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Rajnath Singh Announces 'Seva Sankalp Abhiyan' From September 17 To Mark PM Modi's Public Life



Kolkata: Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday visited Kolkata and, while ad-

ressing a press conference, spoke about the 'Seva Sankalp Abhiyan', which is going to start from

September 17 on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Under this programme, 12 programmes will take place across the country. "The programmes that will be undertaken will reflect the spirit of nation-building and public welfare that has been evident throughout Modi ji's life. Modi's 25 years of public life will take place on October 6 and that will also be celebrated," said Singh.

The Union Minister also mentioned that the campaign will begin with the lighting of lamps 'Ashiwaad ki diya' at the homes of beneficiaries of government schemes on September 17. "No one is compelled to take part in the lighting of lamps. Those who are benefited by the government's schemes will feel happy and might light the lamps. If I have to speak on Modi's 25 years of public life then I would say that

his role and position have changed but challenges grew more. But the core spirit of his life has not changed. The country is progressing under the leadership of Modi," further added the Defence Minister. Notably, West Bengal Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari, who was present at the press conference, mentioned that he will take part in lighting of the lamps alongside Ganges ghat.

India Rejects Pak-China Border Commission, Slams "Theatrics"



New Delhi: In a big statement on Wednesday, India rejected the so-called Pakistan-China Boundary Joint Commission that was operationalised earlier today in Islamabad and reiterated that the entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are "inalienable" parts of India. The Ministry of External Affairs in a statement categorically denied the existence of a boundary between Pakistan and China and said that the Commission exists "without any legal basis". "The entire Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh have been, are and will always remain integral and inalienable parts of

India. Pakistan has no locus standi to enter into arrangements concerning Indian territory under its illegal and forcible occupation", the statement read. India maintained that the so-called 'China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement' that was signed on March 2 in 1963 to demarcate the border between Xinjiang and Pakistan-occupied Gilgit-Baltistan is "illegal" and "invalid". "We resolutely oppose and reject any attempts to alter the status of these occupied territories or legitimise illegal occupation, impinging on India's sovereignty and territorial integrity", the Foreign Ministry statement said. It said that the so-called boundary co-

operation between China and Pakistan concerning Indian territories is therefore "completely unacceptable" and would not affect India's sovereignty over these areas. India called on Pakistan to stop "engaging in such theatrics" and to vacate its territories that are under its illegal and forcible occupation. External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal's comments on the so-called boundary commission come after social media posts by Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said that the meeting of the Pakistan-China Boundary Joint Commission was a "significant milestone" for bilateral relations.

Trump Praises PM Modi's Opium Crackdown As India Remains On US Drug List

New Delhi / Washington: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts against opium production, even as India remains designated on the US list of "major illicit drug producing or drug transit" countries. "I welcome Prime Minister Modi and the Government of India's efforts to address illicit opium poppy cultivation and bolster supply chain integrity. I look forward to continued cooperation through the United States-India Drug Policy Framework", the US Department of State said in a statement.

The United States listed India along with Afghanistan, The Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia, Burma, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Laos, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela as major illicit drug producing or transit countries for 2027. The US clarified that being on the list does not mean a government has failed to fight drugs. Instead, countries are included because of geographic, commercial, and economic factors that make them natural transit or production hubs, even if their governments have strict and active anti-narcotics enforcement in place. Trump, meanwhile, highlighted what he described as "historic progress" by his administration in tackling drug trafficking and narcoterrorist organisations. He pointed to tighter border security, lower drug seizures and a decline in overdose deaths as evidence of the progress. Trump claimed drug seizures along the US southern border had dropped by more than half after what he called four years of "open border chaos". He also said drug

overdose deaths had "plunged" and claimed that the administration had saved tens of thousands of American lives. "The narcoterrorists responsible for this invasion are either dead, in jail,



or living in fear knowing they will be next to face American justice," Trump said. The Republican leader said that US military is "unleashed" to strike narcoterrorists if they threaten America.

overdose deaths had "plunged" and claimed that the administration had saved tens of thousands of American lives. "The narcoterrorists responsible for this invasion are either dead, in jail,

Dasara Celebrations to Be Held on Grand Scale, Priority to Common Devotees: Durga Temple Chairman



From Our Staff Reporter Vijayawada, September 16: The Vijayawada Durga Temple governing council meeting concluded after dis-

cussions on 25 issues. Speaking to the media after the meeting, Governing Council Chairman Borra Gandhi said issues dis-

cussed earlier regarding the Dasara celebrations were reviewed again. He said this year's Dasara celebrations would be conducted on a grander scale than in previous years. He said the temple authorities had offered silk clothes to Lord Vinayaka at Kanipakam on behalf of the Goddess temple. He added that contractors would be selected for Dasara-related works only after examining whether they had prior experience in handling such works. Borra Gandhi said there was no governing council during last year's Dasara celebrations, but this time

members of the council would be appointed to oversee the arrangements. He said every aspect, including electricity, queue lines and painting works, would be inspected. Priority would be given to common devotees, he said, adding that efforts would be made to reduce the number of police personnel deployed this year. He said it had been decided to conduct arjitha seva rituals this year in the newly constructed building. Measures would be taken to ensure that devotees face no inconvenience during the arjitha sevas, the chairman said.

Dasara Celebrations to Be Conducted Using Advanced Technology: EO Executive Officer Sheena Naik said steps would be taken to ensure that mistakes made in the past were not repeated. He said the number of police personnel would be kept to a minimum and the celebrations would be conducted with the extensive use of technology. Sheena Naik said there were still 25 days left for the Dasara celebrations and that some issues remained to be discussed. He said common devotees would also be allowed inner-sanctum darshan and that a decision on the ticket price would be taken soon.

Chiranjeevi Nag Makes Strong Remarks Against Own Party Leaders

From Our Staff Reporter Srikakulam, September 16: Chiranjeevi Nag, son of former Speaker Tammineni Sitaram, has made strong remarks against YSRCP leaders. He said there would be no full stop to Tammineni Sitaram's political career, only commas. He criticised the district party president for not even condemning former MLA Gorle Kiran's remarks against Tammineni. He questioned whether it was not Sitaram who had protected Kiran from Dharmana in the Etcherla constituency in the past. Chiranjeevi Nag questioned why YSRCP leaders were themselves alleging that there was a political understanding between Tammineni and Kuna Ravikumar. He said it was unfortunate that key YSRCP leaders in the district, including the



Dharmana brothers, Kumbha Ravi Babu and Bhudi Mutyala Naidu, had not spoken on the issue. He claimed that if the situation continued, the YSRCP would not win even a single seat in the upcoming elections in Srikakulam district. Chiranjeevi Nag said Tammineni had not discriminated against anyone when he served as the district party president. He said

there was discussion among the public that the party was moving forward by focusing on a single caste. He also said there was uncertainty among party leaders over whether Chintada Ravi would be the YSRCP candidate from Amadalavalasa. Chiranjeevi Nag urged the YSRCP leadership to conduct a survey into the functioning of the party's district leadership.

Coalition Leaders Hold Meeting in Gajuwaka, Discuss Local Body Elections



From Our Staff Reporter Visakhapatnam, September 16: A meeting of coalition leaders was held in Gajuwaka in the district ahead of the upcoming local body elections in the state. TDP State President Palla Srinivasa Rao attended the meeting as the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, Srinivasa Rao called upon all coalition leaders to work collectively for the victory of the alliance candidates in the upcoming elections. He urged leaders who are not allotted seats to wholeheartedly support those who receive

the party nominations and work for their victory. He said public welfare should be their primary objective and that they should not work with the sole aim of securing positions. He alleged that the state's development had gone back by 10 years because the YSRCP came to power once and said that if the YSRCP were given another opportunity, nothing would remain in the state. He stressed that the YSRCP should not be given another chance under any circumstances. Palla expressed his wish

that coalition leaders should win with the highest possible majorities in every seat they contest. He called upon coalition workers to work at the

grassroots level for their victory. He advised leaders and workers not to enter politics for personal or financial gains, but to focus on the welfare and de-

velopment of the people of the state. A large number of former corporators, coalition leaders and party workers attended the meeting.

CM Chandrababu Brought Reforms in Power Sector: Minister Gottipati

From Our Staff Reporter Vijayawada, September 16: Minister Gottipati Ravikumar said the coalition government was working with the welfare of employees as its primary objective. He said appointment letters on compassionate grounds were handed over to 25 people today. Since the coalition government came to power, a total of 359 jobs had been provided across various departments, he said. He added that 35 people had been appointed under special cases. The minister said the safety of employees in the power department, who work round the clock, was also a priority. Gottipati Ravikumar said Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu was the person who introduced power sector reforms across the country. He said solar power had been provided under the PM Surya Ghar scheme



to six lakh SC and ST beneficiaries, describing it as an initiative unmatched elsewhere in the country. The minister congratulated all those who received their appointment letters on the occasion.



Jyothi Yarraji an Inspiration to Young Athletes: Minister Lokesh

From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, September 16: Andhra Pradesh Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh wished Jyothi Yarraji "all the best" as she prepares to showcase her talent at the Asian Games. The minister posted his message on X, praising Yarraji for inspiring many young athletes. Lokesh said Yarraji will compete in the women's 100-metre hurdles on September 25 and 26. He expressed hope that she would run fast and bring glory to India. The



minister said the entire state of Andhra Pradesh was standing behind Jyothi Yarraji and supporting her.

EDITORIAL

Deepening Oil Crisis

The war that erupted in West Asia shows no signs of ending anytime soon. On the contrary, the conflict is spreading to new areas and posing a major challenge to the global economy. The impact of the Iran-Israel clashes has already reached the Gulf countries. The latest drone attacks on key oil infrastructure in Saudi Arabia and the closure of the East-West oil pipeline have made the situation even more precarious. The 1,200-km pipeline, established by Saudi Arabia as an alternative to the Strait of Hormuz, has the capacity to transport up to four million barrels of oil a day. This accounts for nearly four per cent of global oil supplies. The closure of this pipeline is likely to lead to oil shortages in several countries, including India. The Houthis have been carrying out attacks targeting the pipeline. According to the latest reports, the Houthis have already taken control of the strategically important Hanish Islands in the Red Sea. The growing Houthi influence near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait poses yet another threat to oil transportation.

