

OPEN SEARCH

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15 killed as truck mows down devotees outside Gwalior temple

GWALIOR. (AGENCY)

Fifteen people, including several teenagers, lost their lives around 25 were injured as a speeding truck ploughed into devotees gathered for Navratri prayers outside a temple in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior district early on Sunday, police said. The paddy-laden truck, bearing a Punjab registration number, entered a no-entry zone on Chinar Road at around 1.30 am, crashed into several devotees waiting for darshan and roadside shops before hitting the Sheeta Mata temple's entrance gate, they said. The impact brought down a section of the temple wall, trapping people under the debris, officials said. The truck driver fled the scene, and police teams were searching for him, they added. An investigator said the truck's brakes may have failed, forcing the driver to swerve left in a desperate attempt to control the vehicle. Had it continued straight, he said, it would have ploughed into at least 600 to 700 devotees.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the loss of lives in the accident and announced

CM orders probe, action against 9 cops



Prime Minister expresses grief over loss of lives in mishap in Gwalior

ex gratia relief of Rs 2 lakh to the next of kin of each deceased and Rs 50,000 for each injured. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced financial assistance of Rs 4 lakh each to the families of

the deceased, Rs 2 lakh for each seriously injured person and Rs 50,000 for other injured persons. The government will also bear the treatment expenses of the seriously injured, he said.

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has expressed deep grief over the loss of lives due to a mishap in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. The Prime Minister conveyed his condolences to the bereaved families and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured. The Prime Minister announced that an ex-gratia of Rs. 2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National

Relief Fund (PMNRF) would be given to the next of kin of each of those who lost their lives. The injured would be given Rs. 50,000. The Prime Minister's Office posted on X, "Distressed to learn about the loss of lives due to a mishap in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. My condolences to the bereaved families. Praying for the speedy recovery of the injured.

The CM ordered a probe into the incident, along with the removal of the area's City Superintendent of Police and suspension of eight other police personnel for negligence. He said

the accident occurred because the truck entered a prohibited area, and directed the district administration to conduct a fact-based inquiry and submit a report.

The accident occurred outside the 125-year-old Sheeta Mata temple, located about 20 km from Gwalior city, where thousands of devotees had gathered for Navratri prayers and were waiting for darshan. Vehicles are supposed to be parked about a kilometre from the shrine, raising questions about how the truck entered the restricted area where, according to some people, not even a bicycle could pass. Acting Inspector General of Police Asit Yadav said the impact brought down a wall on the temple's left side. The truck had broken through police barricades while speeding towards the shrine, Collector Ruchika Chouhan told reporters. Two police personnel were also injured while trying to stop it, she said, adding that the Regional Transport Office (RTO) had been asked to examine the vehicle. CM Yadav, in a post on X, said he has ordered the removal of the Gwalior.

Chorbagan tragedy :

19 dead, 24 undergoing treatment; Bengal forms team to inspect major Kolkata puja pandals

KOLKATA. (AGENCY)

Nineteen people died and 24 injured people are presently undergoing treatment following the Chorbagan tragedy, prompting the West Bengal government to form a special team to inspect the arrangements at Kolkata's major Durga Puja pandals and recommend safety measures. Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari formed the team on Saturday night, comprising state Disaster Management Secretary Rajesh Singh, Fire Services Director General Anuj Sharma and Special Task Force Additional Director General Javed Shamim. The team will inspect popular puja pandals in Kolkata with assistance from the Kolkata Police and submit its report to state Home Secretary Sanghamitra Ghosh. The Director General of Police will guide the team. Adhikari said puja committees would have to follow the team's recommendations. If a pandal's structure is found to be unsafe or at risk of collapse, the organisers may have to restrict the celebrations to the puja rituals conducted by priests.



The team will inspect popular puja pandals in Kolkata with assistance from the Kolkata Police and submit its report to state Home Secretary Sanghamitra Ghosh.

LED screens could be installed outside the pandals so that visitors can watch the programmes without entering the premises. "If necessary, conduct the puja with only the priest performing the rituals. If the structure is damaged or could collapse, stop after the puja. Install LED screens outside so that people can watch the programmes inside," the chief minister said. The chief minister reached Calcutta Medical College and Hospital on Saturday night after receiving

news of the accident. The injured were taken to the hospital, where he held an emergency meeting with the authorities before visiting the accident site at Chorbagan later in the night. With Ashtami, Navami and Dashami still remaining, the police and administration are taking steps to prevent a recurrence of such an incident during the remaining days of the festival. Adhikari urged people to remain cautious over the next two to three days. He, however, clarified that all pujas could not be stopped in the wake of the tragedy. Several popular pandals in Kolkata have been witnessing unexpectedly large crowds, and the authorities would work to identify and rectify any shortcomings.

CJI inaugurates Ladakh bench of HC in Leh; 'historic milestone,' says LG

LEH : (AGENCY)

Chief Justice of India Justice Surya Kant on Sunday inaugurated the Ladakh Bench of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in Leh. Ladakh Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena called the day a landmark milestone, fulfilling a long-standing demand for a court closer to home. "A new era of accessible justice begins in Ladakh! Deeply grateful to Chief Justice of India, for inaugurating the Ladakh Bench of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh, today at Leh, in the gracious presence of Supreme Court Judges and the Chief Justice and other companion Judges of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh," Saxena said on X after the event. Deeply grateful to Hon'ble Chief Justice of India, Mr. Justice Surya Kant ji, for inaugurating the Ladakh Bench of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh, today at



Today at Leh, in the gracious presence of Hon'ble Supreme Court Judges and the Chief Justice and other companion Judges of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh.

Leh, in the gracious presence of Hon'ble Supreme Court Judges and the Chief Justice and other companion Judges of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh," Saxena said on X after the event. Deeply grateful to Hon'ble Chief Justice of India, Mr. Justice Surya Kant ji, for inaugurating the Ladakh Bench of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh, today at

eliminating distant travel, financial burden and robustly strengthening the judicial system in Ladakh. The Ladakh Bench of the High Court and Hon'ble CJI's successive visits to Ladakh within a short span of 6 months, reflect his steadfast commitment for ensuring easier and faster "access to justice" to all citizens, particularly to the remote communities in Ladakh. My sincere thanks and gratitude to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri @narendramodi ji and Hon'ble Home Minister, Shri @AmitShah ji, for consistently guiding Ladakh.

Education system now an exclusion system designed to keep millions of youth out : Rahul

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY) Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said what is prevailing in the country is not an education system but an "exclusion system" that is designed to keep millions of Indian youth out. The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha's remarks came in an Instagram post with a video of his recent interaction with a group of students. "If you don't have money, power, or don't speak English, the system will push you out without a second thought," Gandhi said. "You can't call this an education system. It's an exclusion system - designed to keep millions of Indian youth out," Gandhi said. Besides holding interactions with students here, Gandhi is also engaging with students on a large scale through his 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' initiative. Earlier this month, during his 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' event in Chennai, Gandhi had launched a no-holds-barred attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, calling him "Mogambo Modi". The Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha also told the students of the country that they have "nothing to fear, we are with you, and together, we are going to demolish Modi". He had made the remarks at the sixth edition of 'Chhatron Ki Goonj'.

Shah to visit Punjab on October 20 Likely to meet families of Jhota, Gulzar Singh

MANSa : (AGENCY)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Punjab on October 20, BJP leader Ravneet Singh Bittu said on Sunday, without sharing further details of the visit. "Punjab welcomes Hon'ble Union Home Minister Shri @AmitShah Ji on his visit to Punjab on 20th October," Bittu, a former Union Minister, said in a post on X. At a time when Punjab is battling the grave menace of drugs, we need decisive action, strong leadership and a firm resolve to secure our youth and our future, he said. The AAP government in Punjab has lost its mandate much before the completion of its term, Bittu said, appealing to Punjabis to support Shah and have faith in the BJP's mission to make the state drug-free. "Let us unite to save Punjab's youth and reclaim Punjab's future," he further said. It will be Shah's second visit to Punjab within a month. He had visited Jalandhar on September 30 and addressed a rally marking the culmination of the BJP's



At a time when Punjab is battling the grave menace of drugs, we need decisive action, strong leadership and a firm resolve to secure our youth and our future, he said.

'Nasha Mukht Punjab Yatra', which began on September 18. Meanwhile, sources said Shah would visit Mansa to meet the family of anti-drug activist Parvinder Singh Jhota, who was shot dead on October 13. The Home Minister would then travel to Gurdaspur to meet the family of anti-drug activist Bikramjit Singh and may also visit Sangrur

to meet the family of daily-wager Gulzar Singh, sources said. Jhota was allegedly shot dead by a medical store owner in Mansa on October 13 following an objection to drug-related activities. Two days later, on the night of October 15, Bikramjit Singh was allegedly killed at Mari Panwan village in Gurdaspur district after opposing drug sales. On September 7, Gulzar Singh, a Dalit labourer from Toor Banjara village in Sangrur, allegedly died by suicide after being pressured by local AAP leaders to apologise for questioning Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema at a public meeting over the alleged sale and supply of "chitta" (heroin) in his village. The Ministry of Home Affairs had on Friday written three letters to the Punjab Chief Secretary seeking detailed reports on the recent alleged drug-related deaths and killings of Jhota in Mansa, Bikramjit Singh in Gurdaspur and Gulzar Singh in Sangrur. The incidents have brought the issue of drug trafficking.

India bars sugarcane juice, syrup for ethanol production in 2026-27

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY)

State-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) have officially banned the use of sugarcane juice, sugar syrup, and B-heavy molasses for ethanol production in the next 2026-27 supply period. Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum, and Hindustan Petroleum released a collaborative tender requesting around 11 billion litres of ethanol, specifically directing suppliers to remove sugar diversion completely. This regulatory measure seeks to maintain local retail prices and protect national stock levels.

Low rainfall in key cane-producing regions, notably Maharashtra and Karnataka, has raised concerns about the upcoming harvest yield, prompting policymakers to prioritise raw sugar reserves over



biofuel production. Ethanol manufacturers must now shift completely to different raw materials to meet their contractual commitments. Documents clearly endorse offers for ethanol produced from corn, broken rice, spoiled food grains, C-heavy molasses, and excess rice obtained via the Food Corporation of India. Acquiring ethanol from external sources is still forbidden; mandating that all involved companies must use their own licensed distilleries. This approach ensures that the nation can keep progressing its E20 mandate, which mandates that all fuel stations.

Haryana Govt Committed to Resolving Issues Faced by Traders and Industrialists : CM Saini

CHANDIGARH. OPEN SEARCH

Haryana Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday received a warm welcome from representatives of the District Vyapar Mandal and the Jalandhar Chamber of Industries and Commerce in Jalandhar. During an interaction, representatives of trade and industry discussed their concerns with the Chief Minister. He assured them that safeguarding the interests of traders and industrialists and making constructive efforts to resolve their problems were among the government's priorities. The Chief Minister said that trade and industry are key drivers of a state's economic progress. Industrial expansion attracts investment, creates employment opportunities for young people and strengthens the economy. The government, he said, is working to pro-



vide a conducive business environment that encourages entrepreneurs to make fresh investments and expand their businesses. He said that during his recent visits to Singapore and Sweden, he held discussions on foreign investment and other measures to promote industrial growth and signed several agreements. *New Initiatives to Promote Industry and Trade in Haryana* The Haryana Government has undertaken

several policy initiatives to promote industry, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and exports. Haryana's Industrial Policy 2026 and initiatives supporting MSMEs and exports aim to attract investment, encourage entrepreneurs and generate employment. He said that the government is focusing on providing financial incentives to eligible entrepreneurs under various schemes, simplifying investment procedures

Government Focused on Investment, Industrial Expansion, MSME Promotion and Job Creation in Haryana

District Vyapar Mandal and Jalandhar Chamber of Industries and Commerce Welcome Chief Minister

and improving facilities for industrial growth. Ensuring transparency through digital processes and the timely disbursement of incentives are also priorities. The Chief Minister assured representatives of trade and industry that the government values entrepreneurs' suggestions and is consistently working to provide the support needed for industrial development. He said that the combined efforts of the Central and State Governments are creating new opportunities.

Army Officer's Wife Shared Info with Chinese agents Posing As Academicians

SRINAGAR. (AGENCY)

The wife of a senior Army officer has been charged by Jammu and Kashmir police for allegedly passing sensitive information to operative intelligence agencies, including China, who had contacted her under the garb of academicians. The accused, wife of a senior Army officer and a resident of Telangana presently residing within the jurisdiction of Gandhi Nagar Police Station in Jammu, allegedly fell into the trap unknowingly, not realising that those she had been interacting with were not academicians but intelligence operatives from China. An FIR has been registered at Gandhi Nagar Police Station as FIR No. 290/2026 under Sections 3 and 5 of the Official Secrets Act, 1923, along with Sections 152 and 61(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya



Sanhita (BNS). Under Section 3 of the Official Secrets Act, offences relating to the collection or communication of information prejudicial to national security, are covered, while Section 5 deals with wrongful communication, retention and handling of protected information. According to preliminary investigation by intelligence agencies, some Chinese operatives posing as academicians got in touch with the woman and made her write articles and write-ups on subjects having strategic and operational significance for publication. Initially, they made her write on environmental

Teachings of Sant Namdev Ji Inspire Humanity, Equality and Dignity of Labour : CM Saini

CM announces Rs 21 lakh for Namdev Bhawan, reiterates commitment to OBC welfare; calls for concrete action against drug menace in Punjab

VIJAY KUMAR.OPEN SEARCH

CHANDIGARH. Haryana Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said that the teachings of Sant Shiromani Namdev Ji Maharaj continue to inspire society with the values of brotherhood, love, equality, humanity and dignity of labour. He said saints and great spiritual personalities do not belong to any particular caste or community but serve as guiding lights for society as a whole. By imbibing their teachings in everyday life, a harmonious society and a strong nation can be built.

