises 172 residences, putting the estimated average value of each home at around Rs 11.5 crore. DLF, however, has not disclosed the prices of individual units.

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The Aureva covers 1.687 hectares, or 4.17 acres. Its residences have a combined carpet area exceeding 37,540 square metres, equivalent to

more than four lakh square feet, while the total saleable area is over 7.5 lakh square feet. Based on the saleable area, the estimated sales value works out to a maximum of about Rs 26,500 per square foot.

DLF said the rapid sell-out reflects strong interest in premium retirement communities that combine wellness, convenience, healthcare facilities and opportunities for social engagement.

Aakash Ohri, Managing Director and Chief Business Officer of DLF Home Developers Ltd, said the project represents the company’s aim of

“redefining luxury retirement housing in India”. He said senior residents were increasingly seeking homes designed to improve everyday living through thoughtful planning, wellness features and a strong community environment.

The project is housed in a standalone G+45-floor tower and offers four-bedroom residences equipped with dedicated staff dormitories, large private decks, premium finishes and universally accessible design features. Every residence has three dedicated parking spaces.

The facilities include a luxury clubhouse, fitness and wellness areas, an indoor swimming pool, spa, yoga pavilion, meditation centre, library, banquet facilities, landscaped gardens and outdoor gathering spaces.

Residents will also have access to a professionally managed medical centre within the complex, including emergency response support and need-based healthcare services.

Ohri said the project’s performance demonstrated rising demand for premium, experience-focused residential developments in this segment and described The Aureva as a potential new

benchmark for the emerging category. HB Design is the master planner for the project, while SHMA has worked as landscape architect. BO Steiber Lighting Design, Hewshott for acoustics and ESD Global for sustainability and green-building advisory have also been associated as consultants.

The Aureva is located next to The Arbour in Sector 63. Its location provides connectivity to Golf Course Extension Road, Southern Peripheral Road and NH-48, besides access to Gurugram’s commercial and educational centres.

Minister Inspects Chhachhrauli Mandi, Seeks Smooth Paddy Procurement

Yamunanagar : Haryana Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shyam Singh Rana inspected arrangements for paddy procurement at the Chhachhrauli grain market on Saturday and instructed officials to ensure that farmers faced no difficulty while selling their produce.

During his visit, Rana met farmers and commission agents and reviewed the facilities and arrangements at the market. The minister expressed satisfaction with the available facilities and said that under Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini’s leadership, the Haryana Government was committed to ensuring that farmers received fair prices for their agricultural produce.

Rana said officials of the departments concerned had been asked to coordinate

closely so that paddy procurement remained transparent and efficient.

He stressed that farmers should not face unnecessary difficulties at grain markets and said special attention was being given both to procurement and the timely lifting of the procured crop.

The minister also directed officials to ensure that growers did not have to wait unnecessarily before selling their produce. He asked commission agents to extend cooperation to the district administration so that the procurement process could proceed smoothly.

Chhachhrauli: SDM Jaspal Singh Gill, DFSC Nitish Singla and Market Committee Chairman Kaishash Chaudhary were among the officials present during the inspection.

Shubman Gill Backs Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Rules Out Resting Veterans

New Delhi : India ODI captain Shubman Gill has strongly backed veteran batters Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma following their impressive performances against the West Indies, stressing that the two senior players remain important to the team's plans. Gill's comments came after India concluded the three-match ODI series in New Chandigarh on Saturday.

Kohli and Rohit were among India's standout performers during the series, once again drawing attention to their continued contribution in the 50-over format. Kohli scored an unbeaten century in the first ODI, while Rohit produced a hundred in the second match. The former India captain then came close to another century in the third ODI before being dismissed for 92.

Rohit's performance in the series was particularly notable as he continued to demonstrate his ability to score heavily despite being one of India's oldest active players in the format. Kohli, meanwhile, also showed his consistency by producing a match-winning hundred in the opening game and anchoring India's batting effort.

Despite their strong performances, questions continue to surround the future of both players in ODI cricket because of their age. Kohli is 37, while Rohit is 39, and there has been discussion about whether India should



gradually provide opportunities to younger players ahead of future assignments.

Gill, however, showed little interest in entertaining speculation about dropping or resting the two veterans. Instead, he highlighted their current form and the importance of having experienced players in India's ODI setup as the team looks towards the next World Cup. Speaking at the post-match press conference after India's defeat in the third ODI, Gill said he was impressed with the way both Kohli and Rohit had batted during the series. He also pointed out that when the senior batters were unable to deliver, another experienced player, KL Rahul, had stepped up for the team.

