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PM Modi Hails 10 Years of UPI Revolution



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday hailed the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) as a “major turning point” in India’s digital payments journey as the country’s flagship real-time payment system completed a decade, highlighting its unprecedented scale, reach and growing global footprint. In a post on X, PM Modi said the rollout of UPI a decade ago had transformed the way Indians make payments and urged citizens to share how the platform had impacted their lives. “A decade ago, UPI was rolled out, marking a major turning point in

India’s digital payments journey. The sheer scale and reach of UPI are something every Indian must be proud of. Tell me about your UPI experience and how it impacted your life,” the Prime Minister said. Launched by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) in April 2016 with 21 member banks and rolled out to the public on 25th August 2016, UPI has emerged as the backbone of India’s digital payments ecosystem. It enables instant, interoperable bank-to-bank and merchant payments through mobile applications, operating round the clock.

Over the past decade, UPI’s transaction volume has expanded from 1.78 crore transactions in FY 2016-17 to 24,162 crore in FY 2025-26, marking an almost 13,000-fold increase. Transaction value rose from ₹0.07 lakh crore to around ₹314 lakh crore during the same period. The platform recorded 2,365.8 crore transactions worth about ₹29.87 lakh crore in July 2026, its highest monthly volume so far. Daily transactions have averaged around 66 crore in 2026, while the number of banks live on UPI has increased to 741 as of July. UPI accounted for about 84 per cent of India’s digital payment transactions in FY 2025-26. Its growing adoption has also strengthened financial inclusion by enabling individuals, small businesses and merchants to make and receive digital payments without relying on traditional payment infrastructure. The platform’s usage is particularly strong in low-value retail transactions. Person-to-merchant (P2M) payments account for

about 63 per cent of transaction volume, while 86 per cent of P2M transactions in FY 2025-26 were below ₹500. Person-to-person (P2P) transactions, meanwhile, accounted for around 71 per cent of transaction value. UPI has also evolved significantly since its launch. The BHIM app was introduced in December 2016, followed by dynamic QR payments in 2017 and UPI 2.0 in 2018. Subsequent innovations included UPI AutoPay, UPI Lite, UPI 123PAY for feature-phone users, credit-line integration, UPI Circle and on-device authentication. The platform has increasingly expanded beyond routine payments. UPI is now used for IPO applications, recurring payments, tax payments and other financial services, while higher transaction limits have been introduced for selected categories. The payment system has also emerged as an important component of India’s Digital Public Infrastructure and has gained international recognition.

"UPI made transactions fast, simple, secure"

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh marks 10 years of digital payments



New Delhi : Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday highlighted the impact of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) on India’s digital payments ecosystem, describing its 10-year journey as a decade of transformative change under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership. In a post on X, Singh said, “From a bold vision to a digital payments success story, UPI has made transactions fast, simple, secure and accessible to every Indian.” He added, “This is the power of Digital India, technology for empowerment, inclusion and ease of living.” Earlier in the day, PM Modi termed the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) a “major turning point” in the country’s digital payments journey, as the interface completed 10 years since its launch. In an X post, the Prime Minister urged UPI users to

share their experience with the interface. “A decade ago, UPI was rolled out, marking a major turning point in India’s digital payments journey. The sheer scale and reach of UPI are something every Indian must be proud of. Tell me about your UPI experience and how it impacted your life,” PM Modi posted. UPI was launched on August 25, 2016, by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) under the regulatory oversight of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). A pilot-basis launch was held in April 2016 with 21 member banks. It was rolled out to the public in August as participating banks made their UPI-enabled mobile applications available on the Google Play Store. The BHIM application was launched in December 2016. According to the Union Finance Ministry, the annual transaction volume ex-

panded from just 1.78 crore transactions in FY 2016-17 to over 24,162 crore transactions in FY 2025-26, representing an almost 13,000-fold surge in transaction volume. Also, transaction value rose sharply from Rs 0.07 lakh crore in FY 2016-17 to about Rs 314 lakh crore in FY 2025-26, translating into a more than 4,000-fold increase in transaction value. UPI is also accepted in 11 countries, with Greece and the Maldives be-

ing the latest to adopt India’s real-time payment platform. UPI is a real-time payment system that powers multiple bank accounts through a single mobile application of any participating bank or payment service provider. The interface integrates multiple banking services, fund transfers and merchant payments on a single platform. It uses two-factor authentication and end-to-end encryption to enhance transaction security.

Junior Doctors Call Off Strike in Andhra Pradesh

From Our Staff Reporter

Amaravati, August 25: Junior doctors in Andhra Pradesh have called off their strike. The junior doctors informed the High Court about their decision and requested the court to direct the state government to resolve their demands. The High Court on Tuesday heard a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed over the strike by junior doctors. During the hearing, the junior doctors informed the court that they were withdrawing their strike. At the same time, they urged the court to direct the government to take appropriate steps to resolve their demands. The High Court directed the state government to take a decision within two weeks on resolving the demands of the junior doctors. With this, the junior doctors’ strike in Andhra Pradesh has, for the time being, come to an end.



Quantum Valley Building to Be Completed by End of December: Minister Narayana

From Our Staff Reporter

Amaravati, August 25: Andhra Pradesh Minister Ponguru Narayana visited the state capital Amaravati and inspected the construction works of Quantum Valley, reviewing the progress of the project. Speaking afterwards, he said that Quantum Valley was being established with the objective of developing Andhra Pradesh into a knowledge hub for quantum technology. He said the government’s aim was to promote the quantum computing sector in the same way Hyderabad was developed in the IT and ITES sectors. A quantum laboratory is being established in partnership with companies including IBM and TCS, he said. The Quantum Valley building is being constructed across 45,216 square feet, with most of the major structural works already completed. A special “room within a room” design is being adopted for the quantum laboratory. The minister said special acoustic-control technology was being installed to ensure that external and traffic noise does

not affect the laboratory. Helium compressors and cryogenic dilution refrigerators will be used to cool quantum chips to around minus 273 degrees Celsius. A dual active feeder system is being installed to ensure uninterrupted power supply. K13-rated isolation transformers are being used to filter harmonics and electrical noise from the power grid. A green-building concept is also being implemented to reduce carbon emissions. Narayana said the government aims to complete the Quantum Valley building by the end of December. Mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) works are expected to be completed within the next one to two months. He said the building would be handed over to IBM on September 15 for carrying out the MEP works. He said two massive towers would be constructed on a total of 50 acres adjacent to the quantum laboratory. Each tower will have 48 floors and stand approximately 202 metres tall. The two towers will have a com-



bined built-up area of around 37 lakh square feet. Space in these towers will be allocated to startups, development companies and various technology firms. The minister said the objective was to develop a more advanced quantum technology ecosystem on the lines of Hyderabad’s Cyber Towers. He stated that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu had

personally reviewed the tower designs and given them final approval. He added that the Chief Minister and Minister Nara Lokesh were personally monitoring the Quantum Valley project. Narayana said quantum computing would create employment opportunities for young people while also improving their economic prospects. Attracting startups and industries is the primary objective, he said. He stated that Andhra Pradesh would be developed into a world-class quantum technology hub. Since quantum technology is still an emerging field, Andhra Pradesh is seeking to gain an early-mover advantage, Minister Narayana said.

Minister Lokesh Arrives in Ballari; Foundation Stones to Be Laid for Several Projects

Ballari, August 25: Andhra Pradesh Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh is scheduled to tour Ballari. The minister arrived at Jindal Vijayanagar Airport in Ballari on Tuesday morning. He was accorded a warm welcome by Karnataka Minister Nagendra, AP Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav, MPs BK Parthasarathi and Ambika Lakshminarayana, MLAs Daggubati Prasad, Amilineni Surendra Babu and Palle Sindhura Reddy, APIIC Director Challa Lakshmi Prasad, TDP Organising Secretary Umar, and other TDP leaders and party workers. Lokesh will shortly visit the Suzlon Blade Stock Yard at Halakundi in Ballari mandal. Later, he will lay the foundation stone for Suzlon wind power projects at Hulikera village in Kanekal mandal of Rayadurg constituency.



128 New Arrivals at Visakha Zoo; Pawan Kalyan Congratulates Staff

From Our Staff Reporter

Amaravati, August 25: Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan expressed happiness over the birth of 128 new animals and birds belonging to 12 species at the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park in Visakhapatnam. Responding on social media platform X, he said that every new life fills us with new hope and that protecting a species means safeguarding our natural wealth.

Pawan Kalyan’s Post

“New life in the lap of nature... new strength for conservation. It is a matter of great happiness that 12 species of animals and birds have given birth to 128 new offspring at the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park in Visakhapatnam. The scientific conservation and breeding programmes undertaken under the supervision of the Forest Department are yielding positive results. This is further strengthening wildlife conservation efforts in the state.

The successful artificial incubation of 10 red jungle fowl chicks and one blue-and-gold macaw chick deserves special mention. My heartfelt congratulations to



the Forest Department officials, Zoological Park staff and veterinary team who were involved in this breeding process. Every new life fills us with new hope. Protecting a species means protecting our natural wealth. I hope Andhra Pradesh achieves many more successes in preserving biodiversity for future generations by making effective use of science and technology,” Pawan Kalyan posted on X.

Special Committee Formed on Hike in Junior Doctors’ Stipend: Minister Satya Kumar

From Our Staff Reporter

Amaravati, August 25: Health Minister Satya Kumar clarified that the government is positive about the demands of junior doctors (JDs). Speaking in Amaravati on Tuesday, he said that the issues raised by the junior doctors had been brought to the attention of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. He expressed confidence that an acceptable solution for all stakeholders would be arrived at through discussions. He announced that a special committee had been constituted to examine the demand for an increase in the stipend of junior doctors. As per the directions of the High Court, the committee will function under the leadership of Health Department Secretary Veera Pandyan, he explained. The committee will meet representatives of the junior doctors within a day or two, he said. He noted that the stipend in Telangana is relatively higher and stated that the government would also compare the stipends offered in other southern states before taking a decision. However, he clarified that no final decision had been



taken on increasing the retirement age. In view of the objections raised by the junior doctors, the government would reconsider the issue of retirement age, he said. He also announced that the appointment of MSc and PhD holders to non-clinical posts would be reviewed. Minister Satya Kumar explained that notifications had been issued in accordance with the guidelines of the National Medical Commission (NMC). He recalled that around 9,500 junior doctors are providing essential medical services across the state. The minister thanked the junior doctors for calling off their strike.