The Chief Minister was addressing a programme organised to commemorate the 756th Prakashotsav of Sant Namdev Ji Maharaj at Namdev Bhawan in Sector 21, Chandigarh, on Sunday. Cabinet Minister Sh. Ranbir Gangwa was also present on the occasion.

The Chief Minister announced a grant of Rs 21 lakh for Namdev Bhawan and assured positive consideration of the memorandum of demands submitted

by Haryana Namdev Sabha State President and former Chairman of the Backward Classes Commission, Sh. Satbir Verma.

Highlighting the contribution of Sant Namdev Ji, the Chief Minister said that through his teachings and life, the revered saint spread the message of devotion, service to humanity and respect for every hard-working individual. His sacred hymns are also enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi, the country is moving towards the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047. The Haryana Government is also working with the spirit of Antyodaya to ensure the welfare of all sections of society and strengthen good governance. During the government's two-year tenure, 70 promises have been fulfilled, while work on 143 others is underway. The Chief Minister said that the Haryana Government has taken the initiative to cele-



brate the birth anniversaries of revered saints and great personalities, including Guru Ravidas Ji, Bhagwan Valmiki Ji, Bhagwan Vishwakarma Ji, Bhagwan Parshuram Ji and Bhakt Dhanna Jat, at the government level to ensure that their teachings reach the younger generation. Appreciating the rich cultural heritage of the Rohilla Rajput community, he urged the youth to move forward in the fields of education, skill development and entrepreneurship.

Reiterating the government's commitment to the welfare of Other Backward Classes (OBCs), the Chief Minister said that both the Central and Haryana Governments have been consistently working to provide greater opportunities in education, reservation and employment to backward communities. He said that granting constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes and providing OBC reservation in Kendriya Vidyalyayas, Navodaya

Vidyalyayas, Sainik Schools and medical education have opened new avenues for the community.

He said that in Haryana, the annual income limit for the creamy layer among backward classes has been increased from Rs 6 lakh to Rs 8 lakh. Besides ensuring representation for the BC-A category in local bodies, the government has also made provision for 27 percent reservation in government jobs. The Chief Minister said that the State Government is also working to provide

opportunities to Agniveers in government services and strengthen the economic empowerment of women. Referring to budgetary provisions for women's welfare and the scheme to provide LPG cylinders at Rs 500 to eligible families, he said that the objective of welfare schemes is to provide relief to the common people.

Expressing serious concern over the growing drug menace in Punjab, the Chief Minister criticised the state government and said that instead of using such a seri-

ous issue for political gains, concrete action should be taken to tackle the problem. He stressed that protecting the youth from drug addiction is a collective responsibility of the government and society.

Referring to awareness programmes and running events organised in Haryana to educate young people about the harmful effects of drugs, he emphasised the need for strict action against those involved in drug trafficking. He also expressed concern over unemployment, law and order and the condition of youth in Punjab, stating that collective efforts are essential to safeguard the future of coming generations. Referring to his visit to Sweden, the Chief Minister said that an understanding had been reached regarding investments of approximately Rs 4,000 crore in Haryana. He expressed hope that these investments would boost industrial activities in the state and create new employment opportunities

for the youth. He said that the government's priority is to provide better opportunities in education, skill development and employment while taking Haryana forward on the path of development. Speaking on the occasion, Haryana Public Health Engineering and Public Works Minister Sh. Ranbir Gangwa said that Sant Shiromani Namdev Ji had given society the message of brotherhood, love, harmony and equality. He said that adopting the teachings of saints and great personalities is essential for building a harmonious society and a strong nation.

The Minister said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini, the Haryana Government has taken the initiative to celebrate the birth anniversaries of saints and great personalities at the government level to spread their teachings among the people. He said that Sant Namdev Ji's birth anniversary has also been celebrated in Haryana during the past two years.

Shruti Choudhry's Intervention Ensures Water Reaches Tail End of Loharu Canal

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH

Haryana Irrigation and Water Resources Minister Shruti Choudhry's intervention has ensured that water reaches the tail end of the Loharu Canal. Acting promptly on farmers' complaints about irrigation difficulties, she directed the officers concerned to resolve the problem immediately. The department subsequently took the necessary steps to ensure water supply to the canal's tail end. Farmers in Kushalpura and several other villages had been facing irrigation difficulties due to inadequate water supply in the Loharu Canal.

Led by the Bharatiya Kisan Union, they raised the issue with Irrigation Department officials and sought adequate water for their fields. Taking their complaints seriously, the Cabinet Minister directed officers to address the problems affecting water supply and ensure that water reached farmers' fields. Following her intervention, the department took action, enabling water to reach the tail end of the canal. Notably, Department officers have assured farmers that necessary steps will be taken to address disruptions in supply, including water theft upstream. They have also assured farmers.

Impressed by the working style of Anil Vij, Ambala Sadar's Ward No. 6 councillor joined the BJP

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH

Impressed by the working style of Haryana's Energy, Transport, and Labour Minister Shri Anil Vij, Sandeep Sharma, councillor from Ward No. 6 of the Municipal Council Ambala Sadar, left Chitra Sarwara and joined the Bharatiya Janata Party today along with his supporters. In addition, Ashutosh, who had contested as an independent from Ward No. 6, also joined the BJP today. Energy Minister Anil Vij welcomed both leaders at his residence, presented them with party scarves, and greeted them amid a large gathering of workers. He said, "I set



out alone toward my destination, but people kept joining and it became a caravan." Led by senior BJP leader and councillor Madanlal Sharma and Rural Mandal President Vikas Bahgal, councillor Sandeep Sharma, Ashutosh, and

hundreds of people joined the Bharatiya Janata Party. On this occasion, Energy Minister Anil Vij said that the BJP family had grown today, with councillor Sandeep Sharma from Ward No. 6 joining the party along with hundreds

of his associates. Similarly, Ashutosh, who had contested the election, had also joined. He said that the BJP's politics of development and work is visible today in the expanded development of Ambala Cantonment. "This is not my contribution alone; it is also the contribution of party workers and the people. We do not practise politics based on caste, community, or regionalism. We practise only the politics of development. When I joined the party in 1971, I was taught the same principle: politics is a means of service, and we enter it to serve. We have demonstrated this.

Work Being Carried Out in the Spirit of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas- Gaurav Gautam

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH

Haryana Minister of State for Sports Sh. Gaurav Gautam said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi and the guidance of Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini, the Central and Haryana Governments are working in the spirit of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas. Guided by the principle of Antyodaya, the government is committed to ensuring that the benefits of development reach the person standing at the last rung of society. Giving further impetus to development in the Palwal Assembly constituency, Haryana Minister of State for Sports, Youth Empowerment and



Entrepreneurship Sh. Gaurav Gautam on Sunday laid the foundation stones for various development works costing approximately Rs 4.25 crore. These include the construction of roads, streets and drains, development of chaupals, cleaning of village ponds, improvement of drainage arrangements and renovation of a cremation ground. He said that providing better roads, a clean environment and essential civic amenities to residents.

Haryana Government to Procure Paddy Beyond Prescribed Average Yield Farmers' Concerns to Be Addressed Within 48 Hours- Agriculture Minister Shyam Singh Rana

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH

Haryana Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Sh. Shyam Singh Rana said that the State Government is committed to procuring every grain produced by farmers and will also purchase paddy exceeding the prescribed average yield. Farmers whose paddy production exceeds the prescribed average need not worry about selling their additional produce. They can submit details of their excess yield in writing to the Secretary of the concerned Market Committee, and necessary action will be ensured within 48 hours of receiving their request.

Sh. Shyam Singh Rana, while reviewing procurement arrangements for the



Agriculture Minister reviews procurement, lifting and payment arrangements at grain markets in Sirsa, Dabwali, Kalanwali and Rania; directs officials to ensure smooth operations

Kharif season during his visit to the grain markets at Dabwali, Kalanwali, Rania and Sirsa on Sunday, directed officers to ensure that farmers do not face any difficulty in selling their produce even when their yield exceeds the prescribed average.

Later, he interacted with farmers and commission agents (arhtiyas) to assess

paddy procurement, lifting of purchased produce, payments, availability of gunny bags, fertilisers and other facilities at the mandis. He directed officers to maintain smooth procurement operations and resolve farmers' grievances on priority.

The Agriculture Minister said that paddy with moisture content up to

the prescribed limit of 17 percent is being procured in accordance with the rules. Payments are being made to farmers after the issuance of J-Forms. He instructed officials to ensure timely lifting of procured crops and maintain adequate availability of gunny bags. He said that prompt lifting of produce from the mandis would also facilitate timely payments to farmers.

He further directed that adequate arrangements for cleanliness, drinking water and other essential facilities be maintained for farmers and commission agents. Procurement-related records should be kept updated, while complaints and grievances must be addressed without delay.

Sense of Security Among Citizens Is the First Step Towards Ram Rajya - CM Nayab Singh Saini

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH

Haryana Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said that restoring Punjab's economy and ensuring that every citizen feels secure would be the first step towards achieving Ram Rajya as envisioned by Maharishi Valmiki. He urged people to follow Bhagwan Valmiki's teachings of equality, harmony and compassion and contribute to building a fearless, drug-free and prosperous society.

The Chief Minister was addressing the Vishal Tirth Yatra organised in Jalandhar on Sunday to mark Bhagwan Valmiki Prakatotsav. The Yatra is

being undertaken from Jalandhar to Shri Ram Tirth in Amritsar, the sacred site associated with Bhagwan Valmiki's penance.

Describing Adi Kavi Bhagwan Valmiki as a guide to humanity and a champion of moral values and social justice, the Chief Minister said that the Ramayana presented the life and character of Lord Ram and offered timeless lessons in righteous living, character building and human values.

The Chief Minister described Bhagwan Valmiki as a sage among sages and a yogi among yogis who spread devotion to Lord Ram and gave humanity the



divine story of his life. He said that Bhagwan Valmiki attained the stature of a Maharishi through chanting Ram's name. It was a great privilege, he added, to have witnessed the construction of the magnificent temple in Ayodhya dedicated to Lord

Ram, whom Bhagwan Valmiki revered.

He said that Bhagwan Valmiki taught that greatness comes from a person's actions and thoughts, rather than birth. His teachings call for an ideal society where everyone is equal

and has the right to live with dignity. The primary purpose of governance, he said, is to serve those at the lowest rung of society. In the Ramayana, Bhagwan Valmiki envisioned a society free from suffering, fear, discrimination, helplessness and injustice.

The Chief Minister said that the celebration of Bhagwan Valmiki's Prakatotsav was also an occasion to reflect on the condition of society in the light of his teachings. Punjab, the sacred land of gurus, pirs, saints and warriors, has always guided the nation, strengthened its food security and made immense sacrifices to

defend its borders. Expressing concern over the situation in Punjab, the Chief Minister said that young people were increasingly being drawn into despair and drug addiction. He said that deteriorating law and order and administrative disorder had left ordinary citizens, farmers, workers and young people feeling let down. A lack of direction and foresight in the Punjab Government's policies and approach, he said, had stalled the state's development. The Chief Minister said that a responsible government works tirelessly for public welfare, guides young people and ensures.

Briefs News

Third Surajkund Diwali Mela to Showcase India's Rich Crafts, Cuisine and Culture from October 23 to 26

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH The Haryana Tourism Department is set to organise the third Surajkund Diwali Mela from October 23 to 26, 2026, at the Surajkund Mela Ground in Faridabad, offering visitors a vibrant blend of festive shopping, traditional crafts, regional cuisines and cultural entertainment. With around 300 stalls, performances by folk artists and a special musical presentation by renowned Sufi and folk singer Kanwar Grewal, the four-day event promises to be a major festive attraction for families and visitors from Delhi-NCR and surrounding areas. Haryana Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini will inaugurate the mela on October 23 in the presence of Haryana Heritage and Tourism Minister Dr. Arvind Sharma, other dignitaries and senior officials. Union Minister Sh. Manohar Lal will attend the closing ceremony on October 26 as the Chief Guest. The mela will transform the Surajkund Mela Ground into a vibrant marketplace showcasing India's diverse craft traditions. Around 300 stalls will feature handicrafts, handloom products, traditional artworks, home décor items and Diwali essentials from different parts of the country. Visitors will have an opportunity to explore a wide range of handcrafted products and experience the richness of India's traditional craftsmanship.

Haryana Bureau of Public Enterprises Chairman Mohan Lal Badoli Inspects Safidon Grain Market

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH Haryana Bureau of Public Enterprises (HBPE) Chairman, Sh. Mohan Lal Badoli, inspected the grain market in Safidon to review crop procurement, lifting operations and other arrangements for farmers. During the visit, he sought detailed information from the concerned officials regarding crop sales, procurement procedures, lifting of purchased produce and facilities being provided to farmers at the market. During the inspection, Sh. Mohan Lal Badoli directed officers to ensure procurement operations continue smoothly so farmers do not face inconvenience while selling their produce. He emphasised that farmers' convenience must remain a priority and that all necessary procurement-related arrangements should be ensured. The Chairman also reviewed crop arrivals at the market, procurement operations, lifting of purchased produce in accordance with prescribed procedures and maintenance of relevant records. He directed officials to ensure timely lifting of procured crops to prevent unnecessary accumulation of produce within the market premises and maintain adequate space for farmers bringing their crops for sale.