The increasing pressure on the two most important maritime routes for global oil transportation is a matter of serious concern. Its impact is already being felt in the oil markets. Brent crude prices have crossed \$107 a barrel. This is not merely an oil-market issue. A rise in crude oil prices leads to higher transportation costs and increased production expenses. It can also push inflation out of control. Developing countries may face greater pressure on their currencies, while global economic growth could slow down. In other words, the impact of the West Asian war could eventually reach every household across the world. The developments could have an even greater impact on India. The country meets a large share of its crude oil requirements through imports. Therefore, a sharp rise in international oil prices could affect India's trade deficit, inflation and the value of the rupee. The impact would not be limited to petrol and diesel prices; it would also be felt in the cost of fertilisers, chemicals, transportation and industrial operations. However, the Central Government has firmly stated that there is no need for undue concern at present and that fuel supplies in the country remain stable. But the real question is how long the war will continue. Managing temporary disruptions is one challenge, while dealing with an oil supply crisis that continues for months is an entirely different one. It is undeniable that the crisis will not be resolved unless the war in West Asia comes to an end. Rather than calculating who won or lost the war, the more important question is how peace can be restored. The latest developments demonstrate how sensitive the situation has become, particularly with Gulf countries postponing talks with Iran. If diplomatic channels are closed and the military option is pursued instead, there is a danger that the crisis could spread further. This is the time for the United States, Europe, the Gulf countries, Iran and other stakeholders to give priority to global peace over their respective interests. In particular, a strong mechanism is needed to ensure the security of international waterways such as the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. The world can no longer remain a passive spectator while some countries turn oil supplies into a weapon and push the global economy into crisis. The West Asian war is no longer merely a problem for the people of the region. It has become a challenge to global energy security, economic stability, food security and international trade. If the sound of bombs does not stop, there is a danger that the flames of rising oil prices could spread across the world. Therefore, countries around the world must work not for another military strike, but for the establishment of peace.

I'm A Woman Motorcyclist, And I Refuse To Be Told Where I Belong

Last Sunday, I was riding on the same Gurugram roads where, elsewhere, a young woman on a motorcycle was being chased and then was allegedly rammed by a car. The incident involving Sia has disturbed me deeply. Not only because she was a woman riding a motorcycle, but because it could have been any one of us. It could have been me. It could have been one of the women I train. It could have been any rider, cyclist, pedestrian, or driver simply trying to get home. Fortunately, Sia was wearing her helmet, gloves, and shoes, which saved her from far more serious injuries in the fall. The entire episode was also captured on an action camera mounted on her motorcycle, and that footage became crucial evidence later. The police subsequently arrested the accused and added the attempt to murder charge to the case. The accused has denied hitting her deliberately and has described the collision as an accident. But for me, the bigger question goes beyond this particular case. Why do our roads feel so unsafe? And why does anyone feel entitled to use a vehicle as a weapon against another human being?

Skills Aren't Enough
I am a motorcycle training instructor and a professional rider, and I have founded my own formal riding academy. I have been riding on Indian roads for close to 20 years and have covered lakhs of kilometres on all kinds of motorcycles. I have seen enough to know that knowing how to operate a vehicle, whether it is a car, a truck, a bus, or a motorcycle, is simply not enough. Driving, or riding, is not only about how to accelerate, brake, turn, and balance. It is also about how to behave on a public road. Road sense, etiquette, and public conduct matter just as much. Maintain distance. Give way. Signal before turning. Do not use your phone while riding. Do not drive aggressively because the person

ahead of you is slower. Do not turn a disagreement on the road into a personal battle. And avoid road rage at all costs, because it ends badly for everyone involved. These are not advanced skills. This is basic road etiquette. Yet, India continues to pay an enormous price for unsafe road behaviour. Government data recorded 4,80,583 road crashes and 1,72,890 deaths in 2023. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways identifies several contributing factors, including speeding, mobile phone use, drunken driving, and lane indiscipline. We have somehow normalised all of this.

Don't Blame The Machine
A vehicle hitting another vehicle is called an "accident". A rider falling is treated as part of riding. Someone cutting across lanes is dismissed with a shrug. We are yet to admit that a vehicle does not move an inch by itself. It starts and rolls only when a human being turns the key. How, then, do we keep blaming the machine when there is always a person behind the wheel? Not everything that happens on the road is inevitable. Some of it is a choice. And when the person on the receiving end is a woman, there is another layer to the problem. Women riders still attract curiosity, judgement, and, sometimes, hostility. Even when I take women out for a ride after their training at my track, I notice people staring as though a woman on a motorcycle is an unusual sight. It should not be. A woman should not have to justify why she rides a motorcycle. She should not have to prove that she belongs on the road. And she certainly should not have to calculate the possibility of harassment every time she rides alone. We often tell our daughters what to wear, where to go, when to return, and how to protect themselves. Perhaps it is time we also taught our sons something equally important: respect. Respect the woman on the motorcycle. Respect the cyclist. Respect the



pedestrian. Respect the person driving faster or slower than you. Respect the road rules even when nobody is watching.

My Own Pending Case
I say this not as someone who has never faced danger. In May 2023, a speeding car hit my motorcycle from behind. I registered an FIR and pursued the matter, but to this day, I do not know where that case has reached. I have also had several close calls with vehicles coming dangerously close to me. Sometimes experience and reflexes get you out of trouble. But we should not confuse survival with safety. We should not be looking at our watch before stepping out on the roads - to feel unsafe checking a certain odd hour to leave home. Our lives should not depend on the mercy of other drivers. On another day, we may not be lucky enough to survive even a minor brush, because riders are far more exposed than anyone sitting inside a car. That is why I believe India needs much stronger and more structured rider and driver education. Learning to move a motorcycle or a car is only the beginning. Before people enter public roads, they need to understand responsibility, road conduct, risk perception, and consequences. We need to teach not just how to drive, but

how to share the road. Until that culture changes, we must protect ourselves as much as we can. I never ride without proper protective riding gear. A full-face helmet, gloves, and riding boots are the minimum, to be accompanied by a riding jacket and knee guards, and they should be worn on every single ride on a motorcycle. Our mantra should be - All The Gear, All The Time! Because we cannot control the person approaching us from behind. We cannot control someone else's anger. We cannot control someone else's impatience.

We can control how prepared we are. And safety cannot become the woman's responsibility alone. For me, this was not simply a case of a woman rider being challenged and chased by a man with a bruised ego. It sits at the intersection of two issues: women's safety and road safety. The outcome could easily have been fatal had a following vehicle run over her. We cannot afford to ignore a case like this. It calls for far greater awareness and real corrective action, so that such incidents do not become a routine affair on Indian roads.

A camera should not be the difference between being believed and not being believed. What happens when there is no helmet camera? No CCTV? No witness? Does an incident

become less serious because there is no recording? That is the question this case should leave us with.

Who Does The Road Belong To?

As we approach the festivals in which we celebrate and worship our goddesses, perhaps we should also ask ourselves how we treat the women who actually share our roads, our homes, and our workplaces.

The road does not belong to the fastest vehicle. It does not belong to the biggest SUV. It does not belong to the loudest rider. The road belongs to all of us. I do not want another woman rider to become a headline before we take road safety seriously. I do not want another Sia, or another Suparna, to be in the news for such an unfortunate reason. I do not want another family waiting for someone who may never return home. We cannot change road culture overnight. But we can begin with something simple: ride sensibly, drive responsibly, respect one another, and remember that the person beside you is not an obstacle. They are a fellow citizen, another human being trying to get home safely - every single time. People are not numbers. We are irreplaceable in our respective families, and hence, our safety is a shared responsibility of society. Not a great ask as a responsible citizen of the country, right?

How A Tiny 0.4% UPI Fee Could Change How India Pays

The introduction of a 0.4% Merchant Discount Rate on certain UPI merchant transactions above Rs 2,000 marks a significant shift in the economics of India's digital payments architecture. For years, UPI's expansion rested on a pricing model in which consumers paid nothing for most transactions and merchants faced no MDR. That helped maximise adoption, but left a basic question unresolved: who ultimately pays for a payment network once it becomes too large and too important to remain dependent on implicit subsidies? The new framework will continue to allow for free peer-to-peer transfers, exclude smaller merchants from the charge if they fall below the prescribed limit, and exclude recurring payments such as xSIPs and utility bills from the charge. The initial cost could be relatively small. The more significant question is what pricing does to the incentives of a network that has become a part of the daily economic life.

UPI Was Never Free
UPI was not really free. Banks and payment service providers still needed to pay for transaction processing, servers, cybersecurity, fraud detection, and infrastructure. The zero-MDR structure just pushed those costs out of the transaction. Some of them were absorbed by public incentives and cross-subsidies. The new MDR brings some of that implicit cost to the fore. This is in line with the economics of a two-sided market. UPI derives its value from having consumers and merchants on the same network. Charging consumers would reduce participation, but charging the commercial side

would enable some of the infrastructure cost to be recovered without disrupting the network effects that have led to adoption.

That explains the design of the charge. Transactions above Rs 2,000 represent a relatively small share of UPI's volume but a much larger share of its value. Targeting them creates a revenue stream while leaving the bulk of low-value payments untouched. But the economic incidence will ultimately depend on behaviour.

The Psychological Effect
A Rs 2,500 transaction would attract Rs 10 in MDR at 0.4%. The amount is small, but its relevance depends on the merchant's margins and volumes. NPCI may prevent a separate surcharge from being imposed on consumers, yet merchants could respond through cash discounts, pricing decisions, or greater encouragement of alternative payment methods. The Rs 2,000 threshold also creates an incentive to split transactions. A Rs 2,500 purchase divided into smaller payments could potentially avoid the charge where such splitting is feasible. The purchase remains identical, but the pricing structure has changed the incentive. The Rs 1 lakh monthly exemption protects smaller merchants, which is important given UPI's role in bringing QR-based payments into the informal and micro-enterprise economy. Yet the introduction of a price can have a psychological effect beyond its immediate financial cost. Businesses that have come to view digital payments as essentially free may begin to think more carefully about which payment method they encourage. The



timing makes that critical. The festive season brings larger purchases in categories such as electronics, apparel and consumer durables. For some merchants, a cash discount could easily exceed the MDR they would otherwise pay. Even a modest shift towards cash would matter because digital payments have also become part of India's wider formalisation process. There is a fiscal logic behind the move.

A Transition
Zero-MDR UPI was never free for the economy. The government provided incentives, while banks and payment companies absorbed costs that could not be recovered directly from transactions. With UPI now processing hundreds of billions of payments a year, continued reliance on budgetary support becomes harder to justify as the sole financing model. The government's annual support for digital payments, which is around Rs 2,000 crore, is small in comparison to the size of the network. This

transition to MDR can thus be interpreted as a transition from budget-supported payments to a more commercially financed infrastructure. The real issue is who is going to foot the bill for an economic necessity. The value of public support was especially useful during the adoption phase of UPI, as digital payments provide network benefits that individual firms cannot fully capture. However, when the adoption becomes widespread, the network also generates commercial value for merchants, banks, and payment platforms. MDR tries to recover some of that value, but not all of it, from the users. The differentiated rates support that approach. Mutual fund transactions have a lower rate of 0.02%, there is no MDR for recurring payments, and QR payments in rural and semi-urban areas are exempt. This is basically price discrimination between segments of different payment cost sensitivities. A uniform charge would be easier, but more dis-

ruptive. Differential pricing enables the system to generate revenue and safeguard categories where digital adoption has more inclusion or efficiency benefits.