EDITORIAL

America Caught in an Economic-Military Conundrum

The US midterm elections are not far away. These elections are likely to be a major test for US President Donald Trump. At a time when Trump's foreign policy appears to have more setbacks than successes, the economic situation is also similar. He is facing growing criticism that his administration has recorded more failures than achievements on the economic front. With Americans already struggling with high prices and inflation, the US Supreme Court has recently placed some restrictions on Trump's aggressive tariff policies. Since returning to the presidency for a second term, Trump's popularity appears to be lower than that of previous presidents. This has reportedly raised concerns within Trump that if the Republican Party loses the midterm elections, he could face impeachment and eventually even the possibility of imprisonment. Trump is already the only US president in history to have been impeached twice. However, he was acquitted by the Senate on both occasions. Therefore, Trump understands better than many of his party leaders the political risks that the November elections could bring. Nevertheless, the possibility of this adverse situation turning into a full-scale political disaster appears relatively low. Most of the Senate seats up for election are in Republican-friendly "red states," giving the party a chance to retain its narrow majority. However, Republicans appear more likely to lose their slim majority in the House of Representatives. When Donald Trump entered the White House for a second time in January 2025, he promised to act as a peacemaker for the world. But over the past 15 months, his foreign policy has suffered several setbacks. His strong desire for the Nobel Peace Prize, including his statements that he deserved the award, has particularly drawn controversy. He has repeatedly claimed that he brought an end to the Gaza war and prevented the India-Pakistan conflict from escalating into a full-scale war. These claims have drawn differing reactions internationally. In any case, the political, economic and foreign-policy challenges facing Trump ahead of the midterm elections are likely to become a crucial test for the Republican Party. Trump, who has proclaimed himself a peacemaker, is being severely criticized by countries around the world for going to war with Iran and, moreover, continuing to intensify the conflict reportedly at the urging of his ally, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Since the US began bombing Iran and its nuclear fuel enrichment facilities on February 28, Iran's strong resistance has reportedly left Trump facing a difficult situation. Iran has not only warned that it would block shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, but the disruption has also contributed to a global oil crisis. Trump, however, has recently brought forward a claim that the Strait of Hormuz belongs to US territory. Iran responded strongly, asserting that the strait remains under its control and declaring that it had already closed the waterway to shipping. The inability of the US to achieve victory in this war is not merely a military setback. It is also contributing to severe pressure on the American economy. US defence spending is increasing. If the war continues for a prolonged period, expenses related to military equipment, troop maintenance, weapons and assistance to allied countries are likely to rise further. With bond-market yields increasing rapidly, the government is being forced to intervene. At the same time, the US national debt crossed \$40 trillion for the first time in August. If this debt were to be repaid at the rate of one dollar per second, it would take more than a million years. However, no one expects the entire debt to be repaid in that manner.

Nor is there any need to do so. The real problem is not simply the total amount of debt. The latest \$1 trillion in debt was accumulated in just five months. Moreover, the interest payments on this debt are becoming a severe financial burden. It is significant that annual interest payments alone have reached \$2 trillion. Critics argue that the Trump administration's economic and military policies, along with what they describe as negligence, have contributed to this situation. Trump has also been entering into conflicts with allies and partners. In particular, after the US imposed 50% tariffs on Canada, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has warned that Canada would respond firmly with reciprocal tariffs on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Meanwhile, there are allegations that Trump's family has benefited enormously during his administration. Critics claim that while many other investors suffered losses, the Trump family earned more than \$2 billion through cryptocurrency.

The Real Reason Gurugram Is Battered By Rain, Year After Year

Every monsoon, Gurugram is confronted with the same paradox. A city celebrated as one of India's most modern urban economies can be brought to a standstill by a few hours of intense rainfall. Roads become channels, underpasses become reservoirs, and traffic corridors become temporary floodplains.

It is tempting to describe this as a drainage failure. But that explanation is incomplete. Gurugram's recurring flooding is fundamentally a failure to plan the city as a hydrological system. The geography of Gurugram has always demanded a particular relationship with water. The Aravallis form the higher ground along the southern and eastern edges of the urban region, while the terrain falls towards the north and northwest. Historical drainage patterns carried water through seasonal channels, depressions, ponds, and natural drains towards the Najafgarh system. Studies have identified an elevation difference of roughly 60 to 70 metres between the Aravalli foothills and the Najafgarh basin, creating a natural gradient for the movement of stormwater. The problem is that the contemporary city has progressively obscured this geography.

Water Follows Topography, Not Master Plans

A city may be divided into sectors, plots, and infrastructure zones, but rainwater does not recognise these boundaries. It follows slope, soil, permeability, and gravity. This is why the idea that Gurugram can solve flooding simply by adding larger drains is inadequate. A drainage network is the final component of a catchment system, not a substitute for one. When open land becomes concrete, the hydrological equation changes. On natural ground, rainfall is divided between infiltration, evaporation, temporary storage, and surface runoff. On a heavily paved urban surface, a much larger proportion becomes immediate runoff. The greater the impervious area, the faster water



reaches the drainage network, and the higher the peak discharge becomes. In engineering terms, the issue is not simply the total quantity of rainfall. It is the rate point at which rainfall is converted into runoff and the timing of that runoff reaching a drainage system. That distinction is crucial. A recent GIS and SWMM-based study of Gurugram examined eight high-runoff sub-catchments and found that a combination of green roofs, permeable pavements, and rainwater storage could reduce runoff volume by as much as 72.31% and peak discharge by 54.05%. These are not aesthetic interventions. They are hydrological infrastructure. We have confused water removal with water management.

For decades, the dominant approach to urban stormwater has been straightforward: collect water as quickly as possible and move it somewhere else. That model is becoming increasingly inadequate. A resilient city follows a different hierarchy: The first four stages should happen as close as possible to where rainfall occurs. Only the residual water should enter the larger drainage net-

work. This requires restoring the city's blue-green infrastructure: ponds, wetlands, natural depressions, open channels, recharge areas, planted corridors, and permeable landscapes. These should not be considered recreational or left-over spaces. They are components of the city's hydraulic system. Research on Gurugram has demonstrated the potential of precisely this approach. One recent study proposed integrating retention ponds into the existing drainage network and found substantial reductions in simulated flood volumes under both regular and extreme rainfall scenarios. The lesson is important: the landscape itself can be infrastructure.

The Next Masterplan

The real opportunity for Gurugram lies not merely in constructing more drains but in changing how future development is evaluated.

Every major development proposal should answer four basic questions:

What is the catchment?

How much additional impervious surface will the development create?

How much additional runoff and peak discharge will it gen-

erate?

Where will that water be retained, infiltrated, or safely conveyed?

This requires moving towards catchment-level stormwater modelling, using high-resolution Digital Elevation Models, rainfall intensity data, soil characteristics, land-use and land-cover data, drainage capacity, and existing water bodies.

GIS and hydrological models such as EPA-SWMM can then simulate how different development scenarios perform under varying rainfall intensities. This should become part of the development approval itself.

A building should not be assessed only for its Floor Area Ratio, parking, access, and fire safety. In a flood-prone urban region, its hydrological footprint should matter as well.

Roads Must Be Part Of The Solution

Gurugram's roads present another opportunity. Instead of treating every road edge as a hard boundary between carriageway and drain, selected corridors can incorporate bioswales, rain gardens, permeable shoulders, depressed landscape areas and temporary de-

tention zones. Parking areas can incorporate permeable surfaces wherever soil and groundwater conditions permit. The objective is not to eliminate conventional drains. It is to reduce the hydraulic load placed upon them. This is particularly important as rainfall patterns become more uncertain. A drainage system designed around historical rainfall statistics may perform adequately under an old climate regime but fail when rainfall arrives in shorter, more intense bursts. A Gurugram-specific study comparing increasing imperviousness with increasing rainfall intensity found that climate change could be the more severe threat to drainage-system performance, with the combination of urbanisation and more intense rainfall further worsening the risk. That should fundamentally change how we design infrastructure.

Not A Yearly Reckoning

Gurugram does not need another cycle of monsoon flooding followed by emergency pumping, desilting, road repairs, and the identification of new flooding hotspots. It needs a long-term urban flood resilience strategy.

The Big Reset In How India Builds Its Defence Is Here

For decades, India's defence debate has been dominated by a familiar contradiction: ambitious military requirements but a slow acquisition system; a large scientific establishment but often inflexible project management; and a growing industrial base but insufficient access to cutting-edge technologies. That contradiction is now being confronted simultaneously at several levels. In a conversation with this author, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, who also holds charge as Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), outlined a timeline that is more significant than a list of individual weapons programmes. It is, in effect, a roadmap for changing how India buys, develops, finances, and ultimately owns military technology. The first building block is Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2026.

The draft DAP 2026 is intended to make acquisition shorter, cleaner, and more responsive to the speed of technological change. The proposed framework reduces procurement categories from five to four, introduces technology-readiness-level-based categorisation, allows greater delegation, provides for two-stage trials, and seeks to monitor timelines from the RFI stage. It also raises indigenous con-

tent under the Buy Indian-IDDm category from 50% to 60%. Buy (Global) now must have 30% IC obligations. Further, DAP 2026 puts forth progressive indigenisation-Long Term Bulk Acquisition (LTBA), indigenous design capability, IP control-ownership. For example, Clause 26.1.1 demands the vendor to show/prove full design control, source code. In an era of drones, autonomous systems, artificial intelligence, electronic warfare, and rapidly evolving sensors, a five-year procurement cycle can mean buying yesterday's technology tomorrow. Singh's larger point is therefore important: the reform of acquisition must be about speed. But speed in procurement alone will not make India technologically sovereign. That is where the second reform becomes critical.

From Procurement To R&D

One of the least-discussed constraints on India's defence technology ambitions has been the financing architecture for R&D. DRDO has traditionally operated many projects within a system designed around sanctioned milestones, expenditure procedures and predetermined project structures. That model can work for conventional engineering programmes. It becomes much harder when the technology itself is moving rapidly. A radar, propulsion system, AI architecture, autonomous platform or electronic-warfare system cannot always

be developed according to a rigid linear timetable. Technology development is inherently iterative: test, fail, redesign, demonstrate, modify and test again. This is why the proposed Delegation of Financial Powers, or DFP-2026, could become as important for DRDO as DAP 2026 is for acquisition.

The objective is to give laboratory directors and project directors greater financial flexibility so that promising technologies can move faster from laboratory development to demonstration and user evaluation.

India cannot aspire to lead in defence technology while treating R&D finance as a conventional expenditure-control exercise. DRDO is awaiting its new full-time leadership through the Prime Minister-led selection process. Its next phase cannot simply be about managing laboratories. It has to be about managing technological missions.

P-75I: Last-Minute Re-check, Final Approval

Project-75I is perhaps the clearest test of whether India has learnt the difference between buying a platform and acquiring a capability.

The programme for six advanced conventional submarines has been in the pipeline for years. The Finance Ministry has cleared the proposal. P75I is in the final leg, awaiting final approval from the highest authority, where some key aspects must be rechecked.

The Strategic Partnership (SP) model was conceived precisely to combine Indian industrial capacity with global technology.

P-75I, therefore, should not be treated as six submarines but India's next submarine technology ecosystem where Indian DPUSs like MDL can build without the support of foreign partners-Naval Group and TKMS.

AMCA: Design To Industrial Capability

The Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) programme has moved from concept to industrial execution. The MoD issued the RFP in May 2026 to shortlisted private-sector contenders for the development of prototypes, with the programme being led by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) under DRDO. AMCA needs 15 GE F414 engines for five flying prototypes.

MoD has issued RPF to L&T and BEL Consortium: Led by Larsen & Toubro, alongside state-run Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Dynamatic Technologies. Bharat Forge-Led Consortium includes public sector BELM (Bharat Earth Movers Limited) and private tech firm Data Patterns. Tata Advanced Systems is competing independently.

However, the GE 404 engine remains an enigma with reported higher prices than the earlier quoted. The issue should be resolved at the earli-

est; otherwise, it will face similar challenges like Tejas Mk1A.

And here lies the strategic significance of France.