Ensure No Delay in Crop Procurement, Lifting and Payments During Kharif Season : Rana

CHANDIGARH : OPEN SEARCH Haryana Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, and Fisheries Minister Sh. Shyam Singh Rana on Sunday inspected the grain market on Bhattu Road and the New Grain Market on Sirsa Road in Fatehabad to review paddy procurement arrangements during the ongoing Kharif procurement season. He assessed crop arrivals, procurement operations, lifting arrangements and facilities available to farmers, directing officers to ensure that farmers face no inconvenience at any stage of the procurement process. Earlier, the Agriculture Minister was accorded a warm welcome upon his arrival at the Market Committee office in Fatehabad. During the inspection, Sh. Shyam Singh Rana said that the State Government is committed to safeguarding farmers' interests and ensuring procurement of their produce at appropriate prices. He directed officers to conduct procurement operations transparently and strictly in accordance with prescribed rules. Farmers should not be made to wait unnecessarily to sell their produce, and any procurement-related issues.

1.43 crore to family of DDA engineer killed in 2022 car crash

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY)

A Delhi tribunal has awarded a compensation of over Rs 1.43 crore to the family of a 59-year-old DDA executive engineer, who died after a car he was travelling in rammed into a stationary bus in 2022. Motor Accident Claims Tribunal's (MACT's) Presiding Officer Abhilash Malhotra, in an order passed on October 13, directed the car's insurer, ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company, to deposit the compensation amount.

According to the plea filed by the deceased's wife, Jain was sitting in the front passenger seat of the car on September 17, 2022, when it hit the rear of a bus parked at a stop near a CNG pump on Outer Ring Road in R K Puram. He was taken to Safdarjung Hospital and



later shifted to the Indian Spinal Injuries Hospital in Vasant Kunj, where he died on September 20, 2022, it said. According to the plea, the car driver, Gulam, who held only a learner's licence, was learning how to drive from Jain, when he pressed the accelerator instead of the brake.

The tribunal noted that the car's owner, Rehmeena Khatun, who is the driver's

mother, admitted in her testimony that the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) engineer had engaged Gulam to drop and pick him up from office and paid him Rs 20,000 per month for it. The tribunal said this showed the car was being used on hire and Jain was a paying passenger, not a driving instructor. "It is clear that the deceased was a passenger on hire

basis in a car and he cannot be considered as a trainer. Therefore, respondent 1 (driver) was negligent in driving the vehicle without assistance of a qualified person having permanent driving license," the tribunal said. "Even in case the plea of respondent 1 is believed that he pressed the accelerator inadvertently instead of the brake, the element of negligence cannot be taken

out," it added. The MACT said it stands proved "on the touchstone of preponderance of probabilities that the aforesaid accident took place due to rash driving of the insured/ offending vehicle." The insurance company had argued that it should be exonerated because the driver held only a learner's licence, no "L" sign was displayed on the car, no licensed person was guiding him, and the car, a private vehicle, was being used for hire. While accepting that the policy conditions had been breached, the tribunal applied the pay and recover principle, under which an insurer must first pay third-party victims and can then recover the amount from the insured. It held the driver, the owner, and the insurer jointly and severally liable for paying the compensation.

Connaught Place, Janpath traders hope weekend crowds bring festive cheer after week of protests

NEW DELHI. (AGENCY)

After a week of protests and barricades around Connaught Place, traders in the area and nearby Janpath are hoping the weekend will bring shoppers back to the markets and help revive business ahead of Diwali. Shopkeepers said customers had been staying away, worried that roads would be blocked or access to the markets restricted. The slowdown has come at a time when traders usually count on the festive season to boost sales. "People think the entire market is closed because of the protests. Even when shops are open, many customers do not want to take the risk of coming here," said Vinod Kumar, who runs a store in Connaught Place. The commercial hub has around 2,000 shops, including



1,300-1,400 establishments across its inner, middle and outer circles. The impact of the protests could also be felt in nearby Palika Bazaar, which has around 300 underground shops, and Shankar Market, home to approximately 200 shops. The closure of Central Park has added to traders' worries, with many expecting footfall to fall further as people avoid the area. For some businesses, the drop has been particularly sharp. Kiran, a store manager at a clothing brand outlet, said

sales had fallen to just 20-25 per cent of normal levels, leaving shopkeepers worried about how they would pay staff salaries and cover other expenses. Manish, a jewellery retailer, said customers, who often plan such purchases well in advance, were postponing visits because of fears of barricades and difficulties in entering or leaving Connaught Place. Some were unwilling to risk getting caught in a confrontation or facing police action just to shop.

Himachal Govt facilitates appointments for PG doctors from Chandigarh's PGIMER, AIIMS

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY)

The Himachal Pradesh government has amended the Resident Doctors Policy, 2025, to facilitate the appointment of postgraduate (PG) doctors who have completed their post-graduate from the PGIMER, Chandigarh, and AIIMS, New Delhi. The appointments will take place against vacant posts of Senior Residents or Tutor Specialists in the state's medical colleges. As per a notification issued by the Department of Medical Education, these appointments will be made on the basis of merit obtained in the MBBS and postgraduate examinations, without conducting any written tests or interviews. They will be made under the 33.33 per cent quota reserved for direct candidates, as notified by the state government on January 31 this year. A government



spokesperson said that several significant initiatives were being taken to strengthen medical education, upgrade healthcare infrastructure and improve the overall healthcare delivery system. The spokesperson further added that the government was committed to making quality healthcare more accessible to the public, while enhancing the capacity of medical institutions to deliver efficient and reliable services. He stressed that the latest amendment to the Resident Doctors Policy, 2025, is another step towards facilitating the appointment of qualified postgraduate doctors in Himachal's medical colleges.

Preparations for the Nirankari Sant Samagam in the Light of 'Awakening' in the Final Stage

NEW DELHI. OPEN SEARCH

Where consciousness is awakened through Brahm Gyan, the heart is illuminated with love, and service becomes a resolve of life, the Sant Samagam becomes a sacred celebration of spiritual awakening, inspiring human beings to look within themselves and connect with the Supreme God.

Giving shape to this divine sentiment and spiritual consciousness, the 79th Annual Nirankari Sant Samagam is going to be held from 23 to 26 October 2026 at the Sant Nirankari Spiritual Site, Samalkha, under the divine umbrella of Satguru Mata Sudiksha Ji Maharaj and Nirankari Rajpita Ramit Ji. Thousands of devotees from India and abroad will gather on this sacred occasion and participate in this divine confluence of Satsang, Seva, love and devotion. With the increasing participation of



devotees, preparations at the Samagam site have now reached their final stage. Through the selfless service, hard work and dedication of the saints, what once appeared to be an ordinary ground has today transformed into a divine spiritual city. Well-organised arrangements have been made for devotees in the ????? pandals. Alongside, state-of-the-art LED screens are being installed so that devotees seated in every corner of the premises can easily watch and listen to inspiring discourses, soulful devotional songs

and spiritual thoughts, and become one with the flow of Satsang. This Sant Samagam is not merely an annual event, but a sacred confluence of Brahm Gyan, devotion, dedication and spiritual awakening. Here, devotees are inspired to awaken their inner consciousness, experience their connection with the Supreme God, and imbibe human values such as universal brotherhood, harmony and selfless service in their lives. This very spirit of the Sant Samagam provides human beings with an opportunity to move

beyond external achievements and recognise the richness within themselves. Among the grand features of the Samagam, the main welcome gate, constructed by the devotees, has become a special centre of attraction. With its unique artistry and magnificent appearance, this gate expresses the spiritual dignity of the Samagam. It is not merely a welcoming structure, but a tangible expression of service, dedication, creativity and collective devotion. With the increasing participation of devotees, its form continues to expand and become more magnificent. Its divine radiance seems to extend a heartfelt welcome to every visitor with love, a sense of belonging and an attitude of equality, thereby conveying the human message of the Sant Samagam. Sharing information, Shri Joginder Sukhija Ji, Secretary of the Sant Nirankari Mandal.

Voters can fill Form 6 to get names re-included in electoral rolls : EC to Delhi HC

NEW DELHI. (AGENCY)

The Election Commission of India has told the Delhi High Court that two voters, whose names were deleted from the electoral rolls after they could not complete the enumeration process during the Special Intensive Revision in the national capital, can fill Form 6 for redressal of their grievance. The statement was made on behalf of the Commission before the court, which was dealing with a petition seeking restoration of names of two petitioners in the electoral rolls.

The court closed the plea noting that the petitioner's apprehension that if he fills Form 6, he would be accused of furnishing a false declaration was "misplaced". "Having heard the learned counsel for the parties, we are of the considered opinion that when the



suggestion is coming from the learned standing counsel appearing for the EC, that too as per the instructions of the electoral registration officer, petitioner No.1's apprehension that he would be accused of furnishing a false declaration is misplaced. "With these observations, the writ proceedings are closed. The petitioners, if so desire, may fill Form 6, which shall be processed in accordance with law," a bench of

Justices Dinesh Mehta and Aditi Choudhary said. The petitioners approached the court challenging the procedure prescribed by the EC for the existing electors who could not be enumerated during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise. They sought directions to restore their electoral entries and permit correction and transposition of their names through Form 8 instead of requiring them to seek fresh inclusion

through Form 6. Their grievance was that they had shifted from their previous address and, consequently, could not fill the enumeration forms, resulting in the deletion of their names from the electoral rolls. The counsel for EC submitted that the petitioners could get their grievance redressed by furnishing Form 6 under the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. He also said that the electoral registration officer would extend assistance, but the petitioners have chosen not to do so for the reasons best known to them. Form 6 is the statutory application for fresh inclusion in the electoral roll. It requires an applicant to fill in their personal particulars. Applicants are also required to affirm that they are applying for inclusion in the electoral roll for the first time.

'Will re-strategise once Das, Ranka are out' : CJP's Abhijeet Dipke vows to continue agitation

NEW DELHI. (AGENCY)

Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke on Sunday vowed to continue the agitation despite what he described as illegal arrests and detentions, saying it would re-strategise after Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka were released. Dipke said he expected both to be released on Sunday and was on his way to meet advocate Vrinda Grover to discuss legal matters. "Once Saurav and Ashu come, we will gather, re-strategise, and determine how to move forward. Given what we have witnessed over the past few days, including the illegal arrests and detentions, it is clear that there is an attempt to intimidate us. However, we will neither be intimidated nor back down. "This is a long battle, and we are fully prepared for it.



Hopefully, both of them will be released today," Dipke said. The immediate episode began on Friday, when Dipke was detained ahead of the proposed 'Lehra Do Tiranga' rally at Central Park in Connaught Place. Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) was in force in Central Delhi at the time. On Saturday, Dipke was granted conditional bail and released from Mandir Marg Police Station after police said he was required to sign a peace bond. He was subsequently booked under Sections 126 and 170 of the BNSS.

Denied washrooms, released at midnight : women's accounts of detention

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY)

For several women detained during the October 11 protests against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, the uncertainty continued long after police took them for detention. Friends struggled to find out where they had been taken; some detainees were reportedly held on the outskirts of Delhi, and several people, including female protesters, were released late at night.

The detention of women has also raised concerns about their treatment in custody. Supreme Court advocate Abhishek Panwar alleged that several young women detained during the October 11 protest near RK Ashram Marg were denied access to washrooms for

seven to eight hours. He said some of the women were menstruating at the time. According to Panwar, the women were released at around 11 pm and reached home close to 12:50 am. He said police personnel dropped the detainees near Najafgarh Road, leaving advocates to help them with their onward journeys.

Speaking to Patriot, Panwar said, "Delhi Police is not following the Supreme Court's directions. Despite the court's clear instructions, female protesters continue to be detained, including after sunset. The police cannot act arbitrarily or disregard the court's directions. This is not the first time that its orders have been ignored."

He also raised concerns about the treatment of



women in custody, saying, "Several young women, including those who were menstruating, were allegedly denied access to washrooms for seven to eight hours. They were released at around 11 PM and reached home close to 12:50 AM. Lawyers had to help them travel, and police personnel dropped them near Najafgarh Road. The

basic needs, dignity and safety of women must be taken into account during detention." Barricades at Supreme Court Panwar also alleged that the police had put up barricades near the Supreme Court despite the court's directions. He said members of the Supreme Court Bar and the wider legal fraternity had to intervene to get the barricades

Speaking to Patriot, Panwar said, "Delhi Police is not following the Supreme Court's directions. Despite the court's clear instructions, female protesters continue to be detained, including after sunset."

removed. "Barricades were also put up in front of the Supreme Court. Members of the advocate fraternity had to go there and make considerable efforts before the barricades were removed. Even lawyers are being asked to show their identity cards while carrying out their work. These actions raise concerns about the arbitrary exercise of police authority," he said. Panwar alleged that jour-

nalists and lawyers were detained while performing their professional duties. "Journalists and advocates were also detained, even though they were there to do their work. On the night of October 11, when I went to help the detainees leave, I was threatened. Lawyers should be able to assist people in custody without facing intimidation," he said. Worried over detained friends For women at the protest, the concern extended beyond their own safety to friends, whose whereabouts remained unknown. Speaking to Patriot, one woman said they were worried about friends detained after sunset and were trying to establish where the police had taken them. "We are worried about our friends.

Briefs News

Fire breaks out at pulses storage warehouse in Delhi's Narela; no casualties reported

NEW DELHI. (AGENCY) A fire that broke out at a 'dal' (pulses) storage warehouse in Delhi's Narela area on Sunday spread across three floors, prompting a two-hour firefighting operation before it was brought under control. The fire was reported to the Delhi Fire Services at 11.10 am from J Block of the Bhorgarh Industrial Area. Ten fire tenders were sent to the spot as the blaze had spread beyond the ground floor to the first and second floors of the warehouse. The warehouse stored dal and other material, much of which is suspected to have been damaged in the fire. The extent of the loss has not yet been assessed. Firefighters worked to combat the flames and prevent them from spreading to nearby buildings. The fire incident did not result in any reported casualties. Local police reached the site, and the cause of the fire is being investigated.