"They've been batting really well," Gill said while discussing the performances of the senior players. He not-

ed that Rohit had been in particularly good form, while also praising Kohli for his contribution. Gill also highlighted Rahul's performances whenever he had been given an opportunity.

Gill's comments underline the confidence that the current ODI captain has in India's experienced batting core. Rather than viewing the veterans simply in terms of their age, the captain appears focused on their recent performances and their ability to contribute to the team's objectives. Rohit's run of form has been especially encouraging for India. Gill pointed out that the veteran opener had scored his third hundred in his last four innings, underlining the consistency he has shown in recent matches. Although Rohit missed out on a century in the third ODI, his score

of 92 once again demonstrated his ability to make a major contribution. Kohli also continued to provide India with the experience and stability expected from one of the team's most accomplished ODI batters. His unbeaten century in the first match of the series was another reminder of his ability to influence games in the format. Gill also made it clear that the discussion cannot be limited to Kohli and Rohit alone. He praised KL Rahul for stepping up whenever he received an opportunity and contributing with the bat. The captain's comments suggested that India's experienced players continue to have an important role within the team's overall batting combination. There had been suggestions that India could use the upcoming ODI matches to experiment with

different combinations and potentially rest Kohli and Rohit. Such a strategy could give younger players greater exposure, particularly with the next generation of Indian cricketers being considered for long-term roles.

Gill, however, ruled out the idea of extensive experimentation, pointing to the limited number of ODI matches available to India. According to the captain, the team does not have unlimited opportunities to test combinations before major tournaments. "I honestly think there is not that much time to experiment," Gill said. He explained that India would ideally want all available players to be part of the team from the next series onwards so that the preferred combination can begin playing together regularly. The captain's comments indicate that India wants to use its upcoming ODI assignments to build continuity rather than constantly rotate its key players. With a World Cup in the team's long-term plans, Gill believes it is important to establish the desired combination well in advance. The Indian team will now have a break of roughly a month before returning to ODI cricket. India's next ODI assignment will be against New Zealand, giving the team an opportunity to continue developing its preferred combination and assess players ahead of future commitments.

Dhoni Advice Helps Shai Hope Guide West Indies to Historic Chase

New Delhi : West Indies captain Shai Hope revealed that advice from former India captain MS Dhoni came to his mind during a difficult 352-run chase against India in the third and final ODI in Mullanpur. Hope said Dhoni had once told him, "You always have more time than you think," and those words helped him remain patient during a tense run chase. Hope eventually produced one of the finest ODI innings of his career, scoring an unbeaten 162 off 143 balls to guide West Indies to a memorable five-wicket victory.

The West Indies had entered the final match with the ODI series already lost after India won the first two games. However, the visitors were determined to finish the series on a positive note and produced a remarkable performance in the final match. Chasing 352, the Men in Maroon completed the target in 48.2 overs to register their highest successful chase in ODI cricket.

Hope was at the centre of the historic victory. The West Indies captain opened the innings and remained at the crease until the winning runs were scored. He also kept wickets for the entire Indian innings, meaning he had already spent 50 overs behind the stumps before taking responsibility for the demanding chase. Despite physical discomfort during his innings, Hope continued to fight and guided his team



over the line. India had posted a massive 351 for seven after being asked to bat first. KL Rahul produced a superb unbeaten 129, while Rohit Sharma contributed a valuable 92. Ruturaj Gaikwad also played an important role with a quick 57. Their combined efforts gave India a strong total and appeared to put the hosts in a commanding position.

The West Indies, however, refused to allow the required run rate or the size of the target to affect their approach. Hope took responsibility at the top of the order and focused on building the innings gradually. Rather than attempting to score all the required runs quickly, he concentrated on partnerships and ensured that wickets were preserved for the later stages of the chase.

Hope said the advice he received from Dhoni played an important role in his approach. According to the West Indies captain, the former India wicketkeeper-batter had told him that a batter often has more time

than he initially believes. Hope remembered those words when the pressure increased and used the advice to break the chase into smaller targets instead of focusing on the enormous total of 352.

The situation became even more challenging for West Indies as they were not at full strength during the chase. Hope pointed out that his team was already a batter down and felt they were potentially two batters short. Despite those difficulties, the West Indies captain stayed calm and continued to build the innings alongside his teammates.