The Sixth-Generation Opportunity

India cannot afford to finish AMCA in the 2030s only to discover that the world has already moved to the next technological generation. Singh's position that India is open to working with France on sixth-generation fighter technology therefore deserves close attention. The global combat-aircraft race is already moving beyond the fifth-generation paradigm towards networked combat, autonomous loyal wingmen, AI-enabled decision-making, distributed sensors, combat clouds and manned-unmanned teaming. France offers India an unusual proposition because it retains a relatively complete sovereign combat-aircraft ecosystem-Dassault in aircraft design, Safran in propulsion, Thales in sensors and electronic systems, and MBDA in weapons. The original European FCAS was conceived as a system-of-systems combining a next-generation fighter, unmanned remote carriers and a combat cloud. But the programme's manned-fighter component has run into big industrial and political differences between France and Germany, and Dassault is now pursuing discussions with the French government for a future combat-aircraft demonstrator, potentially flying around 2031-32.

Collector Directs Officials to Speed Up Development Works



Rampachodavaram, August 25: Polavaram District Collector K. Dinesh Kumar directed officials to expedite the completion of various sanctioned development works in the district and ensure that welfare schemes reach every tribal family on time. The Collector held a review meeting on development programmes at his camp office here on Tuesday evening. He instructed officials of all departments to work in coor-

ordination and complete the targets within the stipulated time. He stressed the need to take up road repairs and regular maintenance in tribal and remote areas to ensure hassle-free transportation for people. Under the PM JANMAN scheme, officials were directed to speed up the provision of roads, drinking water, electricity and houses in Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) habitations.

Dinesh Kumar also directed officials to ensure 100 per cent basic infrastructure in Tribal Welfare Ashram schools. He called for increasing banking touch points in remote areas and resolving issues related to bank accounts, Aadhaar linkage, DBT seeding and other direct benefit transfer services at the earliest. As part of the NITI Aayog Aspirational Blocks Programme, he directed of-

ficials to strengthen banking services and awareness programmes in remote areas of Y. Ramavaram, Maredumilli, Gurtedu and Gangavaram mandals. The Collector also reviewed the functioning of the three systems received under the NITI TAR programme and enquired about the awareness being created among PVTGs and the process of uploading relevant details. DRDA Project Director Dr. Dasari Ratnakar Rao, District Agriculture Officer Rammohan Rao, CPO Venkat Rao, MPDOs Bapanna Dora, Lakshmana Rao and Srinivasa Rao, LDM Dileep, Aspirational Blocks Programme coordinators K. Lavan Reddy and Sandhya, financial literacy team members, Airtel Payments Bank representatives and others attended the meeting.

Awareness on Financial and Digital Literacy in Gangavaram Dhan Samvaad Workshop for Micro and Nano Entrepreneurs



Gangavaram, Pen Power, August 25: A Dhan Samvaad financial and digital literacy workshop was conducted in Gangavaram Mandal on Tuesday under the aegis of Mahindra Finance. The programme aimed to enhance financial and digital literacy among micro and nano entrepreneurs, create awareness about government schemes, and encourage the safe use of digital financial services. Gangavaram Mandal Parishad Development Officer Y. Lakshmana Rao, Aspirational Block Coordinator L. Hemalatha Madhuri, and SBI Gangavaram Branch Manager Ratnam attended the programme as chief guests. Raj Kumar M.V., Senior Manager (South), Founda-

tion for MSME Clusters (FMC), inaugurated the workshop. **Awareness on Financial Management** During the workshop, entrepreneurs were educated on financial planning, savings, utilisation of loans and responsible loan management. They were also briefed on the safe use of digital payments and online banking and advised to remain vigilant against cybercrimes and digital fraud. Participants were also informed about various government schemes, including Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY),

Udyam Registration and e-Shram. **Programme Should Be Extended to Other Areas** Mandal Parishad Development Officer Y. Lakshmana Rao said financial and digital literacy programmes would be highly beneficial in areas such as Gangavaram. Appreciating the initiative, he suggested extending similar programmes to other aspirational blocks in Alluri Sitarama Raju district. SBI Branch Manager Ratnam said that people could improve their financial security by making proper use of banking services and enrolling in social security schemes for which they are eligible. **18,000 Enterprises to Benefit**

The Dhan Samvaad programme is being implemented with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) support from Mahindra Finance and under the aegis of the Foundation for MSME Clusters. The programme is being implemented in Visakhapatnam, Krishna, Guntur and Alluri Sitarama Raju districts of Andhra Pradesh, with the objective of strengthening the financial and digital capabilities of around 18,000 micro and nano enterprises. A. Venkat, Master Trainer Shankar Rao, and District Trainers Rambabu and Satish, among others, played a key role in the successful conduct of the programme. Entrepreneurs and representatives concerned participated in the workshop.

"Will distribute appointment letters to 1 lakh youth in next 6 months"

: UP CM Yogi Adityanath makes big announcement on employment

Lucknow : Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said his government will distribute "appointment letters to one lakh youth in the next six months", while attacking the pre-2017 recruitment system. Speaking at an Appointment Letter Distribution Event, the Chief Minister said his government has provided over 9.30 lakh government jobs in the last nine-and-a-half years without a single appointment being questioned. "From day one, we resolved to break the pre-2017 pattern where recruitment advertisements were issued, only for the 'uncle-nephew duo' and the entire 'Mahabharata-style clan' to fan out across the state for extortion. Young people were left wandering aimlessly; results were never declared, and ultimately, the courts had to intervene and issue stay orders," he said. CM Yogi added, "I want to assure the youth across the state that within the next six months—please note, within the next six months we are going to issue government



appointment letters to 100,000 young people, distributed in batches every week." He said youth were left in limbo and dismissed as unemployable, while the fault lay with corrupt individuals in recruitment commissions and politicians in the government machinery. "We must bear in mind that when we select the most deserving candidates without discrimination, the entire state reaps the benefits. The state harnesses their talent and energy—a key

achievement of the 'double-engine' Bharatiya Janata Party government over the past nine to nine-and-a-half years," CM Yogi said. He added, "Our government has successfully provided government jobs to over 9.30 lakh youths of Uttar Pradesh, and not a single appointment has been called into question. The fault did not lie with the youth; the blame lay with the corrupt politicians and individuals dishonest and unscrupulous who had been installed within the com-

missions, boards, and the government machinery of that era." The CM said the government is working under a policy of zero tolerance towards crime and criminals and will break the back of the 'cheating mafia' and mafias entrenched in various institutions. "We will ensure their kingpins face severe consequences," he said. Reacting to talk of a sugar crisis, CM Yogi said there is no shortage in Uttar Pradesh. "UP's total monthly sugar consumption is 4 lakh tonnes; we currently hold a stock of 28 lakh tonnes. Just imagine—we have a seven-month supply on hand, and since we will restart sugar mills on October 15, we will produce another 90 lakh tonnes of sugar. UP has the capacity to feed not only its own 25 crore people but the entire 140 crore population of India," he said. The Chief Minister said foreign countries are now seeking youth from UP for jobs. "For the first time, such a large delegation from Japan visited India; out of all the states, they chose UP and expressed their desire to provide jobs in Japan to the youth of UP.

Take Diplomacy Beyond Traditional Diplomatic Circles, PM Modi Tells IFS Officer Trainees



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked Indian Foreign Service (IFS) Officer Trainees of the 2025 batch to take diplomacy beyond traditional diplomatic circles and engage meaningfully with local communities and the diaspora. A group comprising 50 IFS Officer Trainees from different States and Union Territories across the country called on Prime Minister Modi at Seva Teerth earlier today. PM Modi posted on X: "Interacted with the Officer Trainees of the 2025 Batch of the Indian Foreign Service. Called upon our young diplomats to: Take diplomacy

beyond traditional diplomatic circles and engage meaningfully with local communities and the diaspora. Become catalysts for India's economic engagement by identifying new opportunities for investment. Make our Missions more technology-driven and citizen-centric, strengthening their digital presence. Always ensure seamless and responsive consular services. Showcase India to the world by highlighting our civilisational heritage, culture and tourism potential." During the interaction, PM called upon the young diplomats to build strong

grassroots-level engagement in their countries of posting and emphasised that Indian Missions should foster meaningful relationships not only with governments and institutions but also with people at the community level. PM Modi also emphasised the importance of strengthening the digital presence of Indian Missions. He said that a website is often the first gateway through which people interact with an institution and called for greater use of technology to make the delivery of consular and other services more seamless, responsive and citizen-centric. Prime Minister

urged the Officer Trainees to work towards making India a more attractive global tourism destination by showcasing its civilisational, cultural and geographical strengths. He suggested leveraging the "Bharat ko Janiye" (Know India) Quiz to generate greater interest in India among young people across the world and encouraged the use of AI and gaming to make such initiatives more engaging. The Officer Trainees shared their experiences from training and Bharat Darshan. They also spoke about the importance of understanding India's civilisational and cultural links with the world.

Students break barricades during march to Raj Bhavan, demand cancellation of 70th BPSC exam

Patna : Students protesting against the 70th Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) examination broke through barricades while marching towards Raj Bhavan from Gandhi Maidan in Patna, demanding cancellation of the examination. The protestors attempted to proceed towards the restricted area despite police barricading the route. The demonstration comes amid continuing concerns raised by students over the conduct of the 70th BPSC examination. DSP Kamakhya Narayan Singh said police would stop the protesters if they attempted to move ahead, while expressing hope that the students would agree following the dialogue with senior officials. Speaking to News Agency, DSP said, "We will stop them; we won't let them proceed further. However, the dialogue has been positive, and we hope the students will agree. They have raised several issues with the senior officials, and the outcome has been positive. So,

I expect the turnout to be lower and that they will agree. If they don't, we will stop them right here. We won't allow them to enter the restricted area." Speaking at the protest site, Congress leader Sushil Kumar said the protesters were also seeking changes in the Teacher Recruitment Examination (TRE) 4.0 and action on issues related to the BPSC, Bihar Staff Selection Commission (BSSC), and Sub-Inspector recruitment. "We want to state clearly that a single-stage examination must be implemented for TRE 4.0 at all costs, and negative marking should be abolished. There are numerous other issues as well, regarding the BPSC, BSSC, Sub-Inspector recruitment. The government has offered no assurances on any of these points. We have urged the Chief Minister to hold a dialogue; he should invite our delegation for talks. We have been on a hunger strike for nine days, yet no one is willing to listen to us. Just imagine, had the government engaged in dialogue, this situation would



not have arisen. We are heading towards the Chief Minister's residence; the Chief Minister should hold talks, and our delegation will go there for the discussion," Kumar told News Agency. The students in Bihar are staging a protest and demanding the cancellation of the 70th BPSC examination over alleged irregularities and paper leaks. The agitation has also centred on the proposed Teacher Recruitment Examination - Fourth Phase (TRE-4) process, with the students objecting to the proposal of conducting the TRE-4 exams in two phases across the state while de-

manding the release of the official TRE-4 advertisement. Meanwhile, Bihar Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav wrote a letter to Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary regarding the ongoing BPSC examination row, urging him not to ignore the protesters' demands and engage in constructive dialogue to find an immediate resolution of the matter. In his letter, Yadav urged the state administration to conduct the TRE 4 as a single examination and immediately end the alleged discrimination faced by Hindi-speaking candidates in the BPSC Civil Services Main Examination and interview.