3 arrested for abetment to suicide after 5 family members found dead in Greater Noida

NOIDA : (AGENCY) Three people have been arrested for the alleged suicide of a couple and their three children, whose bodies were found at their home in a village in Greater Noida, police said on Sunday. The accused, including two sisters and a brother-in-law of the deceased man, were arrested based on a complaint registered by a relative, Rabupura SHO Sujeet Upadhyay said. According to police, the deceased man, Mahesh (37), recorded a voice note on his mobile phone before his death, allegedly holding the three accused responsible for the deaths. Preliminary investigation suggests that a property dispute may have led to the incident, police said. he post-mortems indicated signs of poisoning, following which viscera samples were sent for forensic analysis. The exact cause of death will be established after the report is received, the SHO said. Mahesh, his wife Lalita (35), their daughter Mishti (7), and sons Laddu (11) and Sakshat (3) were found dead on Saturday morning at their home in Nagla Shri Padam village near Rabupura. Preliminary suspicion had pointed to possible food poisoning, with reports suggesting that the family ate noodles before their deaths.

Jamia students allege forced eviction as protest intensifies

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY) Tensions escalated at Jamia Millia Islamia on Saturday after students protesting for the restoration of the university's students' union alleged that the administration forcibly removed them from the campus early in the morning and subsequently shut all entry gates, disrupting access to university facilities. The incident came on the fifth day of a hunger strike demanding the reinstatement of the Jamia Millia Islamia Students Union (JMSU). According to the All India Students Association (AISA), protesting students were pushed out of the campus around 5 am, following which the university authorities sealed the premises and suspended campus activities. The move triggered fresh protests outside the university, with students gathering near Gate No. 7 around 3 pm and demanding that the campus be reopened and normal access restored. AISA claimed that despite police detentions and alleged threats from the university administration, students managed to re-enter the campus and continued their sit-in demonstration. The student organisation accused the administration of attempting to suppress the ongoing agitation instead of engaging in dialogue with the protesters over their demand for the restoration of an elected students' union.

19 of 59 desi ghee samples found unsafe in Delhi, 4 substandard

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY) Nineteen of 59 desi ghee samples collected from markets across Delhi have been found unsafe for human consumption, while four others failed to meet prescribed food safety standards, prompting enforcement action by the Delhi Government. The Food Safety Department found expired food products, pests, unhygienic storage conditions and lapses in temperature control during inspections of warehouses and dark stores operated by quick-commerce and retail companies. The drive was conducted on the directions of Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, who said, "No compromise will be allowed with the health of Delhiites." The department collected ghee samples from markets in Naharpur, Posangipur, Laxmi Nagar, Preet Vihar.

Open Search

EDITORIAL

A shadow of tragedy over the joy of festivities

The incident that occurred in Chorbagaon, Kolkata, West Bengal, is deeply tragic and concerning. It has once again raised serious questions about safety arrangements in public places, crowd management, and administrative preparedness. In any democratic and civilized society, protecting the lives of citizens must be the highest priority. When a large number of people gather at a public event, the responsibilities of the organizers and the administration increase significantly.

Festivals and religious gatherings hold great significance in India. People participate in celebrations such as Durga Puja with immense devotion and enthusiasm. Large crowds are a natural part of such occasions; however, managing these crowds and ensuring public safety are essential responsibilities of the administration. If adequate entry and exit gates, emergency routes, trained security personnel, and medical facilities are not available, even a minor disruption can turn into a serious accident.

The Chorbagaon incident highlights the urgent need to enforce safety standards strictly at public gatherings. Merely preparing plans on paper is not enough; their effective implementation is equally important. Essential measures should include estimating the expected crowd size, providing separate entry and exit routes, installing CCTV cameras, ensuring the availability of fire and emergency services, and arranging ambulances for prompt medical assistance. In addition, contingency plans must be prepared to deal with adverse weather conditions.

Following this incident, the administration should conduct a fair and transparent investigation to determine the actual causes of the tragedy. If any negligence or violation of safety regulations is established during the investigation, appropriate legal action must be taken against those responsible. At the same time, providing adequate assistance to the affected families and proper medical treatment to the injured must remain the government's primary responsibilities.

The media and civil society also have important roles to play in this regard. The media should report facts responsibly, while citizens should follow the safety instructions issued by the administration. However, the entire responsibility for public safety cannot be placed on ordinary citizens.

Heavy burden

GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI

Until I read Raju Ramachandran's mind-clasping book, 14 Lawyers, I had not heard of Pushpa Kapila Hingorani (1927-2013, picture). My loss, not hers! Now that I know of her and of her work, I am never going to forget her or her phenomenal achievement. The fourteen personalities about whom Ramachandran writes are, each one of them, achievers in different fields of the law, each a unique person. Why Pushpa Kapila Hingorani, Kapila for short, has made me write this column is that Ramachandran's word portrait of her tells us how she changed for all time the narrative on prisons and prisoners in India of whom a staggering 70% and more were then and still are 'undertrials'.

That is the category of prisoners who have been jailed but not convicted yet and may well be wholly innocent. Many of them have been in prison for longer than the sentence they would have served had they been convicted and given the longest jail sentence envisaged for that crime. Lawyers know that category well. But most of us do not. Kapila made her dramatic contribution to this 'cause' way back in 1979, her stage having two 'sets' — Bihar's jails and the Supreme Court of India with Justice P.N. Bhagwati (1921-2017) and his brother judge, Justice D.A. Desai (1920-2004), constituting the two-member bench that decided in favour of her principal client, Petitioner Hussainara Khatoon, who had fled Yahya Khan-ruled East Pakistan and sought refuge in Bihar, getting clamped in 'protective custody' which stretched to four and more years. Let me share a few basic facts about her. Ramachandran tells us in his precise but uncannily engaging style that Pushpa was born to an Indian family in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1927 and qualified as a barrister from Lincoln's Inn in 1960 and came to work in India. That made her a migrant-lawyer in India. Meeting her future husband in another migrant-lawyer, the Karachi-born Sindhi, Nirmal Hingorani (1921-2015), in the Supreme Court's cloisters, she became, with him, a naturalised Indian national. Neither of them could have satisfied the onerous requirements of an SIR verification today. But I have strayed. This column is not about exclusions and inclusions in India's electoral rolls. It is about exclusions and inclusions in the stream of India's life.

Before coming to that theme, I must turn to a person critical to the story. Khusró Faramuráz Rustamjí (1916-2003), iconic officer of the Indian Police Service who was chief security officer to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru from 1952 to 1958, going on to be the founding director-general of the Border Security Force and, still later, achieve permanent renown as a member of the First National Police Commission, penned two articles for The Indian Express on his findings about the conditions of the under-trial prisoners languishing in Bihar's jails for long periods without a trial. Kapila, on reading these shown to her by her husband, Nirmal, was shocked but more, she was ignited to action. She filed a petition in the Supreme Court which was admitted after much wrangling on procedural matters. It came to be celebrated as Hussainara Khatoon & ORS vs Home Secretary, State of Bihar, Kapila herself being styled thereafter as 'the mother of PILs'. The orders in her favour, of Justice P.N. Bhagwati and Justice Desai, led to the release of undertrials in Bihar and, all told, over 40,000 undertrials across the country. 40,000? This is not a typo for 4,000 or 400. The figure is 40,000 — released as a result of one order in one case fought by Pushpa Kapila Hingorani, Kapila for short and Kapila forever. Thanks to 14 Lawyers, I asked another lawyer, also a woman, who has done steady work for prison reform over decades, Maja Daruwala, how many undertrials were today 'languishing in India's prisons'. Very rightly, she referred me to the factsheet issued by the National Crime Records Bureau which despite being about 2024, namely two years old, is precise and informative. There were, it said, as of December 31, 2024, 5,09,012 prisoners in 1,331 jails across the country. Of these, 3,68,883 or 72.5% are undertrials.

JYOTI MALHOTRA

So what does this have to do with the ongoing people's protests in Delhi, where the police continue to brutally pick up pro-democracy activists and supporters of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)

THE centre of gravity this weekend is shifting to Jamnagar, the Kathiawari town in coastal Gujarat, which also boasts of the largest oil refinery in the world US Secretary of State Marco Rubio is travelling there to applaud its owner, Mukesh Ambani's decision to dial down Russian imports and instead invest \$300 billion into building a refinery in Texas. Rubio is also skipping Delhi. This means he won't meet Prime Minister Modi, the first time a US leader has done so in recent memory. Instead, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is flying down to Mumbai today, where Rubio is stopping over, en route to Jamnagar.

So what does this have to do with the ongoing people's protests in Delhi, where the police continue to brutally pick up pro-democracy activists and supporters of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), all of whose leaders they have detained this week?

Part of the answer lies in Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's social media timeline. To the news that Rubio is not travelling to Delhi, Gandhi wrote scathingly on X, "Mr Rubio has summoned his employee to Mumbai."

It's not clear whether any further movement on the Indo-US trade deal will be announced when Jaishankar meets Rubio. Certainly, the stakes are high for the Modi government — it must shift the headlines away from the continuing protests rocking the capital, if it wants to retain control of the narrative. For the first time in 12 years, the INDIA bloc's attack has been hitting its mark, no doubt amplified by the spirited protests of CJP supporters, Neha Bora and her CPI-ML cadres as well as students still showing up from all parts of the country.

Certainly, the young, female JNU student's ardent articulation of her politics has so completely caught the imagination of India's Instagram-obsessed audience that memes and



games — one of them called "Bhaag, Neha, Bhaag," in which the player accumulates "democracy points" as it attempts to circumvent obstacles laid out by Delhi Police — are all the rage. Still, the air is thick with contradictions. The world's largest democracy has refused to allow a 'Tiranga rally' to be held in Connaught Place in the heart of Delhi — all the CJP top leadership has been detained. In Mumbai, where Jaishankar is meeting Rubio, the Bollywood actor Imran Khan, a US citizen with an OCI card, has been told to return home because he participated in a CJP rally. And when Ambani hosts Rubio this weekend in Jamnagar, everyone in the room will think but not speak about a certain Elon Musk, a close confidant of Donald Trump, who has openly and repeatedly come out against Ambani.

In this season of the celebration of good over evil, as the goddess Durga descends upon the land this week and declares the end of Mahishasura (ya devi sarvabhuteshu budhirupen sansthitā), it's not clear who's winning the good fight nor who the good or bad people are. Just that the world is closing in.

Is the person who wants

to unfurl the Tricolour, for example, a good or not-so-good person? Unfurling the national flag, after all, should be classified as a good thing. But Delhi Police have just declared both Jantar Mantar and Connaught Place out of bounds, as neither are designated protest sites; Ramlila Maidan is, but it has been booked out for the rest of this year, save three days, and moreover, rental costs are Rs 1.21 lakh a day. And so, the moral dilemma is upon us. To be or not to be anti-national is no longer the question. The question is, is there a higher calling than Delhi Police? From all accounts, Rahul Gandhi has decided the Congress will cede space to political outfits like the CJP to carry out their own protests as well as get all the INDIA bloc parties onto the same platform so they protest together — he has been personally calling the top leaders to ensure they show up. The idea is to showcase a united Opposition, despite its many differences, on the resignation of the CEC; to manifest the INDIA bloc's determination to keep the political temperature hot, so that it feeds into Assembly elections in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, Goa and Uttarakhand in early 2027. A second mass protest by

the INDIA bloc is being planned for November 1.

For Rahul, this is a make-or-break political moment. Under his leadership, the Congress has only won one state out of eight, Kerala, since the 2024 general election; the results of the coming Assembly polls will surely be a referendum on his leadership. He realises he needs the fire that comes naturally to Neha Bora and young CJP student leaders — he wants them to be part of the large Congress umbrella. In this "Shivji ki baraāt," say Congress leaders, all are welcome. For the same reasons, the stakes are high for the Modi juggernaut. It cannot let Neha Bora or CJP leaders or INDIA bloc, separately or together, take centre stage again. The BJP believes that Neha's immature statement on Bangladeshi protesters this week, "showing India the way" towards regime change, must be exposed. The government realises it needs to break the backbone of these serial protests if it wants to reshape public perception.

That's why Jaishankar's meetings with Rubio — and Rubio's with Mukesh Ambani — are significant. Certainly, the government hopes that oil diplomacy

will help stabilise the roller-coaster India-US relationship and give it a win or two to showcase at home. Back in March, within a week of the start of the US-Iran war, when the US gave India a one-month waiver for importing oil, Ambani's Reliance Industries bought 6 million barrels.

Today, on October 17, as Trump's Russia Act, sanctioning companies and countries like India which import Russian oil, kicks in, Reliance's Russian imports are down to zero; instead, it is importing oil from Venezuela, an industry now controlled by the Americans. Back in the US, as mid-term elections approach, the price of diesel is hitting sky high. Notwithstanding Musk, Ambani has certainly earned leverage in Washington DC. Meanwhile, Jaishankar has just emerged from telling Bloomberg that India is "not a middle power," but "a power in the middle" of a new world order being redrawn. The former JNU student well understands that unless his own government compassionately deals with the turbulence at home, it will never be able to showcase its strength abroad as a power to reckon with.

With CJP wave, it's not just 'disillusionment' that is worrying the BJP



Sabha MPs and 63 Rajya Sabha MPs was rejected by the Speaker and the Chairman of the two Houses, respectively. Technically, the government does not have the power to remove the CEC. But in realpolitik, such technicalities can be overcome, say bureaucrats. The CEC can always resign. The leadership at the helm of the government and the BJP, however, is convinced that Gyanesh Kumar should stay. They know he has gone overboard and been overzealous in his effort to "clean up" the rolls. In talks with NDA allies, the leadership appears to have acknowledged his high-handedness. Yet it continues to dig in its heels. For now, it is throwing its weight behind him. The government and the BJP probably view the nature and strength of the protests in July and those taking

place now differently. The July 20 protest was sui generis—unique, a movement of its own kind. The cancellation of NEET was merely the trigger. But young people who feel hopeless for a variety of reasons stepped out to brave the odds. The protests brought together a broad cross-section of society: young people—half of India's population is under 30—Gen Z, anxious young adults, student unions, LGBTQ+ and queer rights groups, concerned citizens and parent groups, as well as those affected by the cancellation of state recruitment or college entrance examinations. This was a wake-up call. Frustration over many issues coalesced into one demand: Pradhan's resignation. The government was spooked. Pradhan quit. Arvind Kejriwal, Bhim Army's Chandrashekhar Azad,

Sharad Pawar, Mahua Moitra and Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Sanjay Raut all turned up at Jantar Mantar to express solidarity with the youth and the CJP. Their presence was incidental to the larger movement and did not, in itself, seem to worry the government. The protests against the CEC and the SIR are being viewed by the government and the BJP more through a political prism. The BJP sees shuddhata, or purity of electoral rolls, as integral to its ideology. But can this be achieved without harassing eligible voters?