Hope also paid attention to India's over-rate situation, which eventually became another factor in the chase. He knew India would have to bring additional fielders inside the circle if they received an over-rate penalty. Instead of rushing his shots, Hope waited for opportunities and remained patient. His approach allowed him to take advantage of the changing field and keep the required rate under control.

Akmal Slams Saim Ayub Over Sooryavanshi Sendoff

New Delhi : Former Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter Kamran Akmal has strongly criticised all-rounder Saim Ayub for his controversial celebration during the Asian Games 2026 gold medal match against India. Ayub's send-off to 15-year-old Indian opener Vaibhav Sooryavanshi became one of the most discussed moments of the high-profile contest and attracted criticism from fans and former players.

The incident took place during the third over of the match when Ayub dismissed Sooryavanshi for 15 runs off just nine deliveries. After completing the dismissal, Ayub did not settle for a conventional celebration. Instead, he performed a "baby in the cradle" gesture, appearing to mock the young Indian batter because of his age. Sooryavanshi, who is only 15, quietly walked back towards the dugout after losing his wicket. The contrast between the teenager's reaction and Ayub's celebration quickly caught the attention of viewers. Videos and pictures of the incident spread widely across social media, turning a moment in the match into a major talking point.

The celebration attracted criticism because of Sooryavanshi's young age. Although international and high-level



cricket can involve intense competition and emotional celebrations, the gesture was viewed by several fans as unnecessary. The incident also became particularly noticeable because it happened during a major India-Pakistan contest, where every moment tends to receive significant attention. Akmal was among those who expressed disappointment over what happened. The former Pakistan international questioned why Ayub felt the need to make such a gesture after dismissing the young Indian batter. According to Akmal, players representing Pakistan at the international level should concentrate more on their cricket and performances rather than actions that can generate attention on social media.

Speaking on a sports discussion show, Akmal said that such incidents had been happening for a long time. He argued that Pakistan's recent perfor-

mances had not been good enough and suggested that players should focus on improving their cricket rather than creating moments specifically for online attention.

"These things have been happening for a long time. Our performance hasn't been great, but we are doing things for social media," Akmal said. His comments reflected his frustration with what he believes is a growing focus on social media reactions rather than performances on the field.

Akmal also directed his criticism towards the team management. He said the management should think carefully about such incidents because the players are representing Pakistan in international cricket. In his view, the standard expected from international players should remain high regardless of the opponent or the age of the player involved.

The former wicketkeeper-batter specifically pointed out that Sooryavanshi's age should not be used as a reason to treat him differently as a cricketer. Once a young player steps onto the international stage, he is competing as a professional cricketer. Akmal therefore believed that Ayub should have maintained the same level of respect expected in international cricket.

Gavaskar Sets Century Target for Rohit

New Delhi : India batting great Sunil Gavaskar has revealed a personal target he wants Rohit Sharma to achieve before the veteran batter eventually brings his international career to an end.

Gavaskar said he was disappointed when Rohit missed a century against the West Indies in the third ODI, despite scoring a valuable 92. According to Gavaskar, Rohit should ideally finish his ODI career with more centuries than his age at retirement.

Rohit played an important innings for India in the third ODI in New Chandigarh, scoring 92 runs. However, his dismissal just eight runs short of a century left Gavaskar frustrated. India eventually lost the match, although the senior opener had once again shown his ability to produce a substantial contribution at the top of the order.

Gavaskar's disappointment was not because Rohit's 92 was a poor score. Instead, it was connected to a bigger milestone that the

former India captain believes would perfectly reflect Rohit's remarkable ODI career. Rohit currently has 35

such an achievement would be a fitting reflection of the consistency and quality Rohit has maintained over a



ODI centuries, and Gavaskar wants that number to be higher than Rohit's age when he eventually retires.

By the time the 2027 ODI World Cup concludes, Rohit is expected to be 40 years old.

If he continues playing international cricket until that tournament, Gavaskar would like him to have at least 41 ODI hundreds. The former India opener believes

long career.

Rohit had an opportunity to move to 36 ODI centuries in the third match against the West Indies. He reached 92 and appeared well placed to convert his innings into another hundred, but he was dismissed before reaching the landmark. Gavaskar admitted that the missed opportunity was particularly frustrating because every century brings Rohit closer

to the target he has in mind.