The Case For Fintech

There is also a commercial implication for fintech. Payment platforms have spent years building scale without being able to monetise the basic movement of money directly. Their commercial models have consequently expanded into lending, financial products, subscriptions, and payment hardware. A predictable transaction-linked revenue stream could eventually change that equation. For banks, the calculation is different. They bear much of the infrastructure and security cost behind UPI. A sustainable revenue pool could strengthen incentives to keep investing in the systems required to support its scale. Yet UPI is no longer only a domestic payments system. India has touted it as a model of interoperability, scale, and low transaction costs, digital public infrastructure.

Supreme Court PIL Challenges 0.4% MDR On UPI Transactions Above Rs. 2,000 Before October 15 Rollout



New Delhi: A public interest litigation (PIL) matter has been filed in the Supreme Court, challenging the Centre's September 14 notification and the MDR framework announced on September 15, which is stated to come into effect from October 15.

UPI MDR framework challenged

The government has introduced a 0.4 per cent fee on UPI payments of more than Rs 2,000 made to merchants from October 15. Under this, a merchant discount rate (MDR) of 0.4 per cent is to be levied on person-to-merchant transactions of above Rs 2,000. However, no MDR is to be levied on UPI trans-

actions of up to Rs 2,000. The plea has been filed by advocate Anjan Datta, challenging the Centre's September 14 notification and the MDR framework announced on September 15, which is stated to come into effect from October 15.

Details of proposed charges

According to the petition, the new framework provides for a 0.4 per cent MDR on general P2M (person-to-merchant) UPI transactions exceeding Rs 2,000, subject to a cap of Rs 300 for transactions of Rs 75,000 and above. It also provides for a flat Rs 5 MDR for transactions of above Rs 2,000 in specified essential and thin-margin sectors, including railways, telecommunications, insurance, fuel and agricultural

inputs, while capital-market transactions attract an MDR of 0.02 per cent, capped at Rs 300.

Petitioner's objections

The petitioner has contended that UPI transactions of up to Rs 2,000 and all person-to-person transfers will remain free, while small merchants receiving up to Rs 1 lakh per month through UPI QR codes are exempted. The plea challenges the constitutional validity of the amended section 10A of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, alleging that it gives unguided powers to the executive to decide which electronic payment modes would receive the no-charge protection. It further questions the fixation of the rates, transaction thresholds, caps and

sectoral classifications through what the petitioner describes as a press release, alleging that the complete operative instrument prescribing these charges has not been published in the Official Gazette.

Concerns over impact

The petitioner has also questioned the distinction between UPI transactions and RuPay debit-card payments, pointing out that the notification continues the no-charge protection for RuPay debit cards without a monetary ceiling. The plea alleges that the framework is arbitrary and discriminatory, and may adversely affect merchants, particularly those with low margins, while also raising concerns over possible indirect consumer burden and digital exclusion.

Reliefs sought in plea

The petitioner has sought the quashing or suspension of the framework insofar as it imposes an MDR on UPI transactions of above Rs 2,000. Alternatively, it has sought a reconsideration of the framework after transparent consultation, publication of empirical data and an impact assessment, besides safeguards for micro and small enterprises. The plea also seeks an independent review by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Union government.

Jarange Patil Suffers From Acute Dehydration While Heading Towards Mumbai; Doctors Advise Immediate Hospitalisation

Beed: Maratha reservation activist Manoj Jarange Patil's health deteriorated on Wednesday while he was travelling towards Mumbai, with doctors advising immediate hospitalisation after his blood pressure and blood sugar levels reportedly dropped significantly. Jarange, who is on the 19th day of his indefinite hunger strike over the Maratha reservation issue, reportedly developed acute dehydration after reaching Patoda in Maharashtra's Beed district at around 11 am. He had reached Patoda nearly 14 hours after setting out from Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna district as part of his journey towards Mumbai.

Tour taking toll on my health

Addressing a press conference, the 44-year-old activist said he was experiencing a severe burning sensation in his stomach and feet and acknowledged that the long journey was affecting his health.

"If I take treatment, the government becomes completely carefree. If I stop treatment, they become anxious. This tour to Mumbai is taking a toll on my health. I can continue if I'm fine, but such a long travel is not good while on a hunger strike. The tour can also be cancelled if there is no option," Jarange said, according to Hindustan Times.

Doctors advise hospitalisation

A medical team led by Beed District Civil Surgeon Dr Satishkumar Solanke examined Jarange in Patoda. "Manoj Jarange's blood pressure and blood sugar levels have plummeted severely," Dr Solanke said. According to the medical assessment cited in reports, Jarange was suffering from acute dehydration and was minimally responsive.

He was administered intravenous (IV) fluids, but doctors reportedly cautioned that saline support alone would not make him fit to continue the long journey. Doctors also warned



that any further decline in his fluid levels could pose serious health risks and advised that he be admitted to an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for treatment.

Mumbai Police deny protest permission

Jarange's health scare comes after Mumbai Police denied permission for his proposed agitation at Azad Maidan. Police cited law and order concerns amid the on-

going Ganeshotsav celebrations while rejecting the application. Jarange has been demanding reservation for the Maratha community, including the issuance of Kunbi caste certificates to eligible Marathas. Despite uncertainty surrounding permission for the Mumbai agitation and concerns over his health, Jarange had set out from Antarwali Sarati towards Mumbai.

PMO Only Authority To Grant Sanction For Prosecuting IAS Officers, Centre Tells Madras High Court

Chennai: The Government of India has informed the Madras High Court that only the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) can grant statutory sanction to prosecute officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in criminal cases. The PMO alone was the competent authority for this purpose, the Department of Personnel and Training,

Government of India, submitted before the Madras High Court in a case on Wednesday. The court had earlier asked the Department to explain why it took a long time to obtain sanction to prosecute IAS officers, who are facing corruption charges, and who was the competent authority to grant sanction for it.

The DoPT argued that

in all such cases the files are sent to the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) for its remarks and then forwarded to the PMO, seeking sanction. In respect of a corruption allegation against two IAS officers belonging to the Tamil Nadu cadre, the DoPT said it had received voluminous documents running to thousands of

pages from the State government. The Department had to peruse it before sending them to the CVC. Thereafter, it would be sent to the PMO, it said, adding the issue on hand will be dealt with within the next two months. Recording the submission, Justice Anand Venkatesh adjourned the case to November 12.

Pilot Fatalities, Fatigue Concerns: Federation Of Indian Pilots Seeks Urgent Safety Overhaul, Withdrawal Of FDTL Waivers

Mumbai: The Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP) has urged the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to immediately withdraw duty-time exemptions granted to airlines and undertake a comprehensive review of pilot fatigue risks.

The union's letter follows a series of recent sudden crew deaths, including the latest incident of an Air India pilot who suffered a fatal heart attack in a New Delhi hotel. FIP President Capt. CS Randhawa, on September 15, called on aviation regulators to strictly enforce flight duty time limitations (FDTL) and establish a science-based fatigue risk management system (FRMS) across Indian operations.

Copies of the representation were also dispatched to the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Prime Minister's Office, and the Air Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB).

The federation highlighted a concerning list of six publicly reported deaths of Indian commercial pilots occurring during operational duty, ground training or scheduled rest layovers between late 2023 and September 2026. The oldest incident was that of November 2023, when a 37-year-old Air India pilot died at Delhi Airport Terminal-3 during Boeing 777 training activities due to a suspected cardiac arrest.

Four of these cases are from the current year, with three sudden deaths



caused by heart attacks or cardiac arrest, including that of Air India's Capt. Sunny Asladekar, who was found dead in a Delhi hotel room on September 11, during Boeing 787 conversion training and layover.

Concerns Over Cumulative Fatigue

While the FIP explicitly stated that no direct causal link between fatigue and these individual deaths has been officially established by crash or medical investigators, it stressed that the recurring loss of young, medically certified flight crew points to a systemic risk surrounding cumulative fatigue, circadian disruption, and operational stress.

The pilot body raised serious objections to "operator-specific dispensations" granted by regulators to major airlines, allowing them to bypass full implementation of the updated Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) governing flight duty and rest limits.

The FIP noted that despite flight schedule reductions caused by external market disruptions, airlines continue to hold operational waivers rather than recruiting adequate staffing.

The union warned that temporary dispensations have degraded into prolonged practices, leaving crews vulnerable to severe fatigue once airline schedules normalise.

Indonesia Flight Incident Cited

The submission detailed the January 25, 2024 incident involving Batik Air's domestic flight BTK-6723 in Indonesia, in which both pilots of an Airbus A320 fell asleep simultaneously for approximately 28 minutes, causing the aircraft carrying 153 passengers to drift 80 nautical miles off course and lose all contact with Air Traffic Control.

Investigators found the First Officer was severely sleep-deprived from per-

sonal life stressors, proving that "rostered rest opportunity does not equal actual sleep obtained".

The FIP emphasised that India's rapid market growth, high aircraft utilisation, red-eye flights, and early-morning schedules demand proactive, data-driven fatigue management rather than relying solely on hours-based regulations. Apart from the immediate revocation of FDTL waivers, the union has demanded establishment of a DGCA-led national FRMS oversight programme comprising regulators, medical specialists, sleep scientists and pilot representative bodies.

It has also suggested enforcing mandatory quarterly audits on airlines' review reports, launching a scientific review of pilot health trends from 2023 to 2026 and protecting reporting pilots from airline disciplinary action or career repercussions when declaring fatigue.

Central Railway Plans Emergency Medical Rooms At 43 Mumbai Suburban Stations, E-Auction

Mumbai: Central Railway will conduct a collective e-auction to set up Emergency Medical Rooms (EMRs) at 43 suburban railway stations, aiming to provide faster medical assistance to passengers during emergencies. The e-auction process will be held soon. The move follows a request by Dombivli-CSMT commuter Sachin Kumar Maurya, who had approached Central Railway seeking an emergency medical room at Dombivli station. In its

September 11 response, the Chief Medical Superintendent's office of the Central Railway Hospital at Kalyan provided details of the existing facilities and the proposed expansion.

Currently, 12 EMRs operate across the Mumbai suburban network. The medical department manages three at Kalyan, Byculla, and Vashi, with services operated by Annie Foundation since August 2022. Its current contract is scheduled

to end on July 31, 2027. Nine other facilities, at Karjat, Kurla, Lokmanya Tilak Terminus, Ghatkopar, Thane, Bhandup, Kanjurmarg, Dombivli and Titwala, are managed through the commercial department.

Facilities Awaiting Operational Clearance

Central Railway said the EMRs at Chembur and Mankhurd are awaiting drug licence-related procedures, while work is under way to complete post-monsoon construction at

Khopoli before the facility is made operational.

Passenger Safety Concerns Rise

The need for such facilities has also gained significance amid safety concerns on the suburban network. According to railway information, incidents of passengers falling from moving local trains have increased by 250 per cent on the main line. Such incidents have declined on the Harbour line, while there has been no change on Western Railway.