Also, for the BJP, the Congress's current democratic fight for an independent and accountable Election Commission sits uneasily with the Congress's own record. For instance, the Congress fielded former CEC T N Seshan against L K Advani in the 1999 Lok Sabha election.

Later, the Congress-led UPA government appointed another former CEC, M S Gill, as a Cabinet minister. In 2009, it rejected CEC N. Gopalaswami's recommendation to remove Naveen Chawla as an Election Commissioner, only to appoint Chawla as CEC later that year, while the general election was under way. This history fuels the BJP's resentment, particularly when the Congress speaks up for the independence of Election Commissioners. The government and the BJP believe they can take on the Congress and the Opposition politically over the SIR issue by framing it as a loser's complaint, presence of the usual Left suspects, and appeasement of illegal immigrants. Hence, their response to the two sets of protesters has been markedly different. They clamped down heavily on the CJP and youth protests on October 10, but allowed the INDIA bloc to gather in large numbers and march in and around Connaught Place on October 12. At the same time, the detentions last weekend and the daily cycle of protests since then have pushed the government on the defensive. There is a concern that the protests, if left unchecked, may gather momentum and draw into their fold all and sundry who are losing faith in the Viksit Bharat dream. As a government official put it, the youth are "disillusioned".

India's ethanol procurement reset shuts out sugar-based supplies

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY)

State-run oil marketing companies have barred ethanol made from sugarcane juice, sugar syrup and B-heavy molasses from their latest procurement tender for the 2026-27 supply year for blending in petrol, as the government seeks to protect domestic sugar supplies while sustaining its nationwide petrol-blending programme. The tender, issued on October 16 by Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) on behalf of oil marketing companies (OMCs), seeks bids for around 11 billion litres of ethanol for the supply year beginning November to meet the requirement of doping 20 per cent ethanol in petrol. It also cuts the incentive for maize-based ethanol,



lowering the procurement price to Rs 68.86 per litre from Rs 71.86. "The Government of India has issued directions that sugar diversion for ethanol be reduced to zero for ethanol supply year 2026-27," the tender document said. "No offers have been sought for ethanol produced from sugarcane juice, sugar or

sugar syrup and B-heavy molasses in this quantity bid tender," it added. The restrictions mark a shift in feedstock sourcing for the ethanol-blended petrol programme, which has relied on both grain-based and sugarcane-based ethanol to reduce crude oil imports and cut vehicle emissions. The tender allows bids

"The Government of India has issued directions that sugar diversion for ethanol be reduced to zero for ethanol supply year 2026-27," the tender document said.

for ethanol produced from maize, broken rice, surplus rice procured by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and C-heavy molasses, according to the document. The reduction in the maize incentive to Rs 2.79 per litre from Rs 5.79 is expected to lower returns for producers supplying ethanol from the grain, even as the exclusion of sugar-based feedstocks increases the importance of alternative raw materi-

als. The move comes amid concerns over domestic sugar availability and rising prices after poor rainfall in key sugar-producing states, including Maharashtra and Karnataka, raised the risk of lower output. India, the world's largest sugar consumer, has increasingly used ethanol blending to reduce its dependence on imported crude oil. However, diverting sugarcane and sugar for fuel production can compete with supplies available for food consumption, particularly when output is constrained. The latest tender underscores the government's effort to balance its energy-security objectives with the need to maintain adequate sugar supplies and contain domestic prices.

Mcap of nine of top-10 most valued firms surges by Rs 3.65 lakh crore; TCS shines

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY)

The combined market valuation of nine of the top-10 most valued firms surged by Rs 3.65 lakh crore last week, with TCS, Bharti Airtel and Infosys emerging as the biggest winners, amid a bullish trend in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex surged 2,256.94 points, or 3.11 per cent, and the NSE Nifty jumped 625.7 points, or 2.77 per cent. Indian equity markets extended their recovery during the week, with the Nifty-50 and Sensex recording their strongest weekly performance in approximately six months. The Nifty-50 advanced around 2.8 per cent, while the Sensex gained approximately 3.1 per cent. The rally was primarily driven by a sharp



rebound in information technology stocks following encouraging September quarter earnings, supported by renewed buying interest in several heavy-weight stocks." Ponmudi R, CEO - Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said. While Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and Infosys were the gainers, Larsen & Toubro emerged as the only laggard. The market

valuation of TCS surged Rs 1,08,542.63 crore to Rs 8,91,134.96 crore, the most among the top-10 firms. Bharti Airtel added Rs 61,406.53 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 11,88,815.45 crore. The valuation of Infosys jumped Rs 55,893.05 crore to Rs 4,71,409.41 crore, and that of Reliance Industries zoomed Rs 53,047.56 crore to Rs 16,37,437.19 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of HDFC Bank rallied Rs 32,379.05 crore to Rs 11,22,628.07 crore, and that of ICICI Bank soared Rs 30,769.95 crore to Rs 10,02,871.44 crore. Bajaj Finance's valuation edged higher by Rs 14,786.65 crore to Rs 6,11,326.72 crore, and that of LIC went up by Rs 4,933.5 crore to Rs 5,02,204.82 crore.

FSSAI issues notices to major manufacturers over labelling, advertising violations

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY)

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued notices to major manufacturers over misleading product descriptions and labelling violations involving ready-to-drink dairy beverages, raising concerns over inconsistencies between product packaging and advertising claims on e-commerce platforms. The food safety regulator found discrepancies in the classification and description of several coffee-flavoured milk beverages, with product labels carrying inconsistent information about their contents and category. In a social media statement, FSSAI said, "Recent inspections and audits have led to



strict enforcement actions against several major brand manufacturers and local FBOs for misleading claims, non-compliance with labelling regulations, and severe food safety violations." According to the regulator's accompanying enforcement notice, the products carried inconsistent descriptions, with the front of the packaging declaring "Flavoured Milk",

while the back described them as "Proprietary Food - 1.12 Dairy Based Drink. The regulator also found that the products were advertised as "Coffee Flavoured Milk" on e-commerce platforms despite their different back-of-pack classification. Further, online product descriptions carried claims such as "crafted with the goodness of flavoured double toned

milk", which FSSAI found inconsistent with the declared composition or category of the beverages. FSSAI observed that the products fall under the standardised category of "Flavoured Milk" prescribed under the Food Safety and Standards (Food Products and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011. Their declaration as "Proprietary Food" was therefore found to be incorrect. The regulator said the inconsistencies in labelling, product descriptions and advertisements violated applicable provisions of the Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018, and the Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2020.

Kaizad Bharucha to step down from HDFC Bank in December after over three decades

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY)

HDFC Bank's senior leadership transition gathered pace on Saturday, with deputy managing director Kaizad Bharucha seeking to step down at the end of December 2026 after more than three decades with the country's largest private sector lender. In an exchange filing, the bank said its board had accepted Bharucha's request to relinquish office at the close of business on December 31, subject to approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Bharucha was among the two candidates reportedly considered for the bank's MD and CEO post after incumbent Sashidhar Jagdishan decided against seeking reap-

pointment. The RBI subsequently selected Anup Bagchi, former MD and CEO of ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, for the position. Bagchi is scheduled to take



charge on October 27. The bank's Governance, Nomination and Remuneration Committee had approved Bharucha's request on Friday. The board credited Bharucha with playing a significant role in the bank's growth and institutional development, particularly.

Built Around You : How Customer Voices Are Shaping the Ai+ Smartphone Experience

MUMBAI : OPEN SEARCH

Ai+ Smartphone is strengthening its customer-first approach by incorporating real user feedback into product and service improvements. Drawing insights from customer reviews, everyday device usage and after-sales interactions, the brand is addressing concerns related to camera stability, connectivity and performance through software updates, enhanced testing and more responsive customer support. This approach reflects Ai+ Smartphone's commitment to building not just for its users, but with them. Across its smartphone portfolio, customers have appreciated Ai+Smartphone for its design, camera capabilities, battery life, performance and value for money. The Nova 2 Neo 5G has received

positive feedback for its battery performance and accessibility, while the Nova 2 Power 5G has been appreciated for its overall experience and dual-tone design, particularly the Blue



Fusion colour. The Nova 2 Ultra 5G has been recognised for its photography experience, performance and AMOLED display. Similarly, the Nova 2 5G and Nova 2 Pro 5G have received encouraging responses for their overall experience and value, while the Ai+ Pulse 2 has been appreciated for its battery, display and design.

FPIs pull out Rs 52,100 crore from equities in October so far amid global headwinds

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY)

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have withdrawn Rs 52,100 crore from Indian equities in October so far, as elevated crude oil prices, higher US bond yields and a stronger dollar weighed on investor sentiment. The latest outflow follows a net withdrawal of Rs 35,861 crore in September. FPIs had invested Rs 20,200 crore in Indian equities in July and Rs 29,631 crore in August, according to data from the Central Depository Services Ltd (CDSL). With the latest selling, cumulative FPI outflow from Indian equities in 2026 has reached Rs 3.12 lakh crore, way higher than the Rs 1.66 lakh crore withdrawn during the entire 2025, the data showed. Dheeraj Gaur, Chief Investment Strategy Officer at Choice Wealth, said FPIs continued to sell Indian equities amid elevated US



bond yields, a stronger dollar and rising crude oil prices. Sticky US inflation has also fuelled expectations of a Federal Reserve rate hike, making US assets more attractive to foreign investors, he said. Meanwhile, expensive crude oil is adding to economic pressures in India, while the Ai-led rally in North Asian markets is drawing foreign funds away from domestic equities, Gaur added. However, foreign investors

turned marginal buyers on October 16. This brief reversal is likely to be tactical rather than indicative of a structural shift in investor sentiment. V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments Ltd, said the marginal decline in the US 10-year bond yield from above 5.3 per cent to 5.08 per cent and the rupee's strengthening against the dollar were significant factors behind the temporary

change in FPI stance. Sectorally, FPIs continued to sell shares in financial services and oil-related companies. However, they remained buyers in consumer services, including digital platform companies, entertainment, restaurants and healthcare services, he added. Pabitra Mukherjee, Deputy Vice President Research at Bajaj Broking, said the sharp moderation in FPI selling and the reversal in flows on Friday indicated that investor sentiment was stabilising, although elevated crude oil prices continued to pose a risk to any recovery. Going ahead, investors will track Brent crude prices and developments in US-Iran relations, while domestic attention will remain on second-quarter earnings for FY27, Mukherjee said. Meanwhile, foreign investors also remained net sellers in the debt market.

Indian refiners' fuel exports to the West jump 43% as they keep processing Russian crude

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY)

Refineries in India and two other countries that run on Russian crude shipped 1 billion euros (USD 1.2 billion) of oil products to sanctioning countries in September, up 43 per cent from August, according to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA). Reliance Industries Ltd's Jamnagar refinery in Gujarat supplied six of the seven cargoes unloaded at EU ports that month, despite the bloc's ban on fuel made from Russian crude. The CREA report covers refineries in India, Türkiye and Brunei. The EU took 667 million euros' worth of their products, Australia 168 million euros, the US 154 million euros

and New Zealand 19 million euros. CREA estimated 295 million euros' worth was refined from Russian crude. Jamnagar also supplied the group's largest US-bound exports, worth 122 million euros, and Russian crude made up 32 per cent of its imports from July to September. Italy received three of the seven EU-bound shipments, Romania two, and Spain and Cyprus one each. Exports reported as destined for EU ports from refineries running on Russian crude rose 80 per cent in value, including a single 104,000-tonne cargo of gasoil (diesel) from Jamnagar still en route to Rotterdam. The EU banned imports of oil products refined from Russian crude in January



2026. The ban exempts net crude exporters, but CREA says the exemption leaves a gap, since net-export status does not stop a country from refining Russian-origin crude. The report calls for applying the ban at the refinery level, barring products from any plant that has processed Russian crude in the previous six months,

whatever the product's declared origin. That is a recommendation from an advocacy group, not policy. India's Russian crude imports fell 13 per cent in September, the second straight monthly decline and the lowest since April. CREA said. Intake dropped at all three of its largest importing refineries:

Jamnagar by 27 per cent, Indian Oil Corporation's (IOC) Paradip by 21 per cent and Nayara Energy's Vadinar by 8 per cent. "Despite the decline, Vadinar overtook Jamnagar as India's largest importer of Russian crude." "India was the second-largest buyer of Russian fossil fuels in September 2026, importing a total of 4.1 billion euros of Russian hydrocarbons. Crude oil constituted 88 per cent of India's purchases, totalling 3.6 billion euros. Coal (309 million euros) and oil products (161 million euros) constituted the remainder of its monthly Russian imports," CREA said. Imports at smaller installations also mostly trended downwards, with

the HMEL Mundra Oil Terminal and the Kochi refinery lowering intakes by 74 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively, month-on-month. The main exception was the IOC Mundra Oil Terminal, which received 570 thousand tonnes of Russian crude in September after receiving none in August," CREA said. India was Russia's second-largest fossil fuel customer in September, spending 4.1 billion euros on Russian hydrocarbons, 88 per cent of it crude. Only China bought more. Since December 2022, India has taken 37 per cent of Russia's crude exports, against China's 50 per cent. India was a marginal buyer of Russian oil before the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Briefs News

IDBI Bank Q2 profit falls 39% on high base, underlying earnings rise 14%

MUMBAI : (AGENCY) IDBI Bank reported a 39 per cent year-on-year decline in net profit to Rs 2,205 crore for the July-September quarter of FY27, largely due to a one-time gain recorded last year, while its underlying profit grew 14 per cent amid stronger interest income and improving asset quality. According to the bank's earnings release, net profit stood at Rs 3,627 crore in the corresponding quarter last year, which included a one-time gain of Rs 1,699 crore from the sale of its strategic investment in National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL). The bank stated, "Excluding this one-off gain, YoY increase in Operating Profit and Net profit is 59% and 14% for Q2 FY27 respectively. Operating profit stood at Rs 2,893 crore, compared with Rs 3,523 crore a year earlier. Excluding the exceptional gain, operating profit increased 59 per cent to Rs 1,824 crore. The bank's core lending income also strengthened, with net interest income rising 29 per cent year-on-year to Rs 4,228 crore from Rs 3,285 crore. Net interest margin improved to 4.11 per cent from 3.71 per cent a year earlier, while the cost of deposits declined to 4.55 per cent. Asset quality also improved, with gross non-performing assets (NPAs) declining to 2.12 per cent from 2.65 per cent a year earlier, while net NPAs fell to 0.17 per cent from 0.21 per cent. The bank stated, "The PCR is consistently above 99% since September 2023." Its provision coverage ratio, including technical write-offs, stood at 99.24 per cent.