HM Amit Shah inaugurates the 9th two-day National Security Strategies Conference-2026 in New Delhi

NEW DELHI: Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah inaugurated the 9th two-day National Security Strategies (NSS) Conference-2026 in New Delhi on Monday. Prior to the inauguration, HM Shah paid homage at the Martyrs' column by laying a wreath in remembrance of the brave personnel of the Intelligence Bureau who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty to safeguard national security and integrity, said a press release from the Ministry of Home Affairs. The conference, held in a hybrid format, was attended by over 850 participants from across the country. Ministers of State for Home Affairs, Union Home Secretary, Deputy NSAs, and Heads of CAPFs/CPOs attended the conference in Delhi. DGPs of States and UTs, young police officers, and domain experts from specialised fields joined the conference in a



virtual mode, it said. On the first day of the Conference, discussions focused on critical aspects of national security, including response to counter-terrorism challenges, fusion, analysis and operationalisation of intelligence through the Multi Agency Centre (MAC), vision document on narcotics control, detection & deportation of illegal migrants, a policy framework to combat cyber-crime and proxy warfare by Pakistan, said the Ministry of Home Affairs. For effective tackling of terrorism & radicalisation, Amit Shah emphasised training for

the implementation of MHA's PRAHAAR scheme, expediting trials by bringing back fugitives & using trial-in-absentia provisions, and undertaking a comprehensive and integrated approach while investigating UAPA cases. The Home Minister directed that an AI-based analysis of information available on MAC platforms should be done to create SOPs to counter various national security challenges. He directed all the agencies to take strict measures against infiltration. The second day of the Conference will focus on the threat landscape from sub-aerial

systems and formulating countermeasures, securing the blue economy, information warfare and its implications on national security and the need for a bio-security framework. In pursuance of the directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, NSSC has been held every year in a hybrid format since 2021, with the objective of finding solutions to major National Security Challenges using the extensive experience of cutting-edge level officers working at the grassroots level in collaboration with domain experts, said the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Kashmiri Pandits On Edge As Fresh Online Threat Lists Homes, Phone Numbers



Fresh anxiety has gripped Kashmiri Pandit employees and residents after a new online hit list, attributed to the United Liberation Council, believed to be a proxy of the banned ashkar-e-Taiba, surfaced with a unprecedented level of detail. Unlike earlier threats, the latest letter contains personal information, including names, phone numbers and

precise residential addresses of targeted individuals in both Kashmir and Jammu, raising concerns about a possible data leak. Security agencies are verifying the authenticity of the letter and trying to identify those responsible for circulating it. This is not the first such intimidation campaign. Following a similar threat in the past, the ad-

ministration had advised minority government employees recruited under the Prime Minister's Rehabilitation Package (PMRP) to work from home and stepped up security at transit camps across the Valley. This time, however, the threat appears more alarming. The terror outfit has published the names and contact details of

PMRP employees along with detailed addresses, including street names and house numbers of Kashmiri Pandit families living in Kashmir and Jammu. In several cases, even vehicle registration numbers have been mentioned. In an apparent attempt to discourage their resettlement and efforts to reclaim ancestral properties, the letter describes members of the community as "traitors" and "white-collar terrorists". Amit Raina of Roots in Kashmir questioned the silence of civil society groups and Kashmir-centric political leadership over the issue. "In the 90s also they acted as mute spectators, which led to the exodus of five lakh Kashmiri Hindus, and this time too they are mum," Raina said. The threat letter also alleges that the targetted individuals are in Kashmir to further the 'agenda of the RSS'.

Harbhajan Singh's 'Doosra' Hits Wicket After Cops Confirm Punjab Drugs Video

Chandigarh: BJP MP Harbhajan Singh has bowled a political 'doosra' this time, with the Punjab Police confirming that a viral video he had shared showing a young man allegedly taking drugs is indeed from Jagraon in Punjab. Harbhajan Singh had quoted a video posted on X by BJP leader Ravneet Singh Bittu and had taken a swipe at critics, saying that even the Jagraon bridge would now be declared to be in Rajasthan by "paid trolls". The police clarification is significant given Harbhajan's earlier controversy over a video from Rajasthan that he had shared as a footage from Punjab. The post was subsequently fact-checked, with the video traced to Rajasthan. This time, the police said the video may be old but the man seen taking drugs under Jagraon Bridge was arrested by the Ludhiana police on August 12. The political exchange comes amid a war of words over Punjab's drug problem, with the Opposition using



viral videos to target the Bhagwant Mann government. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has been highlighting its crackdown against drugs and drug networks. In the old video that turned out to be from Rajasthan, two intoxicated men walked like "zombies" on a road. Then, Harbhajan Singh shared the video on X, expressing concern over the situation in "Punjab" and

saying the state's youth "deserve better". The viral clip was turned into a political attack on the AAP government's handling of the drug problem until it backfired when the facts came out about the location where it was taken. Punjab has long faced a serious substance-use crisis, with opioids, heroin, synthetic drugs and diverted pharmaceuticals among the main concerns.

Drug trafficking is aided by Punjab's location along the Pakistan border with smugglers increasingly using drones, GPS-enabled payloads and encrypted communication. Government action combines arrests and seizures with de-addiction and rehabilitation but access to treatment and action against major trafficking networks remain challenges.

'Structure Is Chamber': Archaeological Survey Debunks Golconda Tunnel Claim



The ASI here on Friday said a structure recently found at the historic Golconda Fort here is a small rectangular shaped chamber constructed of granite stone and not a tunnel. Following reports that a tunnel was reportedly found during the work undertaken by the Army's Artillery Centre, Golconda, behind the fort, an ASI team was deputed to the location to verify the claims, an ASI release said. The team comprised an archaeologist, engineer, surveyor and the site in-charge of Golconda Fort. The area falls within the prohibited area of Golconda Fort, which extends beyond 100 metres from the fortifi-

cation wall, it said. "Upon preliminary inspection, it was observed that the said structure is not a tunnel but a rectangular-shaped chamber measuring approximately 1.2 m X 1.8 m in length and width and 2.2 m in depth," it said. The chamber is constructed of granite stone, with rough stone masonry forming an internal wall-like structure. The team also noticed a few red-coloured potshells, which appear to belong to the medieval period, it said. The preliminary investigation has clarified that the structure is not a tunnel but a small chamber. Its exact purpose or usage,

however, could not be identified without detailed investigation, it said. The ASI Hyderabad Circle will report the matter to the Director General, ASI, and, upon

In Kerala Road Horror, Biker Killed After Iron Rods Fall Off Van, Pierce Him
Thrissur: A man died while riding a bike after several iron rods fell from a moving pickup van and pierced his body in Kerala's Thrissur district on Saturday. The man has been identified as Sherin John. The accident occurred at around 10:30 am near HiLITE Mall in Thrissur's Kuttanellur area. A video that has surfaced shows an autorickshaw making a sudden U-turn in the middle of the road. This prompted Sherin, who was riding behind the auto, and a pickup van carrying iron rods behind him, to stop abruptly. Due to the sudden stop, the iron rods, which appeared to be loosely tied to the truck, slid forward and pierced Sherin's body. Locals can be seen rushing to the spot to remove the rods and rescue him.

2 Child Sex Abuse Accused Escape From Srinagar Jail In Big Security Lapse

Srinagar: In a glaring security lapse that has raised serious questions over prison security, two undertrials facing charges under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act have escaped from the high-security Central Jail in Srinagar.

Confirming the jailbreak, a senior police officer said both the accused were lodged in the Central Jail in connection with separate POCSO cases and managed to give security personnel the slip and flee from the premises. Immediately after the escape came to light, Jammu and Kashmir Police issued lookout notices and launched a massive manhunt to catch them.

According to the lookout notices issued by Kashmir Zone Police on its official X handle, the accused have been identified as Mukhtar Ahmad Gujjar, son of Mohammad Rafiq Gujjar,



resident of Sanglan, Chittergul, Anantnag, wanted in FIR No. 20/2026 registered at Police Station Soura under various sections of the BNS and sections 3 and 4 of the POCSO Act. The other accused has been identified as Farman Khan, son of Abdul Gani Khan, resident of Sadanpora, Rafiabad, wanted in FIR No. 19/2026 registered at Police Station

Lar under various sections of the BNS and sections 3 and 4 (penetrative sexual assault) of the POCSO Act.

The police have made a fervent appeal to the general public to share any credible information regarding their whereabouts. The department has also announced a suitable reward for information leading to their arrest. People having any information have been requested to contact the

nearest police station or dial the emergency helpline number 112. Meanwhile, further investigation is underway, and all efforts are being made to trace and apprehend the escapees at the earliest. Police have also initiated an internal inquiry to ascertain the reasons behind the security lapse that enabled the prisoners to flee from one of the most guarded jails in the Valley.

Ex-Drug Peddler From UP Arrested For Illegal Firearms Sale In Hyderabad

Hyderabad: The Malkajgiri commissioner zone police have arrested a man from Uttara Pradesh for trying to sell an illegal weapon in Hyderabad. Two 9mm pistols, three magazines and 19 live rounds were seized during a joint operation by the Malkajgiri Zone Special Operations Team (SOT) and Bollaram Law and Order police. The accused was identified as 27-year-old Prabhas Kumar, a native of Uttar Pradesh who was living in Bihar Basti at Patancheru and working as a daily-wage labourer. Police said Kumar had previously been involved in drug peddling and was arrested by Cherlapally police in an NDPS case in 2024. Recent reports also state that he had earlier worked as an agricultural labourer and lorry cleaner. According to investigators, Kumar allegedly turned to illegal activities in pursuit of quick money. After his arrest in the drug case, he allegedly shifted his focus to firearms, planning to procure weapons cheaply in North India and sell them at higher prices to people involved in



criminal activities in Hyderabad. Police said Kumar travelled to Bihar on August 10 and contacted a person identified as Sonu, from whom he allegedly procured the firearms and ammunition. The seizure included two 9mm pistols, three magazines and 17 live rounds, along with a double-barrel tappancha and two additional live rounds, taking the total ammunition seized to 19 rounds. The arrest followed credible information that Kumar was moving near Bungalow No. 13, close to

Sadhana Mandir in Bollaram, around 12.10 p.m. on August 22. A joint police team intercepted him and recovered the weapons. Malkajgiri Police Commissioner B. Sumathi said the accused allegedly procured the firearms from outside Telangana with the intention of selling them to persons involved in criminal activities in Hyderabad. Police are now investigating his alleged links with the supplier and others who may be connected to the firearms network. A case has been registered against

Kumar at Bollaram Police Station under the relevant provisions of the Arms Act. Police said the investigation will focus on tracing the source of the weapons, identifying the alleged supplier and determining whether Kumar had already sold firearms to other persons. The police have increased surveillance on suspected movement of illegal firearms into Hyderabad from other States and the alleged involvement of individuals with previous drug-related cases in the weapons trade.

Interpol Issues Red Corner Notice Against UP's Sambhal Violence Mastermind



Interpol has issued a Red Corner Notice against fugitive gangster Shariq Sata, the alleged mastermind behind the violence in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal in November 2024, a police officer said. Sambhal SP Krishna Kumar Bishnoi, who is now the SP of Bijnor after a recent rejig, told reporters on Friday that Sata, the mastermind behind the November 24, 2024, violence, was previously declared a fugitive offender by a court, with proceedings initiated for the attachment of his property.