CM Suwendu Adhikari Assures All Help To Trace Missing Persons After Flash Floods

Kolkata: Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Wednesday met with the family members of those who went missing from the state in the devastating flash flood in Nepal. Talking to the family members at the state secretariat Nabanna, Adhikari mentioned that the state government is doing everything to trace the missing people and assured of all help and assistance to all 37

families.

West Bengal Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Suwendu Adhikari met the family members of those missing in the flash floods in Nepal at Nabanna. The Hon'ble Chief Minister assured them that all-out efforts are being continued by the State Government to trace the missing persons. The state government had earlier set up control rooms and was in direct touch with the



Indian Embassy in Kathmandu to trace the missing persons. A search team from Bengal had also visited Kathmandu to trace the people.

'Evidence-Free Character Assassination': Aaditya Thackeray Breaks Silence On Disha Salian Case

Mumbai: Aaditya Thackeray alleged that his name had been linked to the case for nearly six years despite there being no evidence, calling it a "relentless smear campaign" driven by vested interests. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray on Wednesday denied ever knowing or meeting Disha Salian, saying his name was being repeatedly linked to her death in what he described as a "deliberate, evidence-free" campaign aimed at character assassination. Thackeray's clarification comes a day after Salian's father, Satish Salian, said he had given the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) the names of several people, including Thackeray, Bollywood actors and police officials, whom he claimed were linked to his daughter's death.

"Let's cut through the noise and talk facts, once again, I have never met or known Disha Salian," Thackeray said in a post on X on Wednesday. He alleged that his name had been



linked to the case for nearly six years despite there being no evidence, calling it a "relentless smear campaign" driven by vested interests. "Loud TV debates and media trials do not change the facts," Thackeray said, urging that the official reinvestigation be allowed to proceed without what he called "malicious distractions and character assassination for political motives".

The CBI recently registered an FIR in the 2020 death case following a Bombay High Court order directing a fresh investigation. The FIR, based on a statement recorded from

Salian's father, contains the names of several individuals whose roles are to be examined. However, the CBI has not treated those named in the FIR as accused at this stage. The Bombay High Court had specifically directed that no person should be treated as an accused unless the investigating officer finds sufficient grounds for reasonable suspicion. Salian was found dead in Mumbai on June 8, 2020. Her death had earlier been recorded as an accidental death, while a subsequent investigation had concluded that there was no evidence of foul play. The fresh CBI probe follows allegations by

her father regarding the circumstances surrounding her death and alleged shortcomings in the earlier investigation. In his statement to reporters on Tuesday, Satish Salian said he had named Aaditya Thackeray, Dino Morea, Sooraj Pancholi and others before the CBI. He said he had been seeking a fresh investigation for years and described the registration of the FIR as a breakthrough. Thackeray, meanwhile, said attempts to use the issue politically would not deter him from "fighting for the truth" and standing by fellow citizens.

After Close Contest, BJP Holds Ground In Rajasthan Local Body Polls



Jaipur: The BJP appears to have dominated the urban local body polls in Rajasthan with the party winning 8 big cities out of the 10, proving that there has been no major shift in the urban voter sentiment in Rajasthan. This election is also significant in the context that it was for the first time the entire state of Rajasthan, its urban population, voted together for 309 urban local bodies with over 1.44 crore votes polled under the 'one state, one election' formula. Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma sent out a strong message at the victory celebrations at the BJP office after the results came. "The Congress used to say your kaka

ji (uncle) also could not conduct a one state, one election and now who has done this successfully? Your kaka ji," he said, indicating his man-in-charge status who the party had positioned in the centre of this election. Rajasthan has a total of 5.17 crore voters; 1.44 crore urban voters form 27.84 per cent of the total voter population in the state - a large enough sample size for the BJP to congratulate itself. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah posted congratulatory messages on X. For an election fought directly under the guidance of the chief minister and monitored closely by the

party's central leadership, the results showed the BJP has held its urban vote bank. Out of the 10 municipal corporations, BJP will form the board in 8. The party is the single-largest in Jaipur, Kota, Udaipur and Bhilwara. In Pali and Bharatpur the BJP looked set to form the board with the help of independents. **Jodhpur A Cliffhanger** Jodhpur turned out to be a cliffhanger with both the BJP and the Congress tied at 44. Ten independents and one RLP councillor could edge the BJP into a winning position if they agree. At stake is the prestige of former chief minister Ashok Gehlot and Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.

Whoever pulls it off in Jodhpur will become a test of organisational strength and political skills. **Half-Yearly Exam: BJP Minister** Urban Development Minister Jhabbar Singh Kharra told NDTV they have passed "this half-yearly exam with a first division." "This was the semifinal of sorts and our performance has been good at 60 per cent," he said. A closer look at the number of wards tells another story - the Congress was not too far behind either and a number of independent winners also indicated that it was not a BJP show all the way. Of the 10,245 wards that voted, the BJP won in 4,179 wards and the Congress in 3,613 wards; independents and others won 2,273 wards, with the Aam Adami Party (AAP) making a surprise entry in Baran district and walking away with 42 winners. The number of votes polled also points to a close fight. The difference between the BJP and Congress votes is 99,615 votes. **Close Fight, Narrow Margins** In the 309 local bodies, the BJP polled 37.35 lakh votes, the Congress polled 36.35 lakh votes and inde-

pendents got 29 lakh plus votes - which means the difference in the vote share between the two major parties is just about 0.94 per cent, less than a 1 per cent difference. In the 2023 state assembly election, the difference in the votes between the BJP and the Congress was 99,615 votes or about 2.16 per cent, which shows the margins are narrowing in favour of the Congress and the independents, who have cut into votes substantially. Compared to the last three local body elections when the Vasundhara Raje government was at the helm and when Ashok Gehlot was chief minister, this is the first time that in terms of vote share the BJP and the Congress are so close. "Let the BJP celebrate," Congress president Govind Singh Dotasara told NDTV. "Delimitation was done to favour the BJP and we would have easily won more than a 1,000 wards more and now the panchayat elections will also show people the true picture." At least 70 per cent of Rajasthan will vote in the next phase of the panchayat election, where rural voters will declare their mandate.

Two Tribal Women Shot Dead While Working On Farm In Manipur



Guwahati: Two tribal women were shot dead, and several farmhouses were reportedly set ablaze, at Leisang Kuki village in Jiribam district in Manipur on Tuesday afternoon, in a fresh outbreak of violence along the Jiribam-Tamenglong boundary. This has heightened fears among villagers and renewed concerns over the security of civilians in vulnerable settlements. The victims were reportedly attacked while working on their farms around 3 pm. Local sources said several other villagers who had gone to their respective farms remained unaccounted for following the attack. The women were identified as Chonga Sitlhou, 60, and Kimboi Singson, 30, both residents of Leisang village. According to local accounts, Chonga Sitlhou was gathering firewood at her farm when she came under fire. Kimboi Singson, who had recently completed her nursing studies and had returned home to help her parents with farming, was also killed in the attack. Several farmhouses in and around the area were also reportedly torched, raising concerns over the destruction of civilian property and agricultural livelihoods in addition to the loss of life. The number of people miss-

ing and the final casualty figure remained unclear at the time of filing this report, with information from the remote area continuing to emerge. The latest attack came barely two days after a married couple, were killed in separate attacks at Tollen village in Tamenglong district and Longpi village in Noney district on September 13. The September 13 killings had already triggered widespread condemnation and demands for an immediate investigation by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), along with stronger security for vulnerable settlements. Despite security concerns, villagers continue to access their farms to sustain their families. The fresh violence at Leisang has further deepened concerns over the safety of villagers living along the Jiribam-Tamenglong belt, particularly those dependent on remote agricultural fields for their livelihood. The latest killings -- the sequence of attacks at Tollen, Longpi and now Leisang -- are likely to intensify demands from Kuki-Zo civil society organisations for immediate security reinforcement, protection of vulnerable settlements, a time-bound investigation and stringent action against those responsible.

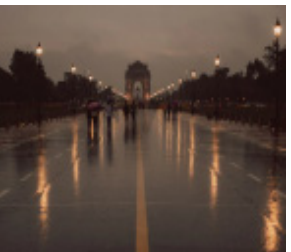
Amazon Quick Delivery Hits \$1-Billion Milestone In India In Less Than 2 Years



Amazon.com Inc. said its India quick delivery service is set to hit annual sales of more than \$1 billion, intensifying competition with homegrown firms such as market leader Eternal Ltd.'s Blinkit. Orders of the Amazon Now service have doubled each quarter since the US company started it in India a year ago, it said Tuesday in a statement. It has now crossed \$1 billion in annualized gross revenue, meaning it's on pace to reach that amount for a 12-month period. Amazon entered India's rapid delivery market in the summer of 2025 after years of sitting out and watching local rivals chip away at its customer base. Walmart Inc.-controlled Flipkart joined the race ahead of Amazon, launching instant deliveries in 2024 and now operating in more than 150 cities. Blinkit leads the quick commerce market in the world's most populous country, followed by Zepto Ltd. and Swiggy Ltd. The Seattle-based tech giant said it's seeking to expand Amazon Now to 100 Indian cities by Diwali, a key Hindu festival in November that also marks the biggest shopping season in the country. Amazon Now currently delivers in more than 60 towns and cities. Instant commerce is gathering extraordinary pace in India, fuelled by surging demand, rising competi-

tion and billions of dollars in global investor capital. US retail giants and Indian startups have blanketed the nation's cities with small, hyperlocal warehouses and delivery riders promising groceries, electronics, and even gold coins in just a few minutes. India's e-commerce market is set to almost triple to \$250 billion by 2030, with rapid deliveries driving the growth, according to a report by Alphabet Inc.'s Google and Deloitte earlier this year. The model has burned through mountains of cash - and flamed out - in nearly every other major market. Yet global investors including SoftBank Group Corp. and Temasek Holdings Pte are betting that India is different. With dense cities, low labor costs, and a rising class of more than 700 million digital-first Gen Z and millennial consumers accustomed to instant services, the country offers a wide room for quick commerce to work at scale. Blinkit, Eternal's key growth engine and India's top instant grocer, has shown operational profitability for a few quarters. It continues to ramp up operations across India's towns and cities. Smaller Swiggy is restraining spending and focusing on profitability while Zepto has had to delay its plans to publicly list after failing to secure its anticipated valuation.