Axis Bank's Q2 profit jumps 38% as provisions fall 52%, asset quality improves

MUMBAI : (AGENCY) Axis Bank reported a 38 per cent year-on-year jump in standalone net profit to Rs 7,003 crore for the July-September quarter of FY27, supported by a sharp 52 per cent decline in provisions and improving asset quality, even as its core operating profit grew at a slower pace. According to the bank's earnings release and investor presentation filed with the stock exchanges on Saturday, provisions and contingencies fell to Rs 1,694 crore from Rs 3,547 crore in the corresponding quarter last year. The decline in provisions helped boost profitability despite operating profit rising only 6 per cent to Rs 11,083 crore. However, the year-ago quarter included a one-time standard asset provision of Rs 1,231 crore, which contributed to the sharp year-on-year decline in provisions. The bank stated in its investor presentation that "GNPA, NNPA, slippages and credit costs improved YOY and QOQ." Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) declined to 1.16 per cent from 1.46 per cent a year earlier, while net NPAs improved to 0.35 per cent from 0.44 per cent. Fresh loan slippages also fell to Rs 4,762 crore from Rs 5,696 crore in the year-ago quarter, indicating fewer loans turning bad. The bank's annualised net credit cost declined to 0.45 per cent, down 28 basis points year-on-year. Meanwhile, net interest income rose 12 per cent to Rs 15,371 crore, while net interest margin stood at 3.36 per cent.

HDFC Bank's Q2 profit growth limited to 4.7% as treasury gains plunge 67%

MUMBAI : (AGENCY) HDFC Bank reported a 4.7 per cent year-on-year rise in standalone net profit to Rs 19,510 crore for the July-September quarter of FY27, as a sharp 67 per cent decline in treasury trading gains weighed on earnings despite stronger income from its core lending business. According to the bank's earnings release filed with the stock exchanges on Saturday, treasury trading gains fell to Rs 780 crore from Rs 2,390 crore in the corresponding quarter last year. The decline limited overall profit growth even as net interest income, the difference between interest earned and interest paid, increased by 9.7 per cent. Highlighting the impact, the bank stated, "PAT, excluding treasury trading gains, grew by approximately 12.6% over the quarter ended September 30, 2025." Net interest income rose to Rs 34,620 crore from Rs 31,550 crore a year earlier, supported by continued expansion in lending. The bank said, "Net interest margin was at 3.16% on total assets, and 3.32% based on interest earning assets." Net revenue increased to Rs 48,450 crore from Rs 45,900 crore, while fee and commission income rose to Rs 9,690 crore from Rs 8,840 crore. Operating expenses stood at Rs 18,970 crore, while provisions and contingencies were Rs 3,570 crore during the quarter. Despite pressure on earnings, asset quality improved.

For Mainpuri voters, a 'vicious' cycle in Samajwadi Party's 2027 election battle

MAINPURI. (AGENCY)

Raman Yadav, 26, a lean youth of middling stature, and his similarly built group of six friends embarked on a bicycle journey from Etah to Lucknow earlier this month to campaign for the Samajwadi Party. They covered the 250km in six days, staying the night at local party offices on the way. Each two-wheeler sported the red-and-green flag of the SP and pictures of a bicycle — the election symbol of the party — and Akhilesh Yadav. The cycles also had small loudspeakers attached to them.

On October 9, when met them, the seven youths were pumping their cycle tyres at a shop in Mainpuri town. They asked the shopkeeper to put grease in the cycles' bearings and assembly points. The chain of one



of the cycles was loose and kept coming off the sprocket. "Can you fix the chain?" one of the campaigners asked the shopkeeper, also one of the mechanics. "The chain is loose and I need to remove two extra links to tighten it. It will take 20 minutes and cost ₹20," replied the shopkeeper, taller and healthier than the

campaigners. Raman got angry. "Bees rupaiya?" he shouted and asked his friends: "Let us move on, he is making a fool of us." The shopkeeper looked offended. "Am I cheating you?" he asked them, tears in his eyes. "What else?" Raman bellowed, and all seven resumed their journey towards Saifai, the village of

party chief Akhilesh in Etawah district, which is their next halt. The shopkeeper muttered: "Kaam ke paise ki jagah gaali dete hain (They abuse instead of paying for the services)." He noticed this reporter watching everything and became suspicious. "No, I am not saying anything," he said. Asked why he can't vent his

anger at not being paid for repairing the cycle or for the pump, he remained silent.

Another man came out of a shop on the other side of the road and replied: "This is how things move here, or else someone from their side will damage the shop or harm the shopkeeper." Before this episode, Raman had told : "It is my second PDA Cycle Yatra this year. I had criss-crossed Uttar Pradesh in February along with some friends. I started afresh two days ago in support of the Saifai family. We want Akhilesh Bhaiya to become chief minister of Uttar Pradesh once again.

" PDA (Pichhra-OBC, Dalit, Alpsankhyak-Muslim) is a new slogan of the SP as the party tries to project a support base wider than its traditional Yadav-Muslim vote bank.

Goa AI Tech Conclave receives strong registrations ahead of event on October 22-23

PANAJI : OPEN SEARCH

Showcasing the state's AI roadmap and solidifying its position as an agile, real-world testbed for high-impact AI solutions, the Department of Information Technology, Electronics & Communications (DITE&C), officially announced the Goa AI Tech Conclave 2026 during a high-level press conference. Set to take place on October 22-23, 2026, at the INOX Courtyard, Panaji, the two-day conclave will unite tech leaders, startups, academia, researchers, policymakers and AI enthusiasts around the theme 'AI for People, Planet and Progress.' The press conference was addressed by Shri. Rohan Khaunte, Hon'ble Minister for Information Technology, Electronics & Communications, Tourism



and Printing & Stationery, alongside Shri. Kabir Shirgaonkar, Director, DITE&C, Dr. Milind Sakhardande, Joint Director, DITE&C, Shri. Neville Noronha, OSD to Minister IT and Shri. DS Prashant, CEO, SITPC. Speaking to the press, Shri. Rohan Khaunte, Hon'ble Minister for Information Technology, Electronics & Communications, emphasised, "Artificial intelligence is reshaping governance, entrepreneurship, industry

and daily life. Goa is recognising this transformation and actively building a hub where people can work, innovate, collaborate and build for the world. By combining our rich cultural heritage, creative industries and tourism strength with responsible AI innovation, we are unlocking new possibilities for our citizens. Ultimately, this conclave is about placing our people first and empowering them as active drivers of India's technological future."

Briefs News

9-year-old dragged away by leopard in Chandrapur; rescued after hundreds join search

CHANDRAPUR : (AGENCY) A leopard attacked and dragged away a nine-year-old boy from a group of pilgrims walking to a temple in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district, officials said on Sunday. Hundreds of locals launched a frantic search and later found the child lying injured in nearby bushes, from where he was rescued shortly after midnight on Sunday, they said. The boy, a resident of Hyderabad, was part of a group heading to the Mata Mahakali temple from Ballarpur town to Chandrapur city late Saturday night. He was walking alongside a neighbour when a leopard attacked and dragged him away at a spot near Visapur toll naka, a forest official said. As news spread, hundreds of people joined the search with police and forest department teams. The boy was later found lying injured in the nearby bushes. He had sustained a deep wound to his neck, which left him unable to call out for help and initially went unnoticed by those searching nearby, the official said. The child was immediately rushed to the hospital for treatment. Camera traps have since been installed in the area to locate the leopard, the official added.

Leopard drags away nine-year-old pilgrim in Maharashtra, boy found injured in bushes

MUMBAI : (AGENCY) A leopard attacked and dragged away a nine-year-old boy from a group of pilgrims walking to a temple in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district, officials said on Sunday. Hundreds of locals launched a frantic search and later found the child lying injured in nearby bushes, from where he was rescued shortly after midnight on Sunday, they said. The boy, a resident of Hyderabad, was part of a group heading to the Mata Mahakali temple from Ballarpur town to Chandrapur city late Saturday night. He was walking alongside a neighbour when a leopard attacked and dragged him away at a spot near Visapur toll naka, a forest official said. As news spread, hundreds of people joined the search with police and forest department teams. The boy was later found lying injured in the nearby bushes. He had sustained a deep wound to his neck, which left him unable to call out for help and initially went unnoticed by those searching nearby, the official said. The child was immediately rushed to the hospital for treatment.

Car Hits Pothole, Loses Control, Then Bus Rams it Killing All 5 Passengers

BEED : (AGENCY) Five people, including a young child, were killed when a car collided with a state transport (ST) bus on the Pandharpur-Khamgaon National Highway in Maharashtra's Beed district. The accident took place near Shindewadi Phata, on the Majalgaon-Telgaon road, in Majalgaon taluka. It happened in front of Avinash Dada Bansode's petrol pump. Reports say a speeding Swift car hit a pothole, and the driver lost control. The car then collided with an oncoming state transport bus. All five people in the car are said to have died on the spot, including a young child. The car was completely crushed in the impact. All passengers on the bus are reported to be safe. According to preliminary information, the victims belonged to a family from Majalgaon. Gajanan Namdas is among them. They had reportedly travelled to Tuljapur for darshan. One clip shows the moments just before and just after the crash.

12-year-old's 'bomb on flight' remark triggers security protocol at Hyderabad airport

HYDERABAD : (AGENCY) A bomb threat allegedly made by a 12-year-old girl aboard a city-bound flight from Ahmedabad triggered a security alert at the Rajiv Gandhi International (RGIA) Airport here, officials said on Sunday. It later turned out to be a prank. The Class 7 student, who was returning to Hyderabad with other students and teachers on Saturday after a school trip, told a fellow student that there was a "bomb on the flight." A cabin crew member, after hearing it, alerted the pilot, a police official said. Following standard security protocols, the aircraft was subjected to a thorough check upon landing here. Nothing suspicious was found, the official said. "As she is a minor, no case was registered, and the girl student was counselled by her teachers.

Guwahati Airport Launches 'Utsav Aarambh' for Durga Puja

GUWAHATI : (AGENCY)

Travellers arriving at Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Assam's Guwahati can now get a glimpse of the Northeast's festive traditions through 'Utsav Aarambh', an initiative launched at the airport's Arrival Village. The initiative marks the airport's first festive engagement at the arrival forecourt, bringing together Durga Puja-themed displays, traditional handicrafts, regional art, music and local food. The festive setup features elements associated with Durga Puja, while visitors can browse handicrafts that showcase the region's traditional art and craftsmanship. Local sweets and chaats are also part of the experience. The initiative brings the festive atmosphere into the airport's

arrival area, giving passengers a glimpse of the culture and traditions of Assam and the wider Northeast as they enter the city. With travellers from different parts of the country passing



through Guwahati, 'Utsav Aarambh' also provides local artisans and food vendors an opportunity to showcase their products to a wider audience. The initiative adds a festive touch to the airport during the Durga Puja season while bringing regional culture, food and traditions to a space that serves as a gateway to the Northeast.

Audi India launches the all-new Audi Q3

Locally assembled at the SAVWIPL plant in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar

PANAJI : OPEN SEARCH

Audi, the German luxury car manufacturer, today launched the all-new Audi Q3 in India, bringing together 150 kW of power, quattro all-wheel drive and a suite of digital, lighting and comfort technologies in its compact luxury SUV. The technology-rich cabin features a digital stage panoramic display, head-up display and SÖNOS premium sound system.

Locally assembled at the SAVWIPL plant in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, the all-new Audi Q3 is available at an introductory price of INR 51,99,000 (ex-show-room).

The all-new Audi Q3 features Digital Matrix LED headlights with micro-LED technology, four selectable daytime-running-light signatures and three advanced dynamic light sequencing



while illuminated Audi rings add a distinctive lighting element at the rear. The new digital interface brings displays, controls and infotainment functions together around the driver, creating a more connected and intuitive experience. The all-new Audi Q3 also introduces a new integrated switch module where the lever on the right selects the gear, while the one on the

left controls the lighting functions, windshield wiper and cleaning functions. A head-up display projects key driving information directly into the driver's line of sight, complementing the digital cockpit and keeping essential information within easy view.