Following the completion of the necessary formalities, the Uttar Pradesh Police had requested the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to get Interpol to issue a Red Corner Notice against him. Sata had fled to Dubai using a forged passport and his family members have frequently travelled there. Police maintained a close surveillance on him and submitted a detailed dossier to the CBI, and subsequently coordinated with Interpol to get the Red Corner Notice issued.

Efforts will now be made to get him arrested and extradited from whichever country he is in, ensuring that he faces legal action for the 2024 incident as well as for the 55 to 60 other criminal cases previously registered against him, Bishnoi said. Tension erupted in Sambhal on November 24, 2024, when protesting locals clashed with security forces during a court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid following claims that a Harihar temple previously stood at the site.

Four people were killed and dozens injured in the unrest. During the investigation, Sata emerged as the prime conspirator in the case, the SP said, adding that he fled the country years ago and has been on the run since. Despite multiple police raids, Sata could not be traced, following which a notice under section 84 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) was pasted at his residence. A lookout circular was already issued against Sata, Bishnoi said. A Red Corner Notice is an international request from Interpol to law-enforcement agencies worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest an individual who is wanted for prosecution or to serve a sentence. According to police, Sata was involved in several organised criminal activities, including vehicle thefts, across the National Capital Region (NCR) and Uttar Pradesh, while operating from abroad.

"Entering Endgame": US Warns Iran Of 'Economic D-Day', Tehran's 'Oil' Response



Washington:The United States and Iran continued exchanging defiant rhetoric ahead of America's scheduled announcement of new economic sanctions that could impact the Islamic Republic and Tehran's most important trading partners, including China. In a Sunday op-ed in the Economic

Times, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent warned that an "economic D-Day is coming for Iran," as he threatened nations against doing business with Tehran. He, however, gave little detail about how the economic warfare will take place.

What Scott Bessent Said

"At dawn begins an economic D-Day -- the single greatest financial offensive ever marshalled against an adversary," he wrote, a day ahead of a planned news conference at 2 pm on Monday. "The world should understand that our objective is to sever every economic lifeline that sustains the ty-

rannical regime until Tehran stands alone," Bessent said, echoing US President Donald Trump's remarks, who first threatened an "economic D-Day" against Iran last week. The United States has also warned of "tremendous economic consequences" for Tehran's business partners to ratchet up economic pressure that could push Iran back to the negotiating table. "Iran's enablers purchase and transport its petroleum... They turn a blind eye to seaborne fuel transfers and the illicit use of their banks, all while concealing the extent of their complicity..." In short, these countries calculate appeasement of the regime to be the safer course. But they would do well to consider the consequences of sustaining it," Bessent wrote in the op-ed. He also warned that if Iran

responded to economic action with brute military force, Trump would "respond swiftly and decisively." Later, taking to X, Bessent claimed the United States "has dismantled Iran's military capabilities, destroyed nearly 100 per cent of its military factories, and buried its nuclear program. We are now entering the endgame. At dawn begins an economic D-Day -- the single greatest financial offensive ever marshalled against an adversary." "The Islamic Republic has subsisted by dressing extortion as security guarantees. It has drawn strength from a calculus that regards Iranian retaliation as certain and American enforcement as negotiable. Under President Trump, that era is over. And those who fear the danger of defying Tehran ought not to discount the

cost of testing Washington," he added.

Iran's Response

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said that the imminent US announcement of new economic sanctions on Iran was an "assertion of extraterritorial sovereignty over every independent member state of the United Nations." "Such secondary sanctions find no foundation in international law," he said in a post on X. A senior Iranian security official also warned that the country will consider any state's participation in or support for the US anti-Iran economic operation as an "act of war." In a social media post, Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said, "If the economic war continues, not a single drop of oil will be exported, nei-

ther through the Strait of Hormuz nor from anywhere in the Persian Gulf. Iran will regard any country's participation in or support for America's economic war against the Iranian people as an act of war."

Call for Diplomacy

As the war neared six months old, the two sides were not exchanging fire but also not pursuing peace talks. All the while, oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz have virtually halted as Tehran clings to its leverage by threatening to strike any unauthorised oil tankers that attempt to transit the narrow waterway. China, which buys more than 80 per cent of Iran's shipped oil, according to 2025 data from "It would be better to end the war today, when we are powerful and have

dignity, and the whole world acknowledges our victory and emphasises that America, contrary to all regulations, attacked our schools, hospitals, and infrastructure and is hated in the world," Pezeshkian said, according to the ISNA news agency. Iran's parliament speaker, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, the country's main negotiator in mediated talks with the US, acknowledged the strain on Iran's economy in comments to Iranian and Iraqi businesspeople late on Thursday. "No matter how much military power we have, we won't survive if people are hungry and we don't have financial turnover, economic growth and national production," Qalibaf said, according to the official news agency IRNA.

Imran Khan's Party Takes Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif To Court After Failed' Heart Checkup



Islamabad:Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's party has filed a contempt petition against the Shehbaz Sharif government in Islamabad after authorities sent him to a state-run hospital instead of the private facility ordered by the Supreme Court. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has also condemned the state-run Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) for failing to conduct a medically recommended diagnostic test on the 73-year-old cricketer-turned-politician despite the availability of a functional CT scanner on the premises, Dawn newspaper reported.

Call for Action

"The petition seeks action against the prime min-

ister, law minister, information minister, and other government officials," said Naeem Panjutha, a legal adviser for Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. PTI's Central Secretary Information, Sheikh Waqas Akram, also called out the "continued failure" of authorities at PIMS to conduct the CT Coronary Angiography (CTA) procedure on Khan despite cardiologists complaining about potential risks of cardiac complications. He demanded that Khan be immediately conducted at Shifa International Hospital.

Allegations of Neglect

Khan was taken to PIMS last week for an eye procedure and other diagnostic examinations. Doctors reportedly recommended a

CTA of the heart, but hospital officials said the required facility was unavailable. He was subsequently returned to Adiala jail without undergoing the test. "...This cannot be dismissed as an isolated administrative lapse; it reflects a deeply troubling pattern," Akram said, adding that required specialist facilities were available at Shifa International Hospital. The PTI leader also referred to a Supreme Court order concerning Khan's comprehensive medical examination and treatment at Shifa International Hospital, alleging that authorities had bypassed the directive and instead transferred him to a facility where the CT angiography was not performed. "When the neces-

sary facilities were available at Shifa International, deliberately taking Khan to a hospital unable or unwilling to perform the procedure raises a grave question: was the decision made in advance to prevent the CT Coronary Angiography from being conducted?" he asked. Akram said a government medical board had examined Khan on August 10 following complaints of heart palpitations and severe headaches. He said a cardiologist at PIMS had already recommended the CTA on August 1 due to fluctuating blood pressure, restlessness, and potential risks of cardiac complications, given Khan's age and prolonged isolation. "Even the government's own doctors considered this diagnostic test necessary," Akram stated. He said these reports had "intensified concerns regarding repeated delays and apparent negligence in providing Imran Khan with timely and appropriate medical care."

'Show Records'

Akram also called for the "prompt disclosure of his (Khan's) complete medical records, reports, and diagnostic results to his family, personal doctors, and legal team." Following PTI's protest, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif last week

formed an inquiry committee, headed by the establishment division secretary, to establish facts and fix responsibility. The PTI leader, however, declared that Imran Khan's heart health cannot be "subjected to political calculations, administrative excuses, or further delay." "Political victimisation must never be permitted to endanger a human life through the denial or postponement of essential medical care. The decision to take him to a facility where the required test was not conducted, despite the availability of the necessary facilities at Shifa International, has created serious concerns that the procedure was intentionally prevented," he alleged. "The government and all relevant authorities will bear full responsibility for any further deterioration in his condition," Akram warned. Khan was arrested on August 5, 2023, in a corruption case and has remained in custody since then. He has been lodged in Adiala Jail, a detention facility on the outskirts of Rawalpindi. The PTI founder's relatives and supporters have repeatedly alleged human rights violations and accused the authorities of restricting his access to adequate medical care, family visits, and legal counsel.

"Canada Ripping Off US": Trump Escalates Trade War With 50% Tariffs From 2027



US President Donald Trump said on Monday that he would raise tariffs up to 50 per cent on a range of Canadian products in the auto sector from 2027 after trade talks between the neighbouring countries collapsed. Trump threatened Canada and said that it will no longer be treated like a US "state".

"On January first, 2027, tariffs on all cars, trucks, both large and small, automotive parts, and steel, will be increased to 50%. Build in the U.S. And there are zero tariffs," Trump said in a post on Truth Social. The current US tariff on autos stands at 25 per cent for non-US content, while imported steel to the United States generally faces a 50-per cent duty. The White House had alleged "discriminatory treatment" by Canada against US alcohol, automobile and dairy products in rolling out the duties. Last week, Trump delayed the implementation of the tariffs by three days last week after the two countries had stepped up talks towards a trade deal. The tariffs came into effect on Saturday after the negotiations collapsed, and it hits about 5.5 per cent of Canadian goods entering the US. The tariffs will affect about \$20 billion worth of products ranging from hockey sticks to cement. In a long post, he accused Canada of "ripping off" the United States for years and claimed that the country's "ridiculously high tariffs" on US farmers and their farm products have made life difficult for them. The US leader alleged that such tariffs have created a "60 billion dollar deficit" between the two countries. Trump said that Canada is among the "worst" countries in the world to deal with. "They feel entitled, and yet, we don't need Canada, they

need us! They do 95% of their business with the U.S., with us, the exact opposite!" Trump wrote.

Canada's Carney Says US Launched 'Trade War'

After the negotiations between Washington and Ottawa broke down on Friday, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said that he walked away because of a 'bad trade deal' and vowed to slap retaliatory tariffs on the US on Saturday. Carney claimed that the US proposed new terms that were

"uneconomic" and "unfair" and said that they undermined the net benefits for Canada. He accused Trump of launching a trade "war" and said, "You're at war when you get attacked. We got attacked." "We cannot accept what they've offered, and we will not give what they've asked," Carney said. New Canadian tariffs will notably target the US steel and dairy industries and take effect on September 8. Carney said further details would come next week.

Indian-Origin Teen Dies After Car Plunges Off Cliff Into Ocean In US

Washington: An Indian-origin teen died in the United States after the car she was travelling in plunged off a cliff into the ocean near Steamer Lane in Santa Cruz. Ali Renee Singh, 19, was a psychology major at the University of California, Santa Cruz and was affiliated with the university's John R Lewis College community, where she enrolled in June 2024, according to a report by NRI Pulse.

The emergency rescue team responding to the crash found Singh's car, which had one more occupant, submerged off the rocky coastline. Police said the other occupant, a male, managed to escape and suffered minor injuries while Singh remained trapped inside.

According to the report, four professional divers attempted to reach Singh on time. She was lifted from the sea and transported by ambulance to a nearby hospital, where she died of her injuries, according to the Fire Department.

The accident occurred on April 13 near Santa Cruz's iconic Steamer Lane surf break. The Los Angeles Times reported that the section of West Cliff Drive, near where the accident took place, was heavily damaged due to ongoing coastal erosion.

Singh's aunt, Monica Singh-Strohmeier, shared a statement on social media confirming Singh's death and urging privacy for her family during this difficult time.

"It is with a very sad and heavy heart that I deliver this news to you," she wrote, saying her niece had died in a "tragic auto accident."

She said Singh, who was originally from Selma in California's Fresno County, was preparing to begin her third year at UC Santa Cruz.