Western Disturbance To Trigger Rains, Thunderstorms In Punjab, Rajasthan And Delhi-NCR On September 16-17



Fairly widespread moderate to heavy rains and thunderstorms are expected in Punjab and Rajasthan, while isolated to scattered rains as well as thunderstorms might impact parts of Chandigarh, Haryana, Delhi NCR, and western Uttar Pradesh on September 16 and 17 due to a developing western disturbance. Under the influence of a low-pressure area over southwest Rajasthan adjoining the Kutch region and southeast Pakistan, isolated extremely heavy rainfall has already been witnessed over Saurashtra and Kutch today (Sept 15). An upper air cyclonic circulation lies over the North-west Bay of Bengal and adjoining north Odisha and West Bengal coasts in lower and middle tropospheric levels. "Fairly widespread to widespread rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning likely over Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi and Punjab during 16th-17th September," read a bulletin by Indian Meteorological Department (IMD). "Fairly widespread to widespread rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning likely over West Madhya Pradesh during September 17-19; East Madhya Pradesh during September 15-17; Vidarbha during September 20-21; Chhattisgarh during September 19-21." Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan and Muzaffarabad are expected to experience similar weather on September 17, IMD added. Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim are likely to see widespread rainfall during 16-20 September, while Gangetic West Bengal is expected to get similar rains during 16-20 September. **Monsoon Withdrawl** As of today, very heavy rainfall has been recorded over West Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. Meanwhile, heavy rainfall has been recorded over West Uttar Pradesh, East Rajasthan, Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and South Interior Karnataka. On Thursday (Sep 17), heavier rains will shift toward Rajasthan and West Haryana, leaving the rest of the plains with mostly isolated or scattered showers. The IMD also predicted that conditions are becoming favourable for withdrawal of the Southwest Monsoon from some parts of West Rajasthan around Saturday (Sep 19).

Right-Wing Vigilante Swatantra Bhardwaj Gets Interim Bail In Case Of Assaulting Dalit Activist's Father



New Delhi: Right-wing vigilante Swatantra Bhardwaj was on Tuesday granted interim bail for three weeks by a court in Delhi in the case of assault on a teen Dalit activist's father at Jantar Mantar during the protest by the Cockroach Janata Party in June. Delhi Police officers had caught Bhardwaj in Bulandshahr,

Uttar Pradesh, on September 5, days after he had been gloating on social media that he "cracked his skull open", and after a protest at the Parliament Street police station by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, besides demands by Aazad Samaj Party MP Chandrashekhar Azad and a CJP team led by Ashotosh

Ranka. Bhardwaj was initially booked under sections 115(2) (causing hurt) and 126(2) (wrongful restraint) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). However, following supplementary statements alleging the use of casteist slurs and online threats to the minor activist, police invoked provisions under the SC/ST

(Prevention of Atrocities) Act alongside a separate FIR under the POCSO Act. The assault happened during the youth-led demonstrations organised by the Cockroach Janta Party, the satirically named movement protesting exam irregularities such as the NEET paper leak, on June 23. During a hearing before Additional Sessions Judge Saurabh Pratap Singh Laler on Monday, Bhardwaj's lawyer argued that the arrest was politically motivated and presented video footage asserting that the complainant had initiated the physical attack. Bhardwaj had also approached the Supreme Court last Thursday, and the bench said nobody could be permitted to browbeat a victim or her family for pursuing criminal proceedings. The counsel appearing for the 14-year-old girl

told the court that she was harassed and her house was vandalised after she registered the FIR against Swatantra Bhardwaj. The bench led by the Chief Justice of India, Surya Kant, remarked, "There cannot be any second opinion about it. Such matters cannot be taken lightly. Nobody should be protected. If violence against a child is involved and persons are roaming free and trying to browbeat the child or the family so that they do not pursue the criminal proceedings, then it's a serious matter." The bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to ensure action on the girl's FIR alleging a later attack on her house, and sought reports from the Delhi and Uttar Pradesh governments on the issue.

In Reverse Trade Flow, India Exports 500 Tonnes Of Hilsa To Bangladesh

India has exported around 500 tonnes of hilsa to Bangladesh over the past two months, marking a reversal of the traditional trade flow of the prized fish between the neighbouring countries, according to fish traders. Another 150-200 tonnes of hilsa is expected to be exported to Bangladesh from India over the next few weeks, they said. The exports come amid reports of lower hilsa production in Bangladesh this year, prompting its fish traders to turn to India to meet the domestic demand for the popular fish. The consignments have been sourced mainly from Gujarat and shipped through Bharuch port, while some supplies have been routed through the Howrah whole-

sale fish market in West Bengal, the traders said. "Bangladesh has been importing hilsa from India for the first time. We usually send fish such as boal, rohu, parse and tangra to Bangladesh. This year there is a shortage of hilsa there," said Syed Anwar Maqsood, secretary of the Howrah Wholesale Fish Importers' Association. "In the last two months, some 500 tonnes have been exported, and another 150-200 tonnes are slated in the coming weeks," the association official said. Hilsa from Gujarat has relatively limited demand in the Indian market because of its high egg (roe) content. However, this characteristic makes it particularly attractive to Bangladeshi buyers,



especially in Chattogram and Sylhet, where roe-filled hilsa is in high demand. "Gujarat hilsa contains a lot of roe, which is highly sought after in Bangladesh. The eggs are also being sold separately for process-

ing and re-exported to other countries by them," Maqsood said. Bangladeshi traders are also processing some of the imported hilsa for export to overseas markets, while the fish is being dried and sold

as salted hilsa in the country's domestic market, he said. Bangladesh is traditionally one of the world's largest hilsa-producing countries, accounting for a major share of global production.

US Confirms It Has Deployed First-Ever 'On-Orbit' Weapon In Space



Washington:The United States has weapons deployed in space, the US Space Force said in the first-ever acknowledgement of possessing such offensive capabilities. US Air Force Secretary Troy Meink said the "on-orbit" weapon was necessary to safeguard American forces against hostile enemies, in a not-so-subtle warning to China and Russia. Meink, who made the announcement at the annual Air, Space, and Cyber Conference at National Harbour in

Maryland, did not specify what type of US weapon is in space. But he hinted that it will be used for "space control" against "evolving threats." Meink's remarks came as the Trump administration rushed to build outer space capabilities for its "Golden Dome" missile defence system to protect the US from missiles and other airborne threats.

The Space Treaty

The militarisation of space is as old as the space race itself -- as soon as Sputnik was launched into orbit

in 1957, Washington and Moscow began exploring ways to both arm and destroy satellites. The biggest worry was once about nuclear weapons in space, but the superpowers and other countries signed the Outer Space Treaty in 1967, banning weapons of mass destruction in orbit. Since then, global powers like the US, Russia, China, and India have been trying to develop capabilities outside the treaty, like ways to target rivals' satellites -- a key to military communications,

surveillance and navigation.

What the US Said

"The US has on-orbit space control weapons capable of defending the Joint Force against hostile adversary action," a US Space Force spokesperson said in a statement that did not provide specifics on the weapons. "Space control encapsulates the mission areas required to contest and control the space domain -- employing kinetic and non-kinetic means to affect adversary capabilities," the statement said, adding that "these capabilities can be employed for offensive and defensive purposes."

What Russia and China Are Doing

Both Russia and China -- the two main geopolitical rivals of the United States -- pose potential threats to US interests in space. China "develops and operates space and counterspace capabilities as part of a military modernization strategy," while Russia "views space as a warfighting domain and believes space supremacy will be a decisive factor in future conflicts," according to the US Space Force.

Iran War Exposed US Weapons Shortfall, Damaged Bases Across Middle East: Report



A U.S. government watchdog released its first report Monday on the impact of the Iran war, acknowledging the military's advanced weapons shortfalls and offering the first public look at the damage to American aircraft, bases and diplomatic outposts in the Middle East. Much of the information has been previously reported over the past six months, but the Pentagon inspector general's report offered the fullest official accounting so far of the conflict's costs in American lives, taxpayer dollars and physical damage. It included information from the watchdogs for the Defense and State departments as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development. The report, whose publication was first reported by NBC News, noted that the U.S. war with Iran "has resulted in strategic inventory shortfalls and revealed industrial base bottlenecks for munitions resupply" in regard to advanced weapons. Experts have previously said it will take about three years for military contractors to replenish advanced missiles and defensive missile interceptors to prewar levels. The Pentagon has repeatedly pushed back against reports of any munitions shortage, saying the U.S. military has all the weapons it needs to fight any conflict. President Donald

Trump said in a social media post Monday that the U.S. is "producing more Exquisite and Elite Weapons than at any time in our History." "They are being delivered on a daily basis to our Forces in the Middle East, and beyond," he wrote. The watchdog report, which covers April 1 to June 30, also acknowledged that Iranian strikes damaged and destroyed hundreds of buildings and other structures at U.S. bases in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Oman and Jordan. It noted that the U.S. naval base in Bahrain, a Navy logistics hub in the region, was targeted with Iranian drones and ballistic missiles. U.S. Central Command had to shift to supply lines to al-

ternate hubs that were much farther away, including Diego Garcia, a U.S.-U.K. base on an island in the Indian Ocean. It required "14- to 18-day logistics cycles" to support operations in the Middle East, the report said. Acting Navy Secretary Hung Cao acknowledged in an interview with The Epoch Times last week that "they blew the hell out of Bahrain" and said he has a task force looking into whether the Navy would need to repair the base in Bahrain to sustain its forces in the region. Dozens of American aircraft and drones also were destroyed or damaged by Iran, including the destruction of as many as 30 MQ-9 Reaper drones that cost around \$30 million apiece, the report said. Seven KC-135 re-

fueling aircraft were damaged or destroyed, including five that were struck by Iranian munitions while on the ground in Saudi Arabia. Another KC-135 crashed in Iraq, killing six service members, following a collision with another KC-135. Those deaths, and the death of a pilot of a helicopter that crashed into the Arabian Sea, are listed as occurring during non-hostile events. Eleven other service members are listed as "killed in action" in Kuwait, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told Congress in late July that the war had cost \$37.5 billion so far. The costs in physical damage to U.S. diplomatic facilities, however, had not been previously publicly released. Such

Saudi Arabia's Limited Options Against Houthis After Trump's Rebuff



Riyadh:Despite its best efforts, Saudi Arabia has been caught in the middle of the war between the United States and Iran. Now, the lightning advances of the Iran-backed Houthi rebels threatening a crucial Red Sea route has forced the Kingdom's leadership to assess its dwindling options on how to respond. In recent weeks, the Houthis in Yemen have repeatedly attacked the kingdom, threatening to choke its oil trade, adding pressure to the already struggling global economy. Adding to the Saudis' frustration is their most essential ally, the United States', unreliability. The US has proven to be unpredictable over the course of the war, and US President Donald Trump seems reluctant to

widen an already unpopular and stalemated Middle East war ahead of congressional elections.

Iran's Trump Card

For Saudi Arabia, diplomatic efforts to engage with Iran have so far produced limited results. A planned meeting between officials from Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf nations was abruptly postponed over the weekend, as the gap between their positions remained vast. The Houthis' advance against Saudi forces ramps up global economic pressure as Tehran's grip over the Strait of Hormuz has been loosened, giving the Islamic Republic another strategic trump card in the war. Michael Ratney, a former US ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said the latest developments are

"incredibly frustrating" for the kingdom. "Despite their antipathy for the Iranians, this is a war they had never asked for, they had great trepidation about it. And once it started, all of their...worst-case scenarios started coming true." The Saudi government has not issued any statement on the matter yet, but a Saudi official anonymously told Associated Press that the kingdom would defend itself and work with partners, including the United States, to ensure freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.