"The reason I was disappointed with Rohit getting out on 92 is because he didn't get a hundred," Gavaskar said while speaking on Jio-Star's 'Haier Cricket Live'. He explained that Rohit could possibly retire from international cricket after the 2027 World Cup, making the remaining period of his career especially important.

Gavaskar said he personally likes the idea of a player having more international centuries than his age at retirement.

He believes such a statistic represents the level a batter has maintained over many years. For Rohit, achieving that mark would provide another memorable achievement at the end of an already highly successful career.

"For me, it's a special thing when a player's hundreds outnumber his age at retirement," Gavaskar said. He explained that such a milestone shows the kind of career the player has had and the standard he has maintained over a long period.

Pant Reveals Secret Behind Irani Cup Win

New Delhi : Rest of India captain Rishabh Pant revealed that a simple but important bowling adjustment played a major role in his team's 167-run victory over Jammu and Kashmir in the Irani Cup on Sunday. After falling 41 runs behind in the first innings, Rest of India made a tactical correction in the second innings by asking their bowlers to pitch the ball fuller. The change produced immediate results as the Ranji Trophy champions were bowled out for just 111 while chasing 279.

Rest of India had faced a difficult situation after Jammu and Kashmir took a first-innings lead.

Their bowlers had not been able to execute the original plan consistently and often bowled too far back of a length. That allowed the J&K batters to build their innings and establish an advantage in the match.

Pant admitted that the team was disappointed with the way the first innings had gone. The original plan had been to attack the stumps and bowl a fuller length, but the bowlers moved away from



that strategy during the innings. The captain and his team management recognised the problem and decided that the approach needed to change when they got another opportunity.

The tactical correction became the turning point of the contest. In the second innings, Rest of India's bowlers repeatedly targeted a fuller length and challenged the batters closer to their stumps.

Instead of allowing Jammu and Kashmir's batters to settle, the bowlers created regular opportunities and eventually completed a stunning collapse.

Pacer Mukesh Kumar led the attack in spectacular fashion. He returned figures

of 6 for 33 and dismantled the Jammu and Kashmir batting order during their chase. His spell was central to Rest of India's victory and ensured that the target of 279 became far beyond the reach of the Ranji Trophy champions.

The victory was particularly satisfying for Pant because the team had been forced to recover after conceding the first-innings deficit.

The Rest of India captain said that winning at the end of such a demanding match made the fatigue and difficulties disappear. He highlighted the satisfaction of seeing a tactical plan work after the team had corrected its mistakes.

Yamal Stars as Spain Beat Czech Republic

New Delhi : Lamine Yamal continued his remarkable goalscoring run as Spain defeated the Czech Republic 3-1 in the Nations League on Saturday. The victory strengthened Spain's position at the top of Group A3, with the world champions moving three points clear of England. Spain have now won all three of their group matches and are unbeaten in 41 consecutive games.

Spain made a strong start in Oviedo and quickly established control of the match. Yamal opened the scoring before captain Rodri Hernandez doubled the advantage, putting Spain in a comfortable position. However, the Czech Republic fought back in the second half and reduced the deficit, creating a nervous final period for the hosts. The visitors' hopes of completing a comeback were eventually ended when Mikel Merino scored late in the match. The Czech Republic were also reduced to 10 players after Ladislav Krejci received a second yellow card and was sent off. Spain took advantage of the situation and secured another important victory. The result extended Spain's unbeaten

run to 41 matches, a sequence that includes their World Cup final victory over Argentina in July. Their latest success also maintained their perfect start to the Nations League campaign and increased the pressure on the teams chasing them at the top of the group. Rodri, who captained Spain, acknowledged that the Czech Republic had made life difficult for the world champions. "They are well drilled, I thought it would be one of the hardest games and that's how it was," Rodri told Spanish broadcaster TVE after the match. The midfielder said Spain had struggled at times to create the same number of opportunities they normally generate, but he was pleased with how the team managed the contest. "It was tricky but we got some chances. There are some matches in which you can't generate that much, but the team was able to manage the match," he said. Rodri also had a personal reason to celebrate after finding the net. The former Manchester City midfielder scored his first goal for Spain in more than two years, adding an important second goal for the hosts before half-time.