Commenting on the launch, Viktoria Kaufmann-Reiger, Senior Director, Sales Overseas, AUDI AG,

"Today, is such an important day for Audi India and I am happy to be a part of this occasion. The launch of the all-new Audi Q3 is an important milestone and it became even more special due to our new AUDI AG Board Member for Sales and Marketing Mr. Martin Sander joining us here in India. His presence underscores not just the importance of this brand-new model but also India's growing importance as an emerging market for AUDI AG. India's luxury landscape is evolving, and we will continue to offer products, technologies and experiences that reflect the aspirations of our customers and the distinctive character of our brand. Customer ambitions are growing, and so are their expectations, and at Audi we want to be well positioned to grow alongside them."

Uttarakhand minister Rekha Arya on husband's demand to withdraw FIR

BAREILLY : (AGENCY)

Uttarakhand women and child development minister Rekha Arya's husband has accused her of amassing ₹210 crore in ill-gotten wealth and filing a police complaint against him based on an AI-generated audio clip. Girdhari Lal Sahu, a BJP leader from Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly, in a video uploaded on social media on Saturday, said: "She has been involved in financial corruption in her department for the last 10 years. I have spoken out against this many times."

Sahu said he had shaped Arya's political career for the last 17 years. "She had two pairs of suits when we came to know each other. I campaigned for her. But when I asked her not to go to Uttarakhand (to contest the election) this time, she filed



a fake police case against me," he said. "She also implicated her former manager in a false case when she came to know about her illegal work," Sahu said, demanding that chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami initiate a probe.

He also claimed that an audio recording, which Arya shared on Thursday evening, was "fake, AI-generated and fabricated", and dismissed the charges against him as "baseless".

He also claimed that an audio recording, which Arya shared on Thursday evening, was "fake, AI-generated and fabricated", and dismissed the charges against him as "baseless".

Cantt police station in Dehradun under the relevant sections of law, including three sections of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. In a statement issued from the hospital after Sahu's video message surfaced on social media, Arya said he had initially kept her in the dark about being married. "He cheated me. He was married when we met. He didn't reveal this to me. Whatever I am doing is meant for the safety of women and children.

Durga Puja stampede: Between the goddess and a mass of humanity

KOLKATA : (AGENCY)

I was at ground zero just this past Tuesday. It was 2 am when I became part of a mass that I can no longer call humanity. I imagine a drone view of this crowd must have looked like a surreal painting, with arms and legs sticking out of an unrecognisable blob crawling like a prehistoric animal. Every moment, I feared that my asthma would be triggered by the sheer trauma of claustrophobia. I kept slithering along with my fellow citizens, as I could find no escape hatch and, secondly, because I am a Puja addict. The artist Susanta Shibani Paul must have had a weird sense of creativity to create this bizarre iron maze to pack thousands of people in and give them a 'unique experience'. For the

past couple of years, I have been writing and giving television interviews on why Puja organisers must do away with the VIP entry culture, which shrinks the passage for humbler citizens and creates choke points.

I had also suggested that mega Pujas in narrow alleyways should be discouraged, as they could be a disaster waiting to happen. The Fire Brigade should not allow such tiny spaces to host Pujas on this scale.

Thirdly, I had recommended an Asian Paints Sharad Sanman award for experience management, which would prompt organisers to consider how the cattle class could have an enjoyable experience. As I stood in the thick of this mass, I could not help thinking of the yawning gulf of economic inequality that



plagues India. This is Kolkata's darkest hour of shame. I am no longer posting Puja pictures this year. While Durga Puja attracts a global audience for its creativity, which has earned it the UNESCO Intangible Heritage label, the darkness beneath the glitter often goes ignored.

A celebration on such a mega scale, which has ranked it among the world's

I kept slithering along with my fellow citizens, as I could find no escape hatch and, secondly, because I am a Puja addict.

Gujarat-based business group, often known as the corporate face of the BJP, or vice versa, entered the fray with its own bouquet of awards for artistic excellence to rival the four-decade-old Asian Paints Sharad Sanman awards.

Politics and big business always create an interesting cohort. Nevertheless, what the political administration could not deliver was the exemplary crowd management experience for which Kolkata Police has had a reputation since the Pujas went mega-scale around three decades ago. The tragic event, which has claimed

at least 19 lives so far and left hundreds critically injured and battling for their lives, also exposed cracks in the healthcare system. A tertiary government hospital once reputed to be among the best in Asia lacked basic trauma care facilities when the dead and injured were brought in, according to junior doctors who addressed an impromptu press meet.

There would be finger-pointing in the coming days, and the blame game would begin. But it would be unfortunate if, in the eagerness to fix responsibility, the baby were thrown out with the bathwater. Kolkata's Durga Puja, an economy estimated to be worth anywhere between Rs 32,000 crore and Rs 40,000 crore.



It's not easy to move from No. 3 to No. 5 or 6 but I love finishing for team : Tilak Varma

BENGALURU : (AGENCY)

India vice-captain Tilak Varma admitted that dropping down the order from No. 3 was not easy, but he is trusting his skill enhancement and mental preparation to ace the demands of his new role. Tilak has been batting either at No. 5 or 6 in T20Is for a while now, and, for him, it came down to working on his game constantly to come up trumps. It's not that easy to change the numbers from 3 to 5 and 6. It will be slightly challenging. But I have been working on that. How can I finish the games? I have said that I love finishing the games for the country, said Tilak after the washed-out fifth and final T20I against the West Indies here on Saturday night. So, for me as an individual, if you see, it



will be easier batting at 3. But unfortunately, now I should bat at 5 or 6 because we have got that combination at the top right now. From nine matches, the left-hander averages 65.66 while batting at number six, at a strike rate of 195. In 26 combined innings at 5 and 6, he averages 46 at a strike

rate of 158. But Ishan Kishan's arrival, skipper Shreyas Iyer's presence at No. 4 and the management's decision to stick with the Abhishek Sharma-Sanju Samson combination at the top meant a mandatory demotion for Tilak. The Hyderabad batter is aware of the situation. Kishan is

The Hyderabad batter is aware of the situation. Kishan is batting at number 3 now, and he is batting really brilliantly there.

batting at number 3 now, and he is batting really brilliantly there. So, for me now, I think there is no option but to bat at 5 and 6 and do the job for the team.

So, I am mentally prepared for that role. And if you see the last few games, I have won from there. So, I am pretty confident to do well there as well, he added.

The 23-year-old said he has been working tirelessly in the nets to improve his range of shots and skill level to meet the challenges of batting lower down the order. Yeah, we should do that, otherwise, it will be slightly tough. When you go

into bat as a finisher, if a slower one comes into your arc, you should go for 6. Otherwise, if you see in T20, most of the time, if you go into that role of 5 or 6, you will get a maximum of 5 to 6 overs to bat. So, I have changed personally. I have been in this role in my childhood as well. I have got the shots going all over the ground. So, I am confident that if I bat at 3 or 5, I have got the technique to adapt. So, if I practise for 1 or 2 days, I can do any role for the team. Now, if I come back to No. 3, I can adapt after a day or two of practice. I am confident of batting anywhere, he noted. The Indian team has been going through a busy schedule over the last few months, playing across the United Kingdom, Japan and India.

Sunrisers Hyderabad CEO set to marry music composer Anirudh Ravichander

CHANDIGARH: (AGENCY)

Kavya Maran, the chief executive officer of Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad, is in the spotlight amid reports that she is set to marry music composer Anirudh Ravichander in Greece on November 10. The daughter of Sun Group chairman Kalanithi Maran, Kavya is closely associated with the conglomerate's media and sports businesses. Kavya is the daughter of Kalanithi Maran, who heads the Sun Group, and Kavery Maran, who is associated with the leadership of Sun TV Network. Her uncle, Dayanidhi Maran, is a DMK leader and Member of Parliament. According to media reports, she complet-



ed her undergraduate studies at Stella Maris College in Chennai before pursuing an MBA at Warwick Business School in the UK. Kavya joined Sun TV Network as an executive director in 2019. She subsequently became a prominent face of the group's sports operations, particularly through her role as CEO of Sunrisers Hyderabad. According to

the Hurun India Rich List 2026, Kalanithi's estimated wealth stood at around Rs 24,600 crore, placing him 146th in the list. Kavya is widely recognised by cricket fans for her appearances at IPL matches and player auctions, where she represents Sunrisers Hyderabad and participates in the franchise's management and team-building.

Briefs News

Pragyan Ojha, in tune with team management, set to take BCCI chief selector role

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY) Pragyan Ojha is set to replace Ajit Agarkar as the chief selector after it was decided that Ramesh Powar will be the West Zone representative on the five-member committee. Former left-arm spinner Ojha (24 Tests) had been the interim chairman after Agarkar's departure since he was the senior-most among the four persons on the panel. Parthiv Patel was tipped to take over from Agarkar but the former wicketkeeper-batter didn't apply when the deadline for the senior panel closed on Wednesday. It is understood that Parthiv backtracked after considering certain financial issues. The remuneration for the selection committee chief is reportedly ₹3 crore annually and Parthiv is believed to lose out substantially if he has to sacrifice his TV commentary assignments and commitments with Gujarat Titans in the IPL. The Cricket Advisory Committee, headed by Ashok Malhotra, interviewed four candidates, including former India opener Wasim Jaffer, for the position on Thursday. The others in the fray were Connor Williams, Jacob Martin and Salil Ankola. that the BCCI decided to go ahead with Powar as West Zone representative, and not Jaffer, who played 31 Tests, since it wanted the selectors to be in sync with the team management's current policy ahead of the ODI World Cup. Ojha has been around for more than a year and is conversant with the team management's wishes.

Rain washes out India-WI T20I decider at Chinnaswamy, series ends 2-2 draw

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY) International cricket returned to the Chinnaswamy after close to two years. But it turned out to be a disappointing comeback for the venue as the fifth and final T20I between India and the West Indies was abandoned after 7.4 overs of play. The series thus ended 2-2. Due to rain and wet outfield, the game began more than two hours after its scheduled start and was reduced to a nine-overs-a-side contest. India, put into bat, were 118/5 before it started pouring again. The conditions didn't get any better, as the game ended as a no-result. Naman Dhir was batting on 24 off six balls, while Tilak Varma had perished off Shamar Springer in what also turned out to be the last ball before the showers returned. The game also marked the return of senior quick Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who made the India playing XI after almost four years. For India, Ishan Kishan (30 off 10 balls) was the top scorer in conditions that were not easy for the bowlers. The West Indies, who had levelled the series with a 24-run win in Hyderabad on Wednesday, bowled as many as 12 wickets, allowing some easy runs for the Indians. For captain Shreyas Iyer, this series was a "great learning" for his team. "We weren't consistent throughout, but it was a great learning. Even today (Saturday), the way we went about our batting was outstanding. "It's going to be a challenging series in New Zealand," Shreyas said.

Shahbaz Ahmed's return boosts Bengal ahead of Ranji Trophy clash with Services

NEW DELHI : (AGENCY) Bengal's start to their Ranji Trophy campaign has been impressive as they registered a convincing nine-wicket win over Delhi at home. However, the second round starting from Sunday could present a sterner test for the Abhimanyu Easwaran-led side when they face Services away at the Palam A ground in Delhi. On paper, Bengal appear a better side. But the conditions at the venue may well go on to even things out between the two teams. It was learnt that Bengal are mulling an extra spinner in their XI with only two quicks. "The conditions (at Palam) are likely to aid spinners more. So, we need to be mindful of our combination," head coach Laxmi Ratan Shukla said on Saturday, the eve of the game. All-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed's return certainly boosts Bengal, with left-arm Pradipta Pramanik and Aamir Gani set to be the other two spinners. In the pace attack, Bengal will be without both Akash Deep and Mukesh Kumar as the duo are getting ready for the A tour of New Zealand. Akash, though, has been picked for the two Tests as well against New Zealand. In their absence, Suraj Sindhu Jaiswal will most likely be included in the XI alongside senior pro Mohammed Shami. "We believe Shami will deliver again," Shukla stated. India's Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill's return to Ranji action for Punjab against Chhattisgarh in Mullanpur will be the main attraction of the second round of the country's premier domestic competition. Gill has been amongst loads of runs, including hitting a double century against the West Indies in the recent home ODIs.

29-year-old Charles Matata wins with course record, Alemu takes women's crown

NEW DELHI. (AGENCY)

Kenya's Charles Matata shattered the course record to win the men's elite race at the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon, while Ethiopia's Wudinesh Alemu took the women's crown as nearly 40,000 people turned up on the streets of the national capital on Sunday morning. Matata clocked 58 minutes and 52 seconds to complete the 21.097 km distance at the iconic Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium and better the previous course record of 58:53, set by Ethiopia's Amedework Walegn in 2020, by one second. It was



also Matata's personal best in the half marathon, bettering his earlier PB of 59:15 recorded in May this year. The 29-year-old Matata's feat of setting a new course record was noteworthy as the humidity was high at around 90 per cent and the temperature of around 21 degrees Celsius was not ideal for long-distance running.

Formula 1 has a great fanbase in India, it has to come here : Hakkinen

MUMBAI : (AGENCY)

Legendary Formula One driver and two-time world champion Mika Hakkinen believes the sport has a huge fan base in India, giving it all the more reason to make a comeback to the country. Hakkinen said he realised the scale of Formula One's following in India after arriving in the country, with the Indian government setting in motion efforts to bring the sport back. India hosted F1 races from 2011 to 2013, with all three races won by German driver Sebastian Vettel for Red Bull. "You had a race in India quite a few years ago

and I have understood there is some discussion. What I have recognised, being here in India, is that the fan base is huge," Hakkinen told PTI in an exclusive interview organised by FanCode, F1's official broadcaster. "Saying that, I think Formula 1 belongs to come to India. It has to come to India. Formula 1 used to have two Indian drivers in history, which activates, of course, even more this kind of reason why there should be a race in India. "It is a beautiful opportunity for companies to come here in India and make a network and start doing business and vice versa. It is not only the



publicity, it is a business overall. And you know what, just do it, guys." With Kimi Antonelli on the verge of clinching the drivers' championship this season, Hakkinen said the young Italian was in a very good

space and was being managed well by Mercedes. "Kimi is definitely in a fantastic place. He is in a very good team and the team has already been taking care of him from a very young age," Hakkinen said.