"She was a very smart, beautiful, and loving young lady and will be missed by all who crossed her path. We ask for privacy for her mother during this difficult time and will keep everyone posted as arrangements are finalized," she wrote.

The fatal accident reignited concerns over the narrowing distance between traffic and the cliff's edge due to continuous erosion. A similar incident occurred in June, when three people died after losing control of their vehicle and tumbling 400 feet off an embankment in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

US Plans Massive Hike In H-1B Visa Fee, Indians Brace For Big Impact

The Trump administration is planning to impose new fees targeting H-1B and F-1 optional practical training (OPT) programmes. The US Department of Homeland Security released a proposed regulation to increase the H-1B visa fee to \$103,265, the Federal Register posted on Monday. Last year, the fee was imposed but has now been blocked by the courts. If the proposed regulations are implemented, they could raise the expenses of working in the US for foreign nationals, for students who are transitioning from universities to workplaces and for employers sponsoring H-1 workers, according to Fragomen, a corporate immigration services firm. The shift is important for Indians because they account for more than 70 per cent of all H-1B visa beneficia-

ries. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services approved 399,402 H-1B petitions in 2024, out of which Indian-born beneficiaries claimed 71 per cent. The immigration law firm Fragomen stated in a note that the proposals have already moved through the White House Office of Management and Budget. "A proposed OPT fee rule was sent to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on August 20 and is now under review. A proposed rule to impose a fee on certain H-1B petitions was received by OMB and cleared review on the same day, August 19," the note said. Fragomen noted that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) might propose a \$100,000 fee on OPT applications, and the proposed H1-B fee could be tied to the ongoing lawsuit over the



administration's previously blocked \$100,000 H-1B petition fee. However, the contents of the proposals remain confidential and will be released officially later.

H-1B Workers Could Lose 60-Day Lifeline

Apart from the new fees, earlier this month, the DHS proposed eliminating the 60-day grace

period for unemployed H-1B workers, forcing them to leave the United States immediately or face status violations if the rule is finalised. A move like this could require affected workers and their dependants to leave the country almost immediately. If the regulation is finalised, it would remove the exist-

ing 60-day grace period for certain workers and their dependants when the employment on which their immigration status is based ends before their authorised period of stay expires. More than 5.2 million people of Indian origin live in the US, according to recent estimates based on US Census data.

National Workshop on SSBSK Focuses on Child Health Monitoring



New Delhi, August, 25 (PIB): Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) convened a two-day National Workshop on Samagra Shishu Bal Swasthya Karyakram (SSBSK) on August 24–25, 2026, at Chhatrapati S a m b h a j i n a g a r, Maharashtra. The workshop was held under the chairpersonship of Smt. Aradhana Patnaik, Additional Secretary & Mission Director, National Health Mission (NHM), MoHFW, and brought together senior officials from the Min-

istry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India; representatives of the Government of Maharashtra; State Nodal Officers for Child Health and ASHA programme from all 36 States and Union Territories; technical experts; and development partners. The workshop focused on translating the SSBSK Operational Guidelines into effective implementation at the State, district, health facility and community levels, with particular emphasis on strengthening the continuum of care for new-

borns and young children from birth to three years of age.

Delivering the keynote address, Smt. Aradhana Patnaik, Additional Secretary & Mission Director, National Health Mission, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, emphasised that while India has made substantial progress in reducing newborn and child mortality, the remaining challenge requires greater attention to vulnerable newborns and children, particularly the first 7 days of life which

are critical for newborn survival, and the first 3 years for optimal brain development underscoring SSBSK's continuum of care for every child's survival, growth and development. She also highlighted the need to move from routine service delivery towards early identification, risk-based follow-up and timely action, with States playing a central role in translating the SSBSK framework into measurable improvements in child health outcomes. She reiterated that effective implementation will require strong teamwork between ASHAs, ANMs, Community Health Officers, Medical Officers and Anganwadi Workers, supported by effective supervision, referral linkages and programme monitoring. The inaugural session commenced with the welcome address by Dr. Shobhna Gupta, Deputy Commissioner & In-charge (Child Health & RBSK), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, who set the context for the two-day national workshop and underscored the importance of coordinated and convergent action among stakeholders for effective implementation of SSBSK. Shar-

ing the State of Maharashtra's perspective on newborn and child health survival, Shri Sanjay Shripatrao Katkar, Commissioner & Mission Director (NHM), Government of Maharashtra, highlighted the importance of strong State leadership and health-system action in advancing newborn and child survival and translating national programme priorities into implementation at the field level. Development partners also addressed the gathering, including Dr Hemang Shah, Director (CIFF), Health & Nutrition, India; Dr Pushpa Deo Chaudhary, Team Lead (RMNCAH), WHO India; Ms Nande Putta, Chief of Health, UNICEF India; and Mr Arvinn Gadgil, Deputy Ambassador of Norway to India, reaffirming their support for strengthening newborn and child health services and implementation of SSBSK. During the inaugural session, SSBSK programme resources were released, including the SSBSK inauguration video, the Shaishav App video and SSBSK training videos for frontline workers, to support programme communication, orientation and capacity

building. A key focus of the workshop was the Shaishav App, the digital platform supporting SSBSK implementation. The application is designed to enable identification and digital line-listing of 'At-risk' newborns and children, scheduling and tracking of home visits, follow-up of referrals, supportive supervision and programme monitoring. The digital platform will support the creation of a longitudinal child health profile, enabling continuity of information and follow-up as a child progresses from the newborn period through early childhood. The emphasis is on using technology as an enabler for timely decision-making while ensuring that compassionate, family-centred care remains at the heart of programme delivery. The workshop also highlighted the importance of strengthening follow-up through community and primary healthcare platforms, including VHSNDs, Ayushman Arogya Mandir-Sub Centres and other child health service delivery platforms, to ensure that children identified with health, nutrition, growth or developmental concerns do not get lost to follow-up.



New Delhi, August, 25 (PIB): The Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC), under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, organised an Interactive Meeting at the Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) and Central Cosmetics Laboratory (CCL), Kolkata. The meeting, being organised for the first time in Kolkata, West Bengal, brought together experts and stakeholders to discuss the way forward for pharmacopoeial standards and drug quality in the country. The meeting focused on "IP 2026: Perspectives, Suggestions & Way Forward" and the significance of Indian Pharmacopoeia Reference Standards and Impurity Standards in assuring the quality, safety and efficacy of pharmaceuticals.

A major highlight of the event was the launch of seven Indian Pharmacopoeia Nitrosamine Impurities Reference Standards, marking the first-ever introduction of these critical reference standards by IPC. The standards launched are N-Nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA), N-Nitrosodiethylamine (NDEA), N-Nitrosoethylisopropylamine (NEIPA), N-Nitrosodibutylamine (NDBA), N-Nitrosomethylphenylamine (NMPPA), N-Nitrosodipropylamine (NDIPA), and N-Nitroso-N-methyl-L-4-aminobutyric acid (NMBA). Nitrosamines are highly potent genotoxic and carcinogenic compounds that may arise unintentionally during manufacturing, storage, packaging or through contamination from various materials used in pharmaceutical production. Controlling of these impurities are crucial in some of the drug formulations used for hypertension, gastric disorder, diabetes, and tuberculosis, etc. The launch of these seven impurities reference standards represents a significant step towards strengthening India's capability for the accurate detection and quantification of nitrosamine impurities in pharmaceuticals. The initiative will support pharmaceutical testing, method validation, quality assurance and regulatory compliance, while further promoting harmonisation with international quality standards and self-reliance in critical reference materials. Dr. V. Kalaiselvan, Secretary-cum-Scientific Director, Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission, during the inaugural address, highlighted the collaborative approach with CDL lab is crucial in ensuring the quality of medicines. Other dignitaries Dr. Suparna Chatterjee, Professor and Head of Pharmacology, IPGIMER Kolkata, Dr. Rakesh Kumar Rishi, Director- Central Drugs Laboratory also graced the occasion. The meeting served as an important platform for experts from regulatory authorities, laboratories and IPC to exchange perspectives, share suggestions and contribute towards further strengthening the Indian Pharmacopoeia and the national drug quality ecosystem.

Mauritius Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms, Lutchmanah Raj Pentiah, calls on Minister Dr Jitendra Singh; discusses further strengthening of India-Mauritius cooperation in public service, training and capacity building

New Delhi: Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms, Republic of Mauritius, Mr. Lutchmanah Raj Pentiah, called on Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences and MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh today at Kartavya Bhavan, accompanied by a high level official delegation, with the agenda to discuss further strengthening of India-Mauritius cooperation in public service, training and capacity building, with greater emphasis on sustained institutional engagement and exchange of expertise between the two countries. Dr Jitendra Singh said the existing cooperation should be taken forward through wider training opportunities, stronger linkages between public service institutions and greater sharing of India's experience in governance, administrative reforms and technology-enabled public service delivery. Dr. Jitendra Singh said India and Mauritius share a special relationship rooted in deep historical, cultural and people-to-people ties, and public administration and capacity building provide a natural area for further cooperation. He said India has consistently supported Mauritius in developing the capabilities of its public servants and that the ongoing

engagement now provides an opportunity to build a more structured and enduring institutional partnership. The Minister referred to the understanding reached during Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's visit to Mauritius last year to train 500 Mauritian civil servants over five years through the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), with the first batch already undergoing training at Mussoorie. He said this initiative can serve as an important foundation for deeper and sustained engagement between the public services of India and Mauritius, beyond individual training programmes. A major focus of the meeting was the development of stronger institutional linkages between ABVIPSI and leading Indian institutions engaged in public service training and capacity building, including the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) and Institute of Secretariat Training & Management (ISTM). The proposed areas include joint programme design, faculty and training capacity building, exchange of expertise, exposure programmes, sharing of training methodologies, development of case studies and joint research. He said the recently operationalised iGOT Karmayogi Mauritius plat-

form can provide a strong foundation for sustained digital learning and capacity building of Mauritian public servants. Indian and Mauritian institutions can work together to develop learning pathways, curate content and incorporate Mauritian governance experiences and case studies into learning resources suited to the country's requirements. The meeting was attended by senior officials from the Government of India and the Republic of Mauritius, representatives of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Public Service and Innovation (ABVIPSI), and High Commissioner of Mauritius to India, H.E. Mrs. Sheila Bappoo. The discussions focused on expanding cooperation in public administration, capacity building, training, digital learning and public service innovation. The meeting also explored the scope for expanding cooperation from conventional civil service training to wider areas of professional capacity building. IIPA has proposed collaboration with ABVIPSI for short- and long-term programmes in public administration, governance, leadership and public policy, besides capacity building of ABVIPSI faculty and staff and training programmes for scientific and technical officials from Mauritius. IIPA has also proposed cooperation in joint research and consultancy, Monitoring



and Evaluation of government schemes and projects, faculty and researcher capacity building, development of online training courses and modules, and faculty and staff exchanges. LBSNAA has proposed opportunities for Mauritian civil servants to participate in suitable mid-career and in-service training programmes and for joint design of programmes aligned with the capacity-building requirements of Mauritius. Mr. Lutchmanah Raj Pentiah welcomed India's continued support to Mauritius and sought further expansion of institutional cooperation. He proposed that NCGG teams visit Mauritius to train trainers and Mauritian public servants and to support more effective utilisation of the Karmayogi Bharat platform. He said 85 Mauritian officers have already under-

gone training through four missions and expressed readiness on the Mauritian side to facilitate further training programmes in Mauritius. The Mauritian Minister also sought India's continued support in developing ABVIPSI as a centre of excellence for public service learning and innovation for the Indian Ocean and Eastern African region. He invited Indian institutions to participate in an international conference on good governance and management proposed by Mauritius and sought deeper academic and institutional linkages with Indian institutions. The two sides also discussed opportunities for cooperation in emerging areas relevant to both countries, including the Blue Economy, ocean technologies, fisheries, desalination and sustainable development. Specialised

capacity-building programmes, practitioner exchanges and joint learning initiatives in these areas can create new avenues for India-Mauritius cooperation.