Mohun Bagan Face Punjab FC in IFA Shield Semi-Final

New Delhi : Defending champions Mohun Bagan will take on Punjab FC in a highly anticipated semi-final of the IFA Shield 2026 in Kolkata on Sunday. The two sides have already shown strong form in the group stage, setting up an exciting contest with a place in the final at stake. Both teams will be determined to take the next step towards lifting the historic trophy.

Mohun Bagan enter the semi-final as the 21-time champions and defending holders of the IFA Shield. The Kolkata giants have enjoyed a strong campaign so far and finished at the top of Group A. Their performances have given them confidence as they prepare to face a Punjab FC side that has also impressed during the tournament.

The defending champions began their group-stage campaign with a dominant 6-0 victory over Sreenidi Deccan. The emphatic result immediately underlined their attacking strength and gave them a strong start in their attempt to retain the title.

Mohun Bagan then



faced a more difficult challenge against NorthEast United. The match ended in a hard-fought draw, but the result was enough for the Kolkata club to finish top of Group A and secure their place in the knockout stage.

The defending champions will also have the advantage of playing in familiar surroundings in Kolkata. Home support could play an important role as Mohun Bagan attempt to reach the final for the second consecutive year. Their experience in the competition will also be an important factor going into the semi-final.

Punjab FC, however, have arrived at this stage with an equally impressive record. They topped Group B after winning both of their

matches. Their perfect group-stage record has given them plenty of confidence ahead of their biggest challenge of the tournament so far.

One of Punjab FC's most notable victories came against record champions East Bengal. Defeating such an experienced side provided an important statement of their ambitions and showed that Punjab FC are capable of competing with some of the biggest names in Indian football. The semi-final therefore brings together two group winners who have taken different routes to the last four. Mohun Bagan combined a big opening victory with a difficult draw, while Punjab FC won both of their group matches.

FPIs Pull Out Rs 35,861 Crore From Indian Equities in September

New Delhi : Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) turned heavy sellers in Indian equity markets in September, withdrawing Rs 35,861 crore on a net basis, as a combination of global and domestic concerns weighed on investor sentiment. The sharp outflow came after two consecutive months of strong FPI investments and marked a significant reversal in foreign investor activity in the Indian stock market.

The selling pressure continued into October, with FPIs beginning the new month on a negative note. Foreign investors sold Indian equities worth Rs 9,232 crore on a net basis in October so far, indicating that the cautious approach seen in September has carried forward into the new month.

The latest figures stand in contrast to the strong investment recorded by FPIs during July and August. Foreign investors had made net investments of around Rs 20,200 crore in July and another Rs 29,631 crore in August, reflecting renewed optimism towards Indian equities during those two months.

The reversal in September has raised questions over the sustainability of foreign flows into Indian markets, particularly amid changes in global economic conditions. Analysts have pointed to several factors behind the latest selling, including developments in West Asia, movements in crude oil prices, weakness in the Indian currency and elevated US bond yields.

The energy shock arising from the West Asia war has emerged as an important concern for global investors. Any sustained disruption or uncertainty in energy markets can influence crude oil prices and increase concerns about inflation, corporate costs and the broader economic outlook. For an oil-importing economy such as India, higher energy prices can also have implications for the country's external position.

Another factor influencing in-



vestor sentiment has been the weakness of the Indian rupee. A weaker domestic currency can affect foreign investors because returns generated from Indian assets may be reduced when converted back into their home currencies. Currency volatility can therefore become an additional consideration for global funds when deciding how much capital to allocate to emerging markets.

The rise in US long-term bond yields has also added pressure to emerging-market assets. The 30-year US Treasury yield touched a multi-decadal high of around 5.4 per cent, making US fixed-income assets relatively more attractive to international investors. Higher US yields can encourage global investors to reassess their exposure to riskier assets, including equities in emerging economies. The combination of these factors has contributed to a more cautious approach among foreign portfolio investors. Analysts, however, have added another factor to the list of reasons behind the September selloff—portfolio rotation. This suggests that some of the selling may not necessarily represent a complete withdrawal of foreign investors from

Indian assets but could also reflect a shift in allocation across sectors, markets and asset classes.

According to V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments, FPIs turned heavy sellers in September after remaining strong buyers in the preceding two months. He noted that the positive FPI flows recorded in July and August were linked partly to expectations of a decline in crude oil prices.