Consistency overrated in T20s for top-order batters, Samson never out of form : Pujara



NEW DELHI : (AGENCY)

Former India player Cheteshwar Pujara believes consistency is overrated for top-order batters in T20 cricket, backing Sanju Samson to bounce back with a single defining innings as the team prepares for its upcoming multi-format tour of New Zealand. "Consistency should be there, but for the top order, I think consistency is overrated in T20s," Pujara said while analysing Samson's fluctuating returns on JioHotstar's 'Out or Not Out'. "He is never out of form. The kind of player Sanju Samson has been in the T20 format his form fluctuates. But it is always a matter of one innings. He plays one good innings, and he is back in form. "So,

you cannot say that this player is not in form. In the T20 format, you are bound to have failures. Who doesn't get out in T20s?" he added. India, who recently finished their five-match T20I series against the West Indies in a 2-2 draw, will begin their multi-format tour of New Zealand with the shortest format. Pujara also expressed doubts over the possibility of Samson and teenage batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi featuring together in India's playing XI in New Zealand, citing the need for additional all-rounders in conditions that could demand greater balance. "Vaibhav playing every game seems a bit difficult in New Zealand because there you need more all-rounders, either a spin all-rounder or a seam-

ing all-rounder. So, there you don't need a lot of batters, especially in the top order," he said. "Either Sanju Samson can open or Vaibhav. I don't think both can be part of the playing XI in New Zealand conditions. So, Vaibhav will have to wait, but he will get opportunities."

Pujara, however, clarified that Sooryavanshi could still feature during the series if conditions or player availability create an opening. "If the spot opens up for him based on conditions or players' fitness, that's fine. But both Sanju and Vaibhav cannot be in the playing XI in New Zealand," he said.

Abhishek Nayar also backed the view that Samson's place in the side would continue to attract scrutiny during quiet spells, only for the wicket-keeper-batter to silence his critics with a substantial knock. "Sanju plays with everyone's emotions because he won't score runs for two matches, and everyone starts raising questions," Nayar said. He added that Sooryavanshi might have to wait for his opportunities, stressing that team balance and the left-right batting combination would be important considerations in the selection process.

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Actor Kangana Ranaut comes in support of Neha Singh Rathore, who was 'defamed' by news channel



Actor and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut came in support of folk singer Neha Singh Rathore and said despite their contrary political takes, she believes no woman should be defamed for TRPs. Rathore and

Ranaut are known to have clashes, with Rathore coming up with satirical political folk songs, which often target the BJP. Recently, a news channel aired a report which used derogatory words for Rathore. The

singer, who alleged the channel attempted to malign her reputation by portraying her as a sex worker, shared a note on her X handle on Sunday and asked Ranaut if the actor had anything to say. "Dear @Kangana Team Ji, Like you, I too am a daughter of this country. Although there is a difference in our ideologies, this difference cannot change the shared truth of us both being women. The channel deliberately ran fake news against me and called me a prostitute. This false news was seen by the entire country, and my dignity was hurt," she wrote in the post. "There must be sisters in your family too! Little girls! Don't you feel afraid for them? Don't you have anything to say about this thuggery by it," she added. Ranaut responded with a post and said "baselessly defaming any woman for the sake of TRPs is absolutely despicable". The actor said the head of the channel should take the responsibility. "Neha-ji, your political views and the statements you make from time to time are contrary to my own political beliefs and are unacceptable to me; however, baselessly defaming any woman for the sake of TRPs is absolutely despicable. The head of ABP should take responsibility for this," she said. (AGENCY)

Neeru Bajwa puts movie 'Thaapi' on hold over Jhota's murder; Khali also expresses grief

Punjabi actor Neeru Bajwa on Sunday announced that she was putting her film 'Thaapi' on hold amid the outrage over the murder of anti-drug activist Parvinder Singh Jhota in Mansa. The film, which was released worldwide on October 16, will no longer be screened in cinemas from Monday, she said in a message posted in Punjabi on Facebook. "We owe everything we are today to Punjab and Punjabiat. The purpose of making 'Thaapi' was also to bring life back to the fields of Punjab. Cinema is for the people and can never be bigger than them," she wrote. Referring to the prevailing

The purpose of making 'Thaapi' was also to bring life back to the fields of Punjab. Cinema is for the people and can never be bigger than them," she wrote.

situation in Punjab, Neeru said she and her team had decided that nothing was more important than the state. "We are putting our film 'Thaapi' on hold. It will not be screened in any cinema from tomorrow. We stand with Punjab in every way until the situation improves. We have stood with Punjab and will continue to do so," she said.

Meanwhile, wrestler-turned-actor Dalip Singh Rana, popularly known as The Great Khali, has also issued a video message expressing grief over Jhota's murder. He said the incident had caused pain across Punjab and India, adding that a person who raised his voice against drugs had been murdered. Khali said he had always stood against drugs and appealed to people to maintain restraint and not lose their calm in the heat of the moment. He added that Jhota could not be brought back, urging people to exercise patience. Earlier, devotional singer Kanhaiya Mittal . (AGENCY)



Season 1 contestants Aarush Bhola, Laila join 'Rise and Fall' Season 2, spark rivalries



The return of former contestant Aarush Bhola and Laila, aka Varun Yadav, has triggered fresh rivalries on the reality show Rise and Fall Season 2. Aarush, a finalist and Ultimate Worker in the previous season, reignited an old rivalry between Shehzad Poonawalla and Rishabh when he asked Shehzad about his favourite contestant. Shehzad named Swara Bhasker, prompting Rishabh to tell him he had "no spine". Shehzad responded with a dig at Rishabh's acting career, reviving their long-standing feud. Swara, meanwhile, exchanged playful banter with Aarush over her films and said, "Mere apne khudke opinion kaafi hai apki career phukne ke liye apki help ki zarurat nahi hai", drawing laughter with her retort. Down in the Basement, Aarush urged the Workers to stop complaining and focus on playing the game. He then asked them whose videos they thought would receive the most dislikes, prompting Sara Guralp to

name Priyanka Chahar Choudhary. The exchange brought their already strained equation back into focus, with the disagreement escalating into threats. Sara warned, "Yeh dono haath mein se ek haath uth gaya, mein bata rahi hu...". The biggest test of the Tower's power balance unfolded on the Fortune Floor, where Ultimate Ruler Niharika Tiwari was offered a deal that could have brought the Workers closer to a potential change in power. Aarush offered to add Rs 10 lakh to the Penthouse Prize Pot if Niharika gave up her Ultimate Ruler position. Varun, however, proposed a counteroffer under which she could retain her position at the cost of Rs 5 lakh being deducted from the pot.

Niharika chose to retain her position, leaving the Rulers dissatisfied and exposing divisions within the Penthouse. Sara was also presented with two options after her fall from power. Varun offered her immunity from nominations in

exchange for a deduction of Rs 2.5 lakh from the Basement Prize Pot. Aarush, on the other hand, offered to add Rs 2.5 lakh to the pot if she nominated herself.

Sara eventually chose to nominate herself, prioritising the Workers' collective interests over her individual safety. Niharika ranked her fellow Rulers according to who she believed was most deserving of their position in the Penthouse. Kajal Raghwani topped the list, followed by Manish Kashyap, Priyanka and Gautam Gulati, while Sonam was placed last and sent directly into the nominations.

Gautam, appointed as the operator, nominated Priyanka from the options of Priyanka, Manish and Kajal, placing her alongside Sara. Sonam later nominated Manish before taking over as operator. She initially selected Gautam but changed her decision to Kajal after the other Rulers questioned her choice, leaving Gautam safe for the week. Produced by Banijay Asia, Rise and Fall Season 2 is hosted by Virender Sehwal and streams free exclusively on Prime Video, with new episodes released daily at 12 noon. (AGENCY)

'Ranabaali' is our Indian take on 'Braveheart', 'Schindler's List' : Vijay Deverakonda

Filmmaker Rahul Sankrityan's Ranabaali is the Indian mass-commercial take on Braveheart, Schindler's List and Inglourious Basterds, lead actor Vijay Deverakonda said in Vijayawada while promoting the film following its release on October 16. "When I wanted to become an actor, I remembered how they would show us English films like Braveheart and Schindler's List. I watched Inglourious Basterds once I grew up. When I watched these films, I hoped I would make something similar when I became an actor," Deverakonda said. Ranabaali is our Indian mass-commercial way of telling a Braveheart, Schindler's List and Inglourious Basterds. This is our history, our culture. It will take you to a whole new world for two hours and 50 minutes. This



is my guarantee," he added. The actor also said that Ranabaali was a film he was proud of. This is a film I am very proud of. I have had a very short career; I'm a fairly new actor. This is my 14th film. Of the 14 films I have made, Ranabaali is definitely in my top three. Not just today, but even after 10 years, Ranabaali will remain a film I am proud of," he said. Deverakonda's statements quickly drew reactions from netizens. "It's easy to hype it as a big film. But when there's nothing to show on screen, such comparisons are a waste. (AGENCY)

Saif jokes on The Great Indian Kapil Show that his KBC ghee and cheque are yet to arrive

Saif Ali Khan has a complaint, and he would like it on record. The ghee he won on Kaun Banega Crorepati has not arrived. Neither has the cheque. The actor raised the matter on The Great Indian Kapil Show, where he appeared alongside Kareena Kapoor Khan. When host Kapil Sharma read out a fan comment claiming Saif joined Instagram because he was so thrilled about winning two years of ghee, Kareena clapped and pulled his leg. Saif waited for the laughter to die down before making his position clear. "I just want to clear one thing. I haven't even received the ghee yet. Even my cheque's



not come," he said, leaving Kareena and Archana Puran Singh in fits. The ghee moment traces back to late September, when Saif and Akshay Kumar appeared on KBC to promote their film Haiwaan. When Amitabh Bachchan announced that answering

the tenth question correctly would win them a two-year supply of Gowardhan ghee, Saif's reaction was immediate. "This is it. This is why I came," he said. Akshay could not stop laughing. The clip went viral and fans promptly declared him "Gen Z born in the wrong era." On Kapil's show, the ghee thread continued. When asked about the secret behind the couple's refreshed appearance, Saif played along. "Nowadays, we get a lot of ghee's supply," he said. Kareena added that the household consumed ghee generously, prompting Saif to volunteer that she also rubs it on her feet every night. (AGENCY)

Tom Cruise celebrates 40 years of 'The Color of Money': 'It was a pleasure and honour'

Hollywood star Tom Cruise has marked 40 years of his film The Color of Money, recalling how he studied the works of co-star Paul Newman and filmmaker Martin Scorsese before working with the two cinema legends on the 1986 drama. Cruise shared a post on his X handle on Saturday, featuring pictures from the film and reflecting on the experience of working with Newman and Scorsese. "40 years since making The Color of Money. I had the privilege to have a general meeting with Paul Newman and separately with Martin



Scorsese years before making this film, where they shared some of their wisdom on cinema," he wrote. Directed by Scorsese, the film follows retired pool shark "Fast Eddie" Felson, played by Newman, as he mentors a young pool player portrayed by Cruise. The film went on to earn over USD 52.29 million at the global box office. Cruise said he had created a "personal study course" by watching the films of Newman and Scorsese in chronological order before meeting them for the film. He repeated the exercise after being cast in the project. Of course, I'd seen their films, but prior to meeting them for the first time, I set up a personal study course where I would watch their films in sequence from the beginning of their careers, up until the point in time. After being cast in 'The Color of Money', I once again studied all of their films in sequence," he said. "Having studied their work, then being able to see firsthand these incredible artists, the towering legends of our field, at work on set, I was able to observe their practical application in every aspect of acting and filmmaking from their point of view," the actor added. (AGENCY)

'Perfect Crown' to 'Mousetrap': 5 K-dramas to add to your Durga Puja watchlist

Durga Puja is the perfect time to slow down, catch up on some much-needed sleep and settle in for a good binge-watch session. And what better way to spend those leisurely hours than with a K-drama that keeps you hooked till the very last episode? Whether you're looking for a cosy escape sessions or a series to binge-watch through the holidays, these picks have you covered.

Agent Kim Reactivated
Starring So Ji-sub, the series centers around Mr Kim, a single father who kept his identity as a secret agent in the past under wraps while raising his teenage daughter. However, when his daughter goes missing, Kim is forced to return to his previous life and plunge into a dangerous mystery that draws unwanted attention. Based on the webtoon Manager Kim, the series blends action, crime and comedy, making it a good pick for viewers who enjoy their thrillers with a dash of humour.



Perfect Crown
Starring IU and Byeon Woo-seok, Perfect Crown is based on an alternate 21st century, where Korea was still run by the monarchy. Seong Hui-ju (IU), a powerful and influential conglomerate who lacks aristocracy, got betrothed to Woo-seok's Prince I-an, a royal with a little financial freedom. But much to everyone's unawareness the two strike a contract marriage. However, tension soon starts to build up after the two find themselves entangled in unexpected feelings that complicate the

arrangement. For fans who swoon over royal settings, palace politics and a hefty dose of romance, this one makes for an enticing festive-season watch.

A Bona Fide Killer
Starring Kong Hyo-jin, A Bona Fide Killer follows Bona, a seemingly ordinary homemaker who secretly works for an organisation that eliminates dangerous criminals who have escaped justice. After taking a three-year break from fieldwork following motherhood, she returns to the job under the cover of an electronics. (AGENCY)

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