The Shrinking Ground

Saudi Arabia's crown prince and de facto ruler, Mohammed bin Salman, has spent years trying to build a Middle East with

wide-ranging social and economic changes aimed at transforming the ultra-conservative kingdom into a global business hub in a more prosperous and integrated region. Those efforts suffered major setbacks after Hamas attacked Israel in 2023. That war triggered another in Iran. When the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, it responded with missile and drone attacks on the kingdom and other Gulf states, effectively shutting down the Strait of Hormuz and bottling up oil and gas exports from the region. Saudi Arabia escaped some of the worst effects by piping its oil across the Arabian Peninsula to the Red Sea, where it could be exported to Europe via Egypt's SUMED pipeline and the Suez Canal, or to Asia via a route running through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and toward the Indian Ocean. But tensions reignited with the Houthis in July, leading the rebels to declare a blockade of Saudi shipping and resume large-scale attacks for the first time in four years.

The Houthi Problem

In just over two weeks, Iran-backed rebels have attacked Saudi Arabia from the east, the south, and the north.

Dil To Pagal Hai' To 'Chale Chalo': Malaysian PM's Post-BRICS Bollywood Playlist Is Viral

'New Delhi:The 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi has concluded, but its echoes continue to be heard beyond geopolitics, with Indian music emerging as an unexpected highlight of the gathering. As the returning world leaders share glimpses of their visit, internet users can't stop talking about Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's careful selection of Bollywood tracks for each photo he posted. Posting a video on Instagram of Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcoming him to Bharat Mandapam, the venue where the meetings were held, Ibrahim picked the song 'Tujhe Dekha To Ye Jana Sanam' from the Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol-starrer film 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge'. For another picture with PM Modi, he used the song 'Dil Toh Pagal Hai' from the Shah Rukh Khan, Madhuri Dixit, and Karisma Kapoor-starrer film 'Dil To Pagal Hai'. For his own pictures addressing the BRICS Summit, the Malaysian leader selected the track 'Har Dil Jo Pyar Karega' from the 2000 Salman Khan, Rani Mukerji, and Preity Zinta-starrer 'Har Dil Jo Pyar Karega'. In the shorts of his departure from India, he used the song



'Kandhon Se Milte Hain Kandhe' from the movie 'Lakshya'. Both tracks send a message of togetherness, making them a fitting choice for the BRICS pictures. During his India tour, Ibrahim also met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi. Sharing pictures of his feast with the Opposition leaders, Ibrahim chose 'Aisa Des Hai Mera' from the movie 'Veer-Zaara' -- a song that celebrates the cultural diversity of India. But one of his most interesting choices of music was for his post about meeting with the Iranian delegation. For his post about meeting Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Ibrahim chose the song 'Saathi Haath Badhana' from the 1957 film

'Naya Daur'. The track is about joining hands and moving forward together, making it a correct fit to forward the message of togetherness. Another post that grabbed attention was Ibrahim's picture with Russian President Vladimir Putin, for which he selected 'Chale Chalo' from the 2001 Aamir Khan-starrer 'Lagaan'-- signifying the message of moving together. The Malaysian leader wasn't the only one who used music to send their diplomatic messaging forward. Indonesia's Foreign Minister Sugiono also used Bollywood music from the movie 'Dil Dhadakne Do' around President Prabowo Subianto's visit. India said the BRICS Sum-

mit in Delhi, held against the backdrop of a "very polarised world", was a success. Talking about the summit, Foreign Minister S Jaishankar said, "The BRICS Summit was taking place in a very polarised world -- there were two major conflicts, big divides and very strong opinions and interests. Even in the midst of this polarisation, we actually forged a consensus. If you look at it, the toughest issue of the day was the West Asia conflict. But we were able to get out a statement to which everybody agreed." As many as 32 delegations had come for the summit -- 11 from BRICS member states, 10 partners, four regional bodies and seven international organisations, he added.

US Judge Blocks Trump Visa Curbs On Foreign Students, Journalists

A US federal judge on Monday postponed implementation of a Trump administration policy that would impose stricter limits on how long foreign students and journalists can study or work in the United States. The preliminary injunction from District Judge Dennis Saylor came one day before the new visa rules from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) were scheduled to take effect. Under the proposed new rules, foreigners on student visas would be admitted for a maximum of up to four years after which they would have to apply for an extension. International students were previously allowed to remain for the duration of their studies. Foreign journalists would be limited to stays of just 240 days, or around

eight months, but could apply for extensions of similar duration. Until now they could stay up to five years. Chinese journalists would get just 90 days, with extensions of 90 days. A coalition of unions representing universities, teachers and journalists had filed a lawsuit challenging the visa restrictions. Saylor put implementation of the new DHS rules on hold for now without ruling on the merits of the case and scheduled another hearing for October 2. But in an accompanying memo, the judge expressed skepticism about the visa restrictions on international students and journalists. He said the current system has permitted tens of millions of foreign students to come to the United States, resulting in "groundbreaking research in

science, medicine, and technology, substantial economic growth, and a host of other benefits." "Rather than attempt to improve that system, DHS elected to replace it with a new program that will substantially restrict the overall number of foreign students, researchers, professors, and journalists," he said. The judge said that under the new rules, DHS denials of visa extensions would be "entirely discretionary and unappealable." "A DHS official -- based on limited and vague criteria, and with no of appeal -- will have the power to cut short the academic, research, or teaching activities of any non-US citizen for no reason or any reason." Foreign journalists applying for visa extensions would also have "no recourse

and no appeal" in the event they are turned down, Saylor said. "The possibilities for abuse are rampant -- in particular, the obvious likelihood that the visas of foreign journalists who are critical of the government (or, more particularly, DHS officials) will not be renewed," he said.

'Absurd'

When it proposed the rule, DHS cited national security grounds, an argument the judge said "borders on the absurd" and was "based almost entirely on a small handful of anecdotes." "The visa restrictions are part of a broader immigration crackdown by President Donald Trump spanning aggressive enforcement operations in major cities as well as new restrictions on legal pathways to citizenship.

On Camera, Indian-Origin Woman, Friend Crushed To Death By Subway Train In New York

Washington:An Indian-origin woman and her Nepali-American friend were crushed to death by an oncoming train at a subway station in New York, apparently after one of them fell onto the tracks and the other jumped off the platform to help, according to American media reports. The victims, both 24, were identified as Malaika Chitre, a resident of Dayton in New Jersey, and Navam Kaul of Sayreville in New Jersey, the New York Daily News reported. Both Chitre and Kaul had attended Rutgers University together. A horrifying video of the inci-

dent has emerged online that shows the woman laughing and pulling the man toward her before an approaching train runs over them at a lower Manhattan subway station. The accident reportedly involved a downtown number 4 train operating on the local tracks inside the Spring St. station. It remains unclear who fell on the track first, but Kaul and Chitre died at the spot, and their bodies were recovered from under the third and fourth cars of the train, according to a report by the New York Daily News. However, quoting law enforcement

sources, the New York Post reported that Kaul may have fallen on the track first or made his way onto the tracks inside the Spring Street subway, prompting Chitre to go down to help him. Police said they were notified of the accident at 3:14 am Sunday after the train was unable to stop in time. Around 100 passengers were reportedly aboard at the time of the incident, and they were evacuated onto the platform.

About the Victims

The New York Daily News reported that Kaul had attended the Rutgers Business School in New

Brunswick from fall 2020 to spring 2024. However, he had not received a degree. Chitre, on the other hand, completed her Bachelor of Science degree in May 2024 from Rutgers-New Brunswick School of Arts and Sciences. Their LinkedIn profiles showed that Chitre worked as an operations specialist at Acadia Pharmaceuticals, while Kaul was a financial data analyst at Bloomberg. "We are saddened to learn of the tragic death of these two former students," said Dory Devlin, assistant vice president of news and media relations at Rutgers.

BIG BREAKING: UPI charges announced; Rs 2,000-plus merchant payments to attract MDR, P2P remains free



Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is set for a major change from October 15, 2026, with merchant transactions above Rs 2,000 set to attract a Merchant Discount Rate (MDR). However, person-to-person (P2P) UPI payments will continue to remain free, regardless of the transaction value. There will also be no monthly quota or volume limit for free P2P transactions. The revised MDR framework applies to select person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions and is aimed at introducing charges for certain higher-value merchant payments while keeping smaller transactions outside the fee structure.

UPI charges: What hap-

pens when you pay a merchant?

Under the new framework, P2M UPI transactions above Rs 2,000 will attract an MDR of 0.4 per cent. For transactions of Rs 75,000 and above, the MDR will be capped at Rs 300 per transaction. For example, a Rs 5,000 payment to a merchant would attract an MDR of Rs 20. Importantly, this does not mean the customer will have to pay Rs 20 over and above the Rs 5,000 payment. The MDR is a charge within the merchant-payment ecosystem, and banks have been directed not to pass the MDR burden on to customers.

P2P UPI payments will remain free
For individuals transfer-

ring money to another individual, there will be no MDR even for high-value transactions. The government has also clarified that there will be no monthly transaction quota or volume-based limit for free P2P UPI payments. This means a person sending money to a family member, friend or another individual through UPI will continue to make the transfer without an MDR.

Rs 5 MDR for essential services

Certain essential sectors will have a separate MDR structure. P2M transactions above Rs 2,000 in categories such as railways, telecom, insurance, fuel and agriculture inputs will attract a flat Rs 5 MDR instead

of the standard 0.4 per cent rate.

This category-specific structure is intended to keep the cost lower for payments involving essential services.

Capital market transactions to attract 0.02 per cent MDR

Payments towards mutual funds, securities, stock brokers and dealers will attract a nominal MDR of 0.02 per cent, capped at Rs 300 per transaction. For instance, a Rs 1 lakh payment towards a capital-market transaction would attract an MDR of Rs 20. A Rs 15 lakh payment would attract Rs 300, with the cap kicking in. The 0.02 per cent rate is significantly lower than the standard 0.4 per cent MDR applicable to specified P2M transactions above Rs 2,000.

Small merchants to continue with zero MDR

Small merchants will continue to benefit from zero MDR if their UPI QR collections are up to Rs 1 lakh a month. The government has said the introduction of MDR will affect around 4 per cent of merchant transactions, limiting the impact of the revised framework to a relatively small portion of the overall UPI ecosystem.

No platform fee or hidden

UPI charges

UPI apps will not be allowed to levy a platform fee or hidden charges on customers for making UPI payments. Banks have also been directed not to pass the MDR burden on to customers. This means the introduction of MDR does not amount to a blanket charge on UPI users. The fee applies to specified merchant-side transactions under the revised framework.