Vijayakumar said the investment trend seen during July and August eventually proved to be a temporary phenomenon. The change in expectations surrounding crude prices, combined with broader global uncertainties, contributed to the reversal in foreign portfolio flows during September. The shift in FPI behaviour is significant because foreign institutional flows have traditionally played an important role in determining liquidity and sentiment in Indian equity markets. Large-scale buying by overseas investors can provide support to stock prices, while sustained selling can increase market volatility and put pressure on major indices. The September outflow also came against a backdrop of heightened

volatility in Indian equities. With global investors monitoring developments in energy markets, currency movements and US interest-rate conditions, domestic markets have remained sensitive to changes in international capital flows.

Portfolio rotation could further complicate the interpretation of the FPI numbers. Foreign investors may reduce holdings in some segments while increasing exposure to others depending on valuations, earnings expectations and global risk conditions. Consequently, net selling does not necessarily mean that overseas investors have abandoned Indian equities altogether.

Nevertheless, the scale of the September withdrawal highlights the changing external environment facing Indian markets. The Rs 35,861-crore net outflow represents a substantial reversal from the combined Rs 49,831 crore invested by FPIs in July and August. The additional Rs 9,232 crore of selling recorded in October indicates that foreign investor sentiment remains cautious at the beginning of the new month.

Market participants will now closely monitor crude oil prices, movements in the rupee, US Treasury yields and developments in West Asia for indications of how FPI flows could evolve. Changes in these factors could influence the relative attractiveness of Indian equities for global investors and determine whether the recent selling trend continues or begins to moderate.

The developments also underline the growing importance of domestic institutional and retail investors in providing stability to Indian markets during periods of heavy foreign selling. While FPIs remain an important source of market liquidity, the ability of domestic investors to absorb overseas selling can influence the extent to which global developments translate into sustained pressure on Indian equities.

FSSAI Recalls Everest Cumin Powder Over Excessive Pesticide Residues

New Delhi :The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has ordered the recall of a batch of Everest brand cumin powder after a regulatory food analysis detected pesticide residues at levels exceeding the prescribed safety limits. The product was declared “Unsafe” under the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, according to a notification issued by the food safety regulator on Sunday.

The action follows a regulatory sampling and laboratory analysis of pre-packed cumin powder. The sample was collected from the premises of M/s Riverside Resorts & Holiday Homes Pvt. Ltd., Goa, during an inspection carried out as part of the food safety monitoring process.

According to the FSSAI notification, the food analyst detected the presence of pesticide residues in the sampled cumin powder at levels higher than the maximum limits prescribed under food safety regulations. The findings prompted the regulator to classify the product as unsafe and initiate action concerning the affected product.

The laboratory report specifically identified residues of Azoxystrobin and Thiamethoxam in the cumin powder.

The FSSAI stated that both substances were found at concentrations exceeding the prescribed maximum residue limits. The detection of residues beyond regulatory limits was the key reason behind the safety action.

Pesticide residue limits are established to ensure that food products remain within scientifically determined safety parameters. These limits are intended to control



the amount of pesticide residues that consumers may be exposed to through food. When residues exceed the prescribed limits, regulatory authorities can take action to protect public health.

The latest action was based on a sample of pre-packed cumin powder, rather than loose or unpackaged spice. The sampling was undertaken from the premises of the Goa-based establishment as part of the regulatory mechanism used by food safety authorities to monitor products available for consumption.

The FSSAI's notification said that the food analyst's report provided evidence of pesticide residues exceeding the permitted levels.

Based on the laboratory findings, the product was treated as unsafe under the applicable provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

The recall highlights the role of food safety surveillance in identifying products that do not comply with prescribed standards. Regulatory sampling allows authorities to obtain products from establishments and have them tested for parameters including contaminants, adulterants and chemical residues.

Cumin powder is widely used as a spice in Indian households, restaurants and

food establishments. Because spices are consumed regularly and can be used across a wide range of food preparations, maintaining quality and safety standards for packaged spice products remains an important part of food regulation.

The detection of Azoxystrobin and Thiamethoxam in the sampled product has therefore led to regulatory intervention. The FSSAI's action is based on the results of the food analyst's examination, which found the residues above the maximum levels permitted under the relevant standards.

The case also underlines the importance of compliance with pesticide-use regulations throughout the agricultural and food supply chain.

Pesticide residues can enter food products when chemicals used during cultivation or crop protection remain on agricultural commodities and subsequently appear in processed food items.