The discussions reaffirmed the shared commitment to take India-Mauritius cooperation in public administration and capacity building to a new level through stronger institutional partnerships and sustained training engagement. The partnership will build upon the 500-officer training programme, ABVIPSI, iGOT Karmayogi Mauritius and the emerging linkages between Mauritian and Indian training institutions, with the focus on building long-term public service capabilities and creating a framework for continuous exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices.

Minister of State for Commerce and Industry and Electronics & Information Technology Shri Jitin Prasada on Official Visit to Morocco

New Delhi: Minister of State for Commerce and Industry and Electronics & Information Technology Shri Jitin Prasada is on an official visit to the Kingdom of Morocco from 24 to 25 August 2026. During the visit, both sides are expected to discuss measures to further diversify the trade basket and enhance market access opportunities. Jitin Prasada will co-chair the 7th Session of the India-Morocco Joint Commission with his counterpart, H.E.

Mr. Omar Hejjira, Secretary of State to the Minister of Industry and Trade, in charge of Foreign Trade, Kingdom of Morocco. The Joint Commission meeting will provide an opportunity to review the existing areas of bilateral economic and commercial cooperation and work towards further consolidating and broadening mutually beneficial engagement. Discussions are expected to cover a wide range of areas, including trade and market access,

cooperation in fertilizer production and supply, investment, industrial cooperation, customs, agriculture and food safety, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, energy and mining, renewable energy, digital transformation, transport and logistics, AYUSH, tourism, education and skills. The two sides are also expected to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of food safety between the National Office of Food

Safety (ONSSA), Morocco, and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). The MoU will facilitate the exchange of information on the safety and quality of imported food products, promote cooperation in sharing information on food testing laboratories and analytical methods, and facilitate the exchange of expertise in areas of mutual interest. It will also enable technical exchanges relating to import procedures, quality control operations, sam-

pling, testing, packaging and labelling. A Cultural Exchange Programme between India and Morocco for the years 2026–2030 is also expected to be signed during the Joint Commission Meeting. The Programme will promote cultural exchanges and collaboration through exchanges of artists and professionals, participation in festivals and exhibitions, cooperation in heritage conservation, and strengthened linkages among museums, libraries and archival

institutions. India and Morocco share longstanding and close relations, with significant potential for further expanding bilateral trade and investment. Bilateral merchandise trade reached around USD 4 billion in 2025. India's major exports to Morocco include refined petroleum, pharmaceuticals, vehicles, synthetic textiles, food products and spices, while Morocco's major exports to India include phosphates and fertilizers.

RRBs Post Record Rs.10,176 Crore Profit, Business Crosses Rs.13.5 Lakh Crore



New Delhi, August, 25 (PIB): A review meeting on the performance of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) was held today in Delhi under the chairmanship of the Secretary, Department of Financial Services. The meeting was attended by the Chairman, NABARD, Chairpersons of all 28 RRBs, officials from the Department of Financial Services, Sponsor Banks, the Reserve Bank of India and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI). The Secretary, Department of Financial Services, noted and appreciated the commendable performance of all RRBs in the Financial Year 2025-26. At present, 28 RRBs are operating through 22,273 branches across 26 States and 3 Union Territories, covering about 700 districts. The total business of all 28 RRBs has crossed Rs.13.5 lakh crore, surpassing the business level of a few individual Public Sector Banks (PSBs) in the Financial Year 2025-26. The net profit of RRBs increased to an all-time high of Rs.10,176 crore in FY 2025-26, compared to Rs.6,820 crore in FY 2024-25. Both Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) and

Net Non-Performing Assets have reached all-time lows of 5.3% and 2.1%, respectively.

RRBs also continue to achieve all targets and sub-targets prescribed under Priority Sector Lending, reflecting their strong commitment to serving marginalised and underserved segments of society. RRBs are also playing a vital role in advancing financial inclusion, having opened over 54.98 lakh new Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts during the Financial Year 2025-26. More importantly, RRBs have been recording an increasing trend in their Credit-Deposit Ratio, which reached an all-time high of 75.2% in FY 2025-26. The Secretary emphasised that RRBs must accelerate the adoption of modern banking technology and the digital delivery of financial services to improve operational efficiency and customer experience, while expanding access to banking services in rural and far-flung areas and ensuring that the benefits of digital banking reach every section of society, including the youth of the country.

Pant, Jurel hit fifties as India take control against Sri Lanka



Colombo: Wicketkeeper-batters Rishabh Pant and Dhruv Jurel hit rollicking half-centuries in an unbroken 112-run stand to help India cross the 400-run mark and wrest control back from Sri Lanka on day two of the second Test at the Sinhalese Sports Club, side Jurel, who is on 59 not out off 107 balls. The duo left Sri Lanka searching for answers after a sweltering open-

ing session. The highlight of the session was Pant, who retired hurt on three after coping a blow on left wrist, coming back and batting in his usual style to take the game forward alongside a rock-solid Jurel. In the morning, Sri Lanka made an early breakthrough with the second new ball when fast bowler Asitha Fernando surprised debutant Saransh Jain with a sharp

bouncer from round the wicket and the leading edge was safely taken by gully. The early wicket brought Pant to the crease, who was immediately targeted with a barrage of short-pitched bowling by the Sri Lankan seamers. A short ball down leg from Lahiru Kumara was pulled by Pant over the stadium roof and even damaged a solar panel, as a replace-

ment ball was sought. With Jurel pristine in his drives and flicks, Pant was tested thoroughly by Lahiru Kumara and Fernando, and took two painful hits to his right shoulder that required medical treatment. Though Sri Lanka turned to the spin duo of Prabath Jayasuriya and Keshara Nuwantha, Jurel relied on the pull to send them to the boundary rope. Pant, on the other hand, used paddle sweep and decisive footwork, apart from edges rolling along the ground, to keep the scoreboard moving. Subsequently, both batters got their fifties easily – Pant thumped a pull to square leg to get his 21st fifty, while Jurel pulled through mid-wicket to bring up his third half-century. As Sri Lanka persisted with spin from both ends ahead of the lunch break, but didn't get consistency, Pant and Jurel raised a 100-run partnership for the seventh wicket and put India in the driver's seat of the match. Brief Scores: India 419/6 in 112 overs (Devdutt Padikkal 117, Rishabh Pant 63 not out; Asitha Fernando 4-60, Lahiru Kumara 1-61) against Sri Lanka

Rishabh Pant breaks MS Dhoni's record for away Test runs by Indian wicketkeeper



Colombo: India star batter Rishabh Pant shattered MS Dhoni's record for most Test runs scored by an Indian wicketkeeper away from home. The swashbuckling batter Pant went past Dhoni's feat during Day 2 of the second Test match against Sri Lanka at the Sinhalese Sports Club here on Monday. Pant scored a stroke-filled 63 in the first innings of the Test to go past the former skipper. Coming into the Test, the 28-year-old Roorkee man had scored 2471 runs in Tests away from home and at neutral venues. He needed to score 26 runs to get past the 2011 World Cup-winning captain, and he did so in style when he hit off-spinner Keshara Nuwantha for back-to-back fours in the 97th over of the first innings in the opening session on Day 2.

Pant went on to complete his 21st Test half-century and a successive one after he had hit one in the second innings of the first Test in Galle. The Southpaw's impressive stay came to an end on the first ball of the second session when he drilled one straight to deep mid-off Nuwantha. However, he has now scored 2534 runs as wicketkeeper away from home in Test cricket, with Dhoni now pushed back to second. Former cricketer Farokh Engineer had 1209 runs in away Tests as wicketkeeper, while Syed Kirmani made 1109 runs as wicketkeeper. In the process, Pant has also surpassed former South African wicketkeeper Mark Boucher in the same record list and has the third-most runs away from home by wicketkeepers overall. The list

is led by former Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed, who made 2696 runs away from home in 52 Tests. Australia legend Adam Gilchrist is second with 2634 runs in 41 Tests away from home or at neutral venues. Pant's knock also saw him close in on 3000 World Test Championship runs as he aims to become the first Indian to get there. Following his 63, the Southpaw now has 2948 runs in 42 Tests in WTC history as he stands 52 shy of the 3000-run margin. Coming to the ongoing Test, India batted at a strong rate in the first session of the second day and amassed 119 runs and lost only Saransh Jain's wicket. Pant and Dhruv Jurel were the stars with the bat as they both crossed half-centuries with India piling the pressure on the hosts.

‘Want to support a friend’: Kapil Dev backs Imran Khan, seeks humane treatment

New Delhi: Former India captain Kapil Dev has reiterated his support for former Pakistan captain and Prime Minister Imran Khan, calling for humane treatment and adequate facilities for his long-time friend after 21 former international cricketers wrote to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif seeking better conditions for the imprisoned former leader.

Kapil, who shared the field with Imran during an era when the two were among the leading all-rounders in world cricket, said he understood why Pakistani players may be reluctant to speak publicly about the matter but felt those outside the country could voice their concern. “I think I don't blame them because they have to live there in Pakistan, the Pakistani cricketers. But for us, we are looking from outside. Yes, I like to support our friend, whom we played with and admired for his cricketing skill. And we keep saying again and again, we don't know the law of the country; that's fine. “But humanity and simply giving the facilities to a prisoner, whoever may be, and he was a former prime minister of the country and a top cricketer of the world, we want him to get the best treatment. What else are we asking for? We are not asking for anything else,” Kapil told reporters at the launch of the ‘Race to DP World India Championship’. The remarks



came a day after the group of former international cricketers appealed to Sharif over Khan's treatment. It was the second collective appeal of its kind in six months, following a February letter in which 14 former captains had raised concerns about the former Pakistan skipper's health. Khan's family had previously alleged that he had suffered a serious deterioration in his eyesight, claiming that he had lost almost all vision in one eye because of alleged medical negligence. The earlier appeal had sought medical attention for Khan and called for the restoration of family visits. Kapil's comments also highlighted the unusual relationship shared by the two former captains, who were part of a generation that included New Zealand's

Richard Hadlee and England's Ian Botham as the four outstanding all-rounders of the era. Their rivalry on the cricket field was accompanied by a friendship away from it, at a time when players from India and Pakistan regularly interacted, exchanged banter and maintained close personal ties despite the intense sporting rivalry between the neighbouring countries. That camaraderie has endured over the decades, with Kapil continuing to refer to Khan as a friend while maintaining that his appeal is centred on basic humane treatment rather than the legal proceedings against him. Kapil also acknowledged the limited public response from Pakistan's cricket fraternity, with Wasim Akram and a handful of others from Khan's

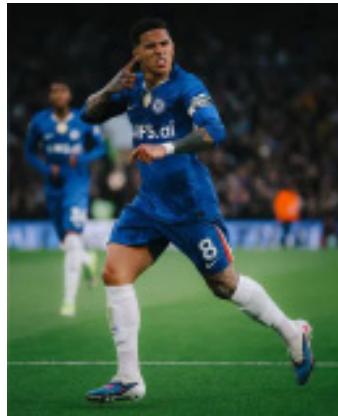
playing generation among those who have spoken out. “I think I don't blame them because they have to live there in Pakistan, the Pakistani cricketers,” Kapil said, explaining why he did not want to criticise those who had chosen to remain silent. For Kapil, the issue transcends cricket and political affiliations. While he said he was not in a position to comment on Pakistan's laws, he stressed that his appeal was simply for Khan to receive proper facilities and treatment while in prison. “But humanity and simply giving the facilities to a prisoner, whoever may be, and he was a former prime minister of the country and a top cricketer of the world, we want him to get the best treatment. What else are we asking for? We are not asking for anything else,” he said.