5 per cent of MDR collection for small merchants

Under the new framework, 5 per cent of the MDR collected will be allocated to a dedicated fund for small merchants. The government has said the framework is aimed at making the UPI ecosystem financially sustainable while supporting its continued expansion, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. With the new framework taking effect from October 15, the key distinction for users remains between P2P and P2M payments. Person-to-person UPI transfers will remain free, while specified higher-value merchant payments will attract MDR. Capital-market transactions, meanwhile, will carry a lower 0.02 per cent MDR, subject to a Rs 300 cap.

Onion Prices:

Mandi rates fall 9.1% as arrivals rise 3.14% YoY; government says supply comfortable



Onion Prices: Onion prices have softened in mandis across India amid higher arrivals, with the government saying that onion availability remains comfortable and that supplies are expected to improve further in the coming months. The all-India average modal price of onion declined 9.1 per cent between September 2 and September 11, falling from Rs 3,721 per quintal to Rs 3,383 per quintal, according to the government.

In Maharashtra, a key onion-producing state, the average mandi price declined from Rs 4,011 to Rs 3,842 per quintal during the period, marking a fall of around 4.2 per cent.

Onion arrivals rise 3.14% YoY

Onion arrivals in mandis have also remained higher than last year. Between April 2 and September 11, around 85.06 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of onion arrived in mandis across the country. This compares with 82.48 LMT during the corresponding period last year, representing an increase of 3.14 per cent. The higher arrivals, along with expectations of further supplies from upcoming crops, have contributed to the easing of mandi prices.

Government says onion availability comfortable

The government said the country's onion availability is currently in a comfortable

position. It expects the kharif and late-kharif crops to perform well, which could further increase supplies in the coming months. The government is continuing to monitor onion prices and arrivals in mandis as well as major consumption centres. It said timely intervention will be undertaken, if required, to ensure that consumers get onions at reasonable prices.

Buffer stock intervention continues

As part of its price stabilisation measures under the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF), the government had started retail sales of buffer-stock onions at Rs 35 per kg from August 27 through the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) and the National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India (NCCF). So far, around 9,200 MT of onions have been dispatched through the two agencies. The intervention has provided relief in retail prices in cities and consumption centres including Varanasi, Shimla, Patna, Kolkata, Delhi, Ghaziabad, Amritsar and Thrissur.

Kanda Express

Kanda Express is the government's initiative to transport large quantities of onions by railway from producing and storage centres to major consumption markets. The initiative was launched in 2024-25 and

has since been scaled up. In 2024-25, onion buffer stocks were transported through 14 railway rakes carrying nearly 12,000 tonnes of onions to five cities. The operation expanded significantly in 2025-26, when 86 railway rakes transported around 88,000 tonnes of onions to 16 major cities. The rail-based movement is intended to facilitate the large-scale movement of onions and augment supplies in markets where additional stocks are required. The main purpose of Kanda Express is to move onions in bulk from Nashik to consumption centres that require additional supplies. Rail transportation facilitates the movement of large quantities of onions across the country. This allows buffer-stock onions to reach markets where supplies need to be augmented. The government is also continuing to monitor onion prices, mandi arrivals and availability across states. The government's focus remains on maintaining stability in onion prices, providing relief to consumers and safeguarding the interests of farmers. With mandi arrivals already higher than last year and kharif and late-kharif crops expected to add to supplies, the government expects the onion supply situation to remain comfortable in the coming months.

CCPA fines Rapido over ride fare prompts, dark patterns

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has fined Roppen Transportation Services Private Limited, which operates Rapido, Rs 10 lakh over what it termed misleading advertisements, unfair trade practices, unfair contract terms and dark patterns on the ride-hailing platform.

The action comes after the consumer regulator examined cab and bike-taxi aggregators operating in India, particularly their practices around pre-ride tipping and dynamic pricing. During the review, the CCPA found that Rapido riders were shown prompts asking them to increase the amount they were willing to pay while their ride booking was still being processed. The messages included, "Higher the price, higher the chance of getting a ride" and "Captains aren't accepting at Rs 60. Try adding +10, +20, +30".

CCPA flags 'Confirm Shaming'

According to the CCPA, Rapido first quoted a fare to the rider. After the rider proceeded with the booking, the app could then ask them to increase the amount if a captain had not accepted the original fare. The

regulator said this could give riders the impression that paying more would improve their chances of getting a ride, particularly at a point when they had already initiated the booking. The CCPA classified the practice as "Confirm Shaming", a dark pattern covered under the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023. The authority said the prompts could create a sense of urgency and make consumers feel that they might lose the ride if they did not agree to pay more.

'Set your price' feature also under scrutiny

The CCPA also examined Rapido's "Set your price" feature. It found that the pricing slider used different colours depending on the amount selected. According to the regulator, increasing the price showed a green message saying there was a "higher chance of getting a ride". Lowering the amount, on the other hand, triggered a red or orange warning. The CCPA also pointed out that the slider allowed more room for increasing the fare than reducing it. The regulator classified this as "Interface Interference", saying the design could influence riders

to choose a higher price.

CCPA questions additional payment before ride

The regulator also questioned the way the additional payment was presented to riders. The CCPA said the fare shown at the time of booking already takes into account factors such as distance, time, traffic and tolls, along with the amount payable to the captain. Against this backdrop, it said there was no justification for subsequently asking the rider to pay more before the ride had started. The authority also noted that a tip is generally a voluntary payment made after a service has been provided. It referred to the Motor Vehicle Aggregator Guidelines, 2025, which state that a tipping facility should be available only after completion of a ride and not at the time of booking or during the ride. Rapido had argued that tipping on its platform was voluntary and that its ride-matching algorithm continued to work irrespective of whether a rider offered an additional amount. The company also submitted that the prompts represented real-time negotiation between riders and drivers, similar to an offline conver-



sation. The CCPA did not accept the argument. It said the timing and design of the prompts put pressure on riders at a stage when they were dependent on the platform to get their booking confirmed. The regulator further noted that Rapido had not submitted data showing that offering an additional amount actually increased the chances of getting a ride. It consequently held the claim that a higher price meant a higher chance of getting a ride to be unsubstantiated and misleading.

CCPA expands scrutiny of ride-hailing platforms

The action against Rapido is part of a wider CCPA exercise covering practices related to advance tipping and dark patterns

on ride-hailing and bike-taxi platforms. The regulator had earlier issued notices to Uber, Ola, Rapido and Namma Yatri, asking them to comply with the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023 and submit self-declarations on compliance. The CCPA's examination of Uber and Ola on these issues is still under way. The regulator said the action against Rapido was taken under its mandate under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 to protect consumer interests and address unfair trade practices and misleading advertisements. Consumers can register complaints related to misleading advertisements, unfair trade practices or dark patterns with the National Consumer Helpline at 1915.

HCLTech, CrowdStrike expand collaboration to defend against AI-powered cyber threats

HCLTech and cybersecurity company CrowdStrike have joined hands to help enterprises strengthen security around artificial intelligence (AI) applications, models, agents, identities and data, HCLTech said in an official statement. The expanded partnership will integrate CrowdStrike's Falcon Guardian with HCLTech's AI Security and Resilience services, bringing AI security deeper into enterprise security operations as businesses increasingly deploy AI at scale, as per the statement. "The companies will combine Falcon Guardian's AI Detection and Response (AIDR) capabilities with

HCLTech's cybersecurity advisory, AI governance, implementation and managed services delivered through its Cybersecurity Fusion Centers," HCLTech said. The partnership builds on the Continuous Threat Exposure Management (CTEM) services launched by the two companies in March 2026. According to HCLTech, the expanded offering is aimed at helping enterprises identify and manage emerging risks across their AI environments while improving visibility into potential cyber threats. CrowdStrike's Falcon Guardian will be combined with HCLTech's TRiBe

framework, which focuses on AI trust, risk governance and resilience. The companies will also use HCLTech's VERITY Frontier AI Resilience operating model to continuously identify, validate and mitigate exploitable cyber exposure across hybrid environments. Daniel Bernard, Chief Business Officer, CrowdStrike, said AI is increasingly becoming a new attack surface for enterprises. "AI is becoming a new enterprise attack surface, and securing it requires visibility and protection everywhere AI operates," Bernard said. He added that CrowdStrike had developed AI Detection and Response capabilities

to secure the broader AI attack surface and said the partnership with HCLTech would help bring those capabilities to more enterprises as they scale their AI adoption. HCLTech Executive Vice President and Global Head of Cybersecurity Amit Jain said companies need to address both sides of the AI security challenge -- protecting against AI-powered attacks while also securing the AI systems they themselves deploy. "The next generation of enterprise security will require organizations to address both sides of the AI risk equation, defending against AI-powered threats while securing the AI sys-

tems they deploy," Jain said.

He said the expanded partnership would combine the companies' cybersecurity capabilities to help businesses adopt AI while maintaining security and operational resilience.

HCLTech and CrowdStrike said the expanded partnership is designed to help organisations scale AI securely and responsibly while improving their overall resilience against emerging cyber risks.

Shares of HCLTech closed at Rs 1,255 per share on the BSE on Tuesday, September 15.

EPFO WhatsApp channel goes live: Step-by-step guide to join

The Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has launched its official WhatsApp channel, where PF and ELIS subscribers can take latest updates regarding several schemes and services. The EPFO WhatsApp channel also shares educational content and useful links with its members. These include YouTube videos and other resources aimed at helping subscribers understand various EPF-related processes and government schemes. The educational content covers topics such as EPF advance withdrawals, contributions after rejoining employment, and the payment process under the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana. These resources can help EPFO members better understand their benefits, contributions and related procedures.

How to join EPFO WhatsApp channel

You can join the official EPFO's WhatsApp channel on <https://www.whatsapp.com/channel/0029vb6kmH48Pgs8fid6Kw3Y>

EPFO Advance Rules

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has made the process of accessing PF funds easier for the account holder. Unlike the restrictive and complicated measures, PF holders can now withdraw up to 75 per cent of their amount for varied reasons, depending on the terms and conditions.

The guidelines divide EPF advances into three broad categories — essential needs,

housing-related needs and special circumstances. The rules specify how many times a member can take an advance for different purposes.

The Employees' Provident Funds Scheme, 2026 has replaced the Employees' Provident Funds Scheme, 1952, bringing changes to EPF contributions and withdrawal rules.

Here is a simple guide to the new EPF advance rules and the limits applicable to members.

1. For illness: No limit

EPF members can seek an advance for illness of themselves or family members. According to the guidelines, there is no limit on the number of times an advance can be taken under this category. This makes illness different from other specified purposes such as education and marriage, where a member can make withdrawals only a certain number of times during membership.

2. For education: Up to 10 times

Members can take an EPF advance for education of themselves or their family members. The withdrawal is allowed up to 10 times during the period of EPF membership.

3. For marriage: Up to 5 times

An EPF advance can also be taken for marriage of the member or family members. The limit under this category is up to five times during membership.

4. For housing-related

needs: Up to 5 times

EPF advances for housing-related requirements cover four purposes:

- Purchase of a flat/house or site

- Construction of a house
- Repayment of a home loan
- Renovation, alteration or improvement of a house

The guidelines specify that these housing-related advances can be taken up to five times during membership.