The FSSAI's monitoring mechanism is intended to ensure that food businesses comply with the standards prescribed under the country's food safety framework. Regulatory sampling and laboratory testing are among the measures used to identify products that may fail to meet those requirements.

GST arrest powers on way out amid concerns over taxmen's overreach

New Delhi :The upcoming GST Council meeting on October 7 is expected to consider a proposal to decriminalise certain offences under the indirect tax regime, a move aimed at improving investor sentiment and addressing concerns among businesses over what they describe as excessive intervention by tax authorities.

According to two people aware of the development, the proposal is likely to be discussed at the meeting as the Centre and states seek to build a broader consensus on changes to the enforcement framework under the Goods and Services Tax system.

The proposed changes come after several months of discussions between the Centre and state governments. Sources said that multiple meetings

have been held over the past eight to nine months to examine the issue and work towards an agreement on reducing or removing provisions that allow arrests under the GST framework.

The discussions have reportedly involved senior levels of the Union government, reflecting the importance being attached to the issue. The Centre and states have been examining concerns raised by traders, businesses and industry representatives over the manner in which criminal provisions under GST are being applied.

One of the key issues under consideration is the arrest provision under GST, which has increasingly become a point of concern among businesses. Industry representatives have argued that the possibility of arrest can create uncer-

tainty for companies and their senior executives, particularly in cases involving disputes over tax liability or alleged violations. The proposed decriminalisation is therefore being viewed as an effort to create a more predictable tax environment while retaining the ability of authorities to take action in cases of serious violations. The exact scope of the proposed changes, however, will depend on the discussions and decisions taken by the GST Council.

The issue has assumed greater significance following several recent arrests under GST provisions. Some of the individuals arrested were senior functionaries of companies, leading industry leaders to question whether the enforcement mechanism was being used disproportionately.

Primary Market Set for Quiet Week as One SME IPO Opens, Six Mainboard Listings Scheduled

New Delhi :The Indian primary market is expected to witness relatively limited activity this week, with only one new small and medium enterprise (SME) initial public offering (IPO) scheduled to open for subscription. At the same time, investors will track the listing of six mainboard companies on the stock exchanges, making the week more focused on new listings than fresh large-scale IPO fundraising.

R.K. Fashion Accessories is set to open its IPO for subscription on October 5.

The issue will remain open for investors until October 7, giving eligible investors a three-day window to participate in the public offering.

The opening of the R.K. Fashion Accessories issue will mark the week's only new SME IPO, making it the key fresh issue in the primary market during the period. SME IPOs have continued to attract investor attention, particularly among investors looking for opportunities in smaller companies entering the public markets.

While fresh IPO activity is expected to remain sub-

dued, the secondary market will see several new entrants. As many as six mainboard companies are scheduled to make their stock market debut during the week, providing investors with multiple opportunities to assess the performance of recently concluded public offerings.

The six companies scheduled for listing are AceVector, Runwal Enterprises, Orient Cables (India), German Green Steel & Power, SRIT India and Shah Investor's Home.

Their market debuts

will be closely watched as investors assess the response received during their respective IPOs and the valuation levels at which the stocks begin trading.

The listing of AceVector will be among the notable events on the primary-market calendar. Investors will monitor the company's opening price in comparison with its IPO price to gauge the level of demand that has carried forward from the subscription period.

Runwal Enterprises is also scheduled to make its debut during the week.

G7, EU Agree to Release 100 Million Barrels of Diesel Stocks Amid Hormuz Energy Shock

New Delhi :The Group of Seven (G7) nations and the European Union have agreed to release 100 million barrels of diesel stocks into the market in an effort to address surging commodity prices triggered by the energy shock linked to disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz. The decision comes as global energy markets

face increased pressure following the disruption to supplies and trade routes through the strategically important Hormuz region. The move is aimed at increasing the availability of diesel and easing pressure on markets that have experienced sharp price increases.

The G7 decision follows sustained pressure from the

Trump administration for countries to release diesel reserves as an alternative to Washington considering an export ban. The United States has been pushing for additional supplies to reach the international market as governments seek measures to contain the impact of the energy shock.

Under the agreement,

the release of diesel stocks will begin immediately and will continue for a period of four months. The participating countries have agreed to coordinate the release in order to maximise its impact on global fuel markets.

A substantial portion of the stocks will be released at the beginning of the programme.