Morgan Rogers says Xabi Alonso's philosophy and freedom on pitch convinced him to join Chelsea

New Delhi: Morgan Rogers has revealed that Chelsea manager Xabi Alonso's footballing philosophy and willingness to give him freedom on the pitch played a major role in his decision to join the Premier League club, as the England international begins a new chapter at Stamford Bridge. Rogers, who has returned to a club he knew from his childhood, spoke about his move, his early impressions of Chelsea's training facilities, and his conversations with Alonso as he prepares to work under the new head coach. The attacking midfielder said Alonso's approach closely matches his own understanding of the game, particularly his desire to express himself and play with freedom. “I've had a few conversations with Xabi Alonso, and it was impor-

tant for me to understand how he works and what he expects. His style fits perfectly with how I see the game and how I want to play. I want to express myself freely on the pitch, and knowing that he supports that was a big reason for me to come here,” Rogers told JioStar. Rogers' return to Chelsea also carries a personal connection. Having spent time at the club as a youngster, he is familiar with Cobham, the training base that will now become part of his daily routine as a first-team player. “I played here at Chelsea's Cobham Training Ground as a kid, and every time I come back, it feels great to be here. It's a fantastic place to train. It has everything a player needs to improve and get the most out of their game. So yeah, it's really nice,” he

added. The 22-year-old said the club's scale and ambitions were also important factors as he considered his future. Rather than viewing the move simply as the next step in his career, Rogers sees an opportunity to contribute to Chelsea's broader project. “I don't think I need to say much about Chelsea. Everyone knows the club's size and stature. I'm excited about the direction the club is heading in, and I want to be part of that journey. I feel I can fit in well here, and I hope it will be a positive experience for both the club moving forward and me,” he stated. For Rogers, the move represents both a return to familiar surroundings and the beginning of a fresh challenge under Alonso. The midfielder said he is eager to translate his



excitement into performances on the pitch. “I'm really excited and happy to be here. I'm grateful for this opportunity, and I can't wait to get started on the pitch,” Rogers said. With his understanding of the club dating back to his childhood and Alonso's philosophy offering him the freedom he is seeking, Rogers will now look to establish himself as an important part of Chelsea's new-look attacking setup.

Sahithi Varshini secures second WGM norm at Kanizsa Open

Hyderabad: International Master Sahithi Varshini has moved a step closer to achieving the prestigious Woman Grandmaster (WGM) title by securing her second WGM norm at the Kanizsa Open 2026 in Hungary. Sahithi scored five points from nine rounds, producing an impressive 2429 performance rating and gaining 37 FIDE rating points. Her live classical rating has now risen to 2313, taking her above the 2300 Elo mark.

The Visakhapatnam player delivered an impressive performance defeating GM Yeshaayahu Tzidkiya (2492) and IM Sahib Singh (2354). Her final-round victory against Sahib Singh was particularly memorable, as she showed tremendous fighting spirit and excellent technique in a long queen-versus-rook endgame. With two WGM norms now secured, Sahithi needs just one more WGM norm with a 2400-plus performance to complete the requirements for the Woman Grandmaster title.

The achievement follows another strong international performance in France. At the Juraflor International Chess Tournament in Les Rousses, Sahithi was adjudged the ‘Best Woman Player’ scoring 5/9 in a strong field and gaining 30 rat-



ing points. Sahithi is the first woman player from Visakhapatnam to earn the International Master title. She has represented India at the Chess Olympiad and has won nine international medals, including Asian Championship titles in the Under-10 and Under-12 categories and a Commonwealth Championship gold medal in Under-10. Sahithi's re-

markable chess journey has been guided by her father and coach, M. Lokeswara Rao, who has trained her since her early years. With her live rating at 2313 and only one WGM norm remaining, Sahithi is now firmly on the path towards becoming a Woman Grandmaster, with her sights set on achieving even greater heights in international chess.

Olly Stone commits to Nottinghamshire with two-year contract extension

New Delhi: England fast bowler Olly Stone has signed a contract extension with County Championship holders Nottinghamshire that will see him stay at Trent Bridge for two more years. This came two days after he powered his County side to a 145-run win over Surrey in three days with a match haul of 10 wickets. Stone, who has played five Tests for England, arrived at Trent Bridge ahead of the 2023 season. He has been a cornerstone in helping the Green and Golds consolidate their lead in the ongoing County Championship. He has scalped 26 wickets in Division One this season, making a strong return from his injury-hampered season last year.

Speaking on the extension, Stone said that he “loves the club”. “I love the club, I love the way everyone operates, and to call Trent Bridge home for two more years is very pleasing,” Stone said in a statement released by the club. “Kevin Shine, Paul Franks, and Peter Moores have been brilliant in helping me to keep getting better and keep developing, and I'm looking forward to another two years with them. I feel this year, my performances out on the field have shown that I've got better, and it's great when you can deliver and win games for Nottinghamshire,” he added. The squad boasts other stars in Haseeb Hameed, Ben Duckett, Kyle

Verreynne and Josh Tongue among others. Stone emphasised they have the squad to “win trophies”. “We've got a great squad here, and not just in one format,” he added. “We're now showing that we've got the squad to go out and win trophies. Everyone is chipping in, and actually, the really good thing is that I think we can still get better, so it's exciting going forward as we try and build on last year's success.” Stone has played five Tests for England, having made his debut in 2019 against Ireland. His final match came against Sri Lanka in 2024 during the home series. The speedster has also played 10 ODIs and one T20I, but his last game for the Three Lions was nearly two years ago.

Trailer Talk: Superstar Turns Menacing Serial Killer

The trailer of *Haiwaan* is finally out, and it shows a completely different side of Akshay Kumar. Directed by Priyadarshan, the thriller features Saif Ali Khan as a visually impaired man, while Akshay Kumar plays a ruthless serial killer. One of the trailer's biggest highlights is Akshay Kumar's transformation. After an out-and-out comedy, *Welcome to the Jungle*, the star has taken a sharp turn with a dark and negative character. His intense screen presence and body language make him look menacing. One also gets a feeling that the makers could have showcased his villainous side even more aggressively. *Haiwaan* is based on Priyadarshan's own acclaimed Malayalam thriller *Oppam*, which starred Mohanlal in the lead role. However, Priyadarshan says *Haiwaan* is not a scene-by-scene remake, but several changes have been made to suit the Hindi audience. The trailer effectively establishes the cat-and-mouse game between Saif's blind character and Akshay's dangerous negative role. Adding to the excitement will be Mohanlal's special cameo, as per the news. Overall, the trailer is decent, with Akshay Kumar's villainous avatar emerging as its biggest attraction. *Haiwaan* releases on September 11, 2026.



Prabhas's Fauji: Overseas rights closed, December release on track

Prabhas' "*Fauji*" has been in the making for quite some time. After multiple postponements, the makers have locked December 3, 2026, as the new and final release date. However, doubts about the film arriving on the announced date have continued to persist. Against this backdrop, the team has now announced that PHF (Phars Film) has acquired the overseas distribution rights to "*Fauji*." The film will premiere in overseas markets on December 2, a day ahead of its India release, providing clarity that the December release is firmly on track. Phars Film has previously handled the overseas releases of several Prabhas films, including "*Saaho*." Mythri Movie Makers appears to have worked out a special arrangement with the distribution company for "*Fauji*." "*Fauji*" is a historical action drama with a fictional story. Directed by Hanu Raghavapudi, the film features Prabhas as a Brahmin soldier. Set during the pre-Independence era, the story also has Hyderabad as one of its key settings. The film has music by Vishal Chandrasekhar. Newcomer Imanvi has been cast as Prabhas's pair in this film. Prabhas is currently filming for both "*Fauji*" and "*Spirit*", but the former is in the final phase of shooting.



Manasa Varanasi Brings Blue Saree To The Wild



Manasa Varanasi, known for her sweet, girl-next-door charm, is winning hearts once again with a simple yet stunning photoshoot in a soft blue chiffon saree. Paired with a crisp white blouse, silver jhumkas, and delicate bangles, the actress kept the look minimal and breezy, striking a natural pose against a leafy green backdrop. Her open curls, subtle makeup, and bright smile added to the effortless, sun-kissed charm of the shoot. The relaxed outdoor setting and understated styling made the pictures feel candid and refreshing, a nice change from heavily glammed-up looks, and fans have been quick to shower praise on her simplicity and elegance. It's been a quiet year on the film front for Manasa Varanasi, with *Vanaveera* failing to click at the box office, but her style updates continue to keep her fans hooked as they await her next announcement.

Rs.72 Crore Spent On Baahubali's Costliest Unreleased Show?



The story of *Baahubali: Before The Beginning* remains one of the biggest mysteries in Indian streaming history. The ambitious Netflix series was planned as a prequel to S. S. Rajamouli's blockbuster *Baahubali* and was meant to showcase the rise of Sivagami. Mukesh G, the cinematographer, reveals a tragic truth, stating that two full seasons of the series were completed before Netflix decided to shelve the project all of a sudden, leaving everyone in shock. This revelation in his latest interview has once again sparked discussions about what really went wrong with the show. Not many know, but the series had a troubled journey from the beginning. It went through multiple directors, recasting of actors, and extensive reshoots. Mukesh reveals that despite spending ₹97 crore and months of shooting, Netflix was unhappy with the final output and chose not to move forward. Originally based on Anand Neelakantan's *The Rise of Sivagami*, the show was expected to expand the world of Mahishmati. Even years after being shelved, the project continues to fascinate fans. The fact that two seasons were reportedly shot but never released makes the series one of the most expensive unreleased productions in Indian entertainment history.



Rukmini Vasanth Glows In Fiery Red Gown

Rukmini Vasanth's rise over the last three years is nothing short of remarkable, and she recently opened up about how it all began. She revealed that her breakout role in *Sapta Saagaradaache Ello* came from a bold, out-of-the-blue Instagram DM to director Hemanth Rao when she heard the film was casting. She followed up with emails and her resume, and after about ten days, Rao responded, leading to an audition that landed her the role of Priya, still her most loved character. Rukmini looked radiant in a fiery red strapless gown with a knotted bodice and flowing pleated silhouette. She kept the styling minimal with soft waves, delicate jewellery, and a beaming smile, letting the vibrant colour do all the talking. During the *Toxic* promotions, celebs are opening up about their struggles, and Rukmini's DM-to-stardom story is proof that hustle truly pays off.