US Natural Gas Production Hits Record High in July 2026, EIA Says

New Delhi :US natural gas production reached an all-time monthly high in July 2026, driven primarily by increased output from new wells in the prolific Permian Basin, according to the latest data released by the US Energy Information Administration (EIA).

The EIA said in its latest Natural Gas Monthly report that gross natural gas withdrawals, which represent the total volume of gas extracted at the wellhead, reached a record 137 billion cubic feet per day (Bcf/d) in July. The latest figure marked a new monthly production record for the United States.

The July record was the first new monthly production high recorded in 2026, following a strong production trend during the previous year. According to the EIA, US natural gas production had reached five monthly records during 2025, highlighting the continued expansion of output across major producing regions.

The latest increase was driven largely by new wells coming online in



Texas and New Mexico, two of the country's most important oil and gas-producing states. The two states together account for a significant share of production from the Permian Basin, one of the world's most prolific hydrocarbon-producing regions.

The Permian Basin, which extends across parts of western Texas and eastern New Mexico, has become a major source of US oil and natural gas production. Continued drilling activity and improvements in well productivity have allowed producers in the region to increase output even as companies focus

on improving operational efficiency.

The EIA reported that gross natural gas withdrawals in Texas and New Mexico increased by a combined 1.7 Bcf/d, or around 3.2 per cent, between June and July 2026. The increase in production from the two states was a major contributor to the national record recorded during the month.

Natural gas production also increased in several other major producing states during July. The EIA said gross withdrawals rose in Louisiana, Oklahoma and North Dakota, with production in each of these states increasing by more than 0.1 Bcf/d during the month.

The rise in production from the Permian region was also linked to increasing gas-to-oil ratios. The EIA said producers in the basin have been experiencing higher gas-to-oil ratios, which means that more natural gas is being produced alongside oil output. This has contributed to the increase in overall US natural gas production.

Meta Reportedly Uses AI Data Centres to Cut Billions From US Tax Bill

New Delhi :Meta has reportedly adopted an aggressive interpretation of a US federal research tax credit to reduce its tax liability by billions of dollars by classifying some of its artificial intelligence data centres as experimental facilities, according to an investigation by The New York Times. The report said Meta has described certain AI data centres as “pilot models” for tax purposes. This classification has reportedly enabled the technology company to claim the federal research and experimentation tax credit for some of the equip-

ment used at the facilities.

The tax strategy is significant because AI data centres require enormous investments in specialised infrastructure and computing equipment. Among the equipment reportedly covered by Meta's interpretation are expensive artificial intelligence chips purchased from companies including Nvidia, according to the newspaper's investigation. Under the reported approach, Meta has treated certain investments associated with developing and testing its AI infrastructure as qualifying research and experi-

mentation expenses. This has potentially allowed the company to receive tax benefits that would otherwise not be available for conventional data-centre equipment. The report comes as Meta continues to invest heavily in artificial intelligence infrastructure. The company has been expanding its computing capacity to support the development and deployment of increasingly sophisticated AI systems, requiring large-scale data centres equipped with specialised processors and other advanced technology. The classification of AI data cen-



tres as experimental facilities is at the centre of the reported tax strategy. According to The New York Times, Meta's description of the facilities as pilot models has enabled it to argue that

certain expenditures qualify for the research and experimentation credit. The federal research tax credit is designed to encourage companies to invest in eligible research and development

activities in the United States. Companies can reduce their tax liability when qualifying expenditures meet the requirements established under federal tax rules. However, determining whether particular spending qualifies for such a credit can involve complex tax and accounting considerations. The treatment of specialised infrastructure and equipment associated with emerging technologies can become particularly significant as companies invest heavily in new forms of computing.

Meta's reported use of the tax provision illustrates

the growing importance of artificial intelligence investments in corporate tax planning. As technology companies spend billions of dollars on AI chips, data centres and computing infrastructure, the question of how such expenditure is classified can have substantial financial consequences. The reported strategy is also notable because AI data centres typically involve massive investments in physical infrastructure. Facilities require specialised computing systems, cooling equipment, power infrastructure and high-performance chips ca-

pable of handling demanding AI workloads. According to the newspaper, the investigation was based on a review of Meta's securities filings as well as interviews with four people familiar with the company's operations. The findings provide insight into how the company has reportedly approached the tax treatment of its AI-related infrastructure. The report described Meta's interpretation as aggressive, suggesting that the company has taken a broad view of which investments can qualify for the federal research and experimentation tax credit.