5. Special circumstances: Up to twice a year

The guidelines also provide for advances in special circumstances as notified by the Central Board, EPFO. Under this category, members can avail themselves of an advance up to two times in a financial year.

What EPF members should remember

Before applying for an advance, members should first identify the purpose of the withdrawal, as the permitted frequency depends on the category. The guidelines also make the 12-month EPF membership requirement relevant to the uniform 75 per cent withdrawal guideline.

25% minimum EPF balance rule

The scheme requires a member to maintain a minimum balance equal to 25% of the aggregate total contributions credited to the EPF account up to the date of withdrawal. This includes the employee's contribution, employer's contribution and interest on those contributions.

From Cricket Bat To Shotgun: Mairaj Ahmad Khan's Remarkable Sporting Journey



There was a time when Mairaj Ahmad Khan dreamed of making it big with a cricket bat. More than three decades later, the 50-year-old is still chasing sporting glory -- only now with a shotgun firmly in his grip. From Khurja in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr district to shooting ranges around the world, Mairaj's journey has taken him places he could never have imagined when he first stepped into the world of sport. At the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games, he will be the second-oldest member of the Indian contingent, behind equestrian Shruti Vora, and will compete at his fourth continental games. Yet, shooting was never supposed to be his destiny. "I was playing cricket when it all started in 1994," Mairaj recalls. A left-handed top-order batter who usually came in at No. 3, he represented Uttar Pradesh in the CK Nayudu and Vinoo Mankad Trophy competitions before joining Jamia Millia Islamia in 1996. He played inter-university cricket and also featured in the Vizzy Trophy. Among his university teammates was a young Virender Sehwag. "I have played with Sehwag and done a lot of nets with him. He played just one match with us because he went on to play for India that year," Mairaj recalled. But while cricket was his pas-

sion, shooting was slowly beginning to pull him in. Guns were not unfamiliar to Mairaj. His family, he says, were zamindars and had always kept firearms. As a youngster, he had also tried air rifle and .22 rifle shooting and even competed in a district-level three-position event in Bulandshahr, where he won Rs 30 in prize money. "I bought a cricket bat with that money," he said laughing. It was after he moved to Delhi that fate nudged him towards a different sporting path. Mairaj would often spend weekends with a cousin who was a Group Captain in the Indian Air Force and a senior officer with the Air Force Sports Control Board. One day, he noticed his cousin cleaning his gun. "I asked him where he was going. He said there was a competition at the Delhi range... the Nationals at Karni Singh Shooting Range. So I went there out of curiosity," he said. What he saw fascinated him. The range was buzzing with some of India's leading shooters, including Asian Games shotgun gold medallist Raja Randhir Singh, Olympian Gurbir Singh -- father of former trap world champion Manavjit Singh Sandhu -- and Zorawar Singh Sandhu's father, who was also a prominent figure in the sport. "I felt very fascinated by the sport," he says. The idea of

competing himself took firmer shape a year later. In 1995, Mairaj's family was running a restaurant at Pragati Maidan, now Bharat Mandapam, along with two kiosks and a kebab outlet called 'Hamari Gali'. One day, some relatives walked into the restaurant after returning from a shooting Pre-Nationals competition. "They told me they had competed and qualified. I made up my mind that from the next year I would also compete. So, they entered my name." For the next few years, Mairaj dabbled in both trap and skeet. Then came the moment that changed everything. In 1999, at a competition in Chennai, Mairaj found himself in a skeet shoot-off against Ronjan Sodhi, who would later go on to win Asian Games gold in double trap and receive the prestigious Khel Ratna award. "I missed the first double shots. I thought he (Ronjan) would win. But he also could not shoot both his targets. In the next round, I went on to win." That victory settled the matter. "After that, skeet became my life. I never picked up the trap gun again and switched full-time to skeet in 1999." The decision transformed his life. "Today, whatever I am is because of skeet. My name, my fame," said Mairaj who became the first ever Indian athlete to qualify

for the Olympics in the shotgun skeet discipline in 2016 Rio edition. The sport took him to two Olympics and brought him World Cup medals, including a gold and a silver. But the journey has come with its share of setbacks -- and, like any long sporting career, its share of heartbreak. Mairaj missed out on the Asian Games in Jakarta in 2018 and Hangzhou in 2022, losing his place by narrow margins. "I was very disappointed. I lost the berth by a close margin." Now, after those misses, he is back on the continental stage. His first Asian Games appearance came in Doha in 2006. At Incheon in 2014, he came agonisingly close to a medal, finishing fifth in the final. At 50, however, he refuses to burden himself with expectations. "I am just going as a new shooter," he said with a laugh. There is no grand declaration, only quiet faith. "Inshallah. I always have faith in him." Perhaps nothing captures Mairaj's remarkable longevity better than the 35-year age gap between him and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, the teenage cricket sensation and youngest member of India's Asian Games contingent. "When I started shooting, he (Sooryavanshi) would have been born around that time," Mairaj said. The comparison is almost poetic. Sooryavanshi is following the same path Mairaj once dreamed of -- a young cricketer trying to make his mark. So, does the veteran have some advice for the teenager? "Fifty is the new 20, you know. He has youth, but I have experience," Mairaj said with a laugh. Then comes the line that perhaps sums up his entire journey better than anything else: "Unke andar josh hai aur mere andar hosh hai (He has the passion. I have the wisdom)." And after three decades, two Olympics, four Asian Games and a sporting journey that began with a cricket bat bought for Rs 30, the veteran shooter is still chasing the next target.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi Snubbed Again, India Captain Says This On 1 Change For India vs Afghanistan In 2nd T20I



India won the toss and opted to bowl first against Afghanistan in the second T20I of the three-match series at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Tuesday. India entered the second match after securing an easy seven-wicket win over Afghanistan in the first T20I on Sunday. After winning the toss, Shreyas Iyer said India opted to bowl first, believing the Arun Jaitley Stadium wicket could offer some early assistance to the bowlers.

He also admitted India could have won more convincingly in the previous match while confirming that Ravi Bishnoi replaced the injured Varun Chakravarthy. "We are going to bowl first. You have a fair idea of how the wicket plays, and it gives the bowlers a little bit of an advantage. It wasn't comprehensive because we could have won by a huge margin. As a bowling unit, we could have picked up wickets in the middle

overs. Varun is injured, and Ravi Bishnoi comes in," Iyer said at the toss presentation. Afghanistan captain Ibrahim Zadran said they would have preferred to bowl first as well and are aiming to play positive cricket. He acknowledged their slow start in the previous game but said the team recovered well and would look to improve this time. "We would have bowled first as well. We want to play positive cricket; we

didn't get a good start that day, but we recovered in the middle overs. We will try to do better tonight. We are playing the same playing XI," he said. In the first T20I, India opted to field first, with Afghanistan managing 156/8 courtesy of a fighting 64* from Azmatullah Omarzai. Arshdeep Singh (3/19) was sensational with the ball. During the chase, Abhishek Sharma (82 off 32 balls, with seven fours and seven sixes) and Ishan Kishan (42 off 33 balls, with five fours and a six) all but sealed the chase with an entertaining 121-run stand for the second wicket. The chase was completed in 13.4 overs.

India vs Afghanistan 2nd T20I playing XIs:

India: Sanju Samson (w), Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan, Shreyas Iyer (c), Tilak Varma, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Ravi Bishnoi

Afghanistan: Rahmanullah Gurbaz (w), Ibrahim Zadran (c), Sediqullah Atal, Gulbadin Naib, Darwish Rasooli, Azmatullah Omarzai, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, Noor Ahmad, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Fazalhaq Farooqi

BCCI Offered Solution To Women's Asia Cup Trophy Row. How Asian Cricket Body Replied

India had informed the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) that the Indian women's team would not attend the trophy presentation ceremony of the Women's Asia Cup 2026 if Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief Mohsin Naqvi handed over the cup. "We communicated with ACC and yesterday I personally informed the ACC chairman that we won't be part of the presentation ceremony if it is done in the same manner as done in

case of the men's cricket team, they did not want to change their position so we had no option," revealed BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia to NDTV. "We have honoured all the victims of the Pahalgam attack by not attending the ceremony" Saikia said. He added that both the cups for the men and the women would come to India soon. "We can assure very soon we will not only get the Women's Asia Cup trophy

but also the Men's Asia Cup trophy" Saikia added. He also alleged that Naqvi is not following established traditions. "When present ICC chair was in ACC, it was the normal traditional practice that winning team office-bearer to hand over the trophy. But since last year, they are not following this tradition" Saikia added. Saikia also expressed that the work being put behind the Indian

women's team in the T20 format. The Indian women's cricket team won the 50-over World Cup for the first time in 2025. "We are basically trying to build our team in the T20 format for the ICC T20 World Cup. In T20 format in women's cricket we have challenges, and our target is the Asian Games" Saikia added. He further said that BCCI had given an alternative to ACC for the presentation ceremony.

"Imran Khan Will Die": 7 Australian Captains Write To Own Government For Pakistan Great's Detention



A total of seven former Australian captains have written to their government, seeking support in a bid to urge authorities in Pakistan to provide jailed former cricket captain Imran Khan with better treatment. Following an earlier letter by 22 international captains urging the humane treatment of Imran, several Australian greats have now joined forces to seek a diplomatic resolution. On Tuesday, these former Australian captains wrote to the country's Foreign Minister, Penny Wong, to intervene diplomatically as concerns grow over Imran's well-being. The signatories of the letter sent to the Australian government are Allan Border, Greg Chappell, Ian Chappell, Belinda Clark, Kim Hughes, Mark Taylor, and Steve Waugh. In a statement, the group of seven captains clarified that they take "no position on the legal or political case against Mr Khan", describing it as a matter for Pakistan to resolve alone. However, they expressed deep concern over the treatment Imran is receiving in Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi, calling it "a matter of basic humanity, whatever their politics". Greg Chappell, one of the most respected cricketing figures in Australia, has requested a meet-

ing with Senator Wong to discuss Imran's case, particularly after the former Pakistan captain's sons alleged a serious threat to his life in a recent interview.

What Does the Letter Say?

The letter penned by the seven captains reads: "Greg Chappell last saw Imran Khan in Islamabad in 2022, when Khan was Prime Minister - hale, hearty, and fit, by his account. It is hard to reconcile that image with the reports now coming out of his detention, and that is why we write to you today, not as diplomats or political actors, but as former Australian captains who felt we should speak up." "Mr Khan led Pakistan to its only World Cup title. He also led his country as Prime Minister. Australians hold him in great regard - as a cricketer whose skill and leadership left a lasting mark on the game we share, and as someone who has helped improve the lives of Pakistanis by building cancer hospitals," it added. In a conversation with the Hindustan Times, Greg Chappell emphasised that the political case against Imran is not a concern for him or the other signatories, but insisted that he must be afforded humane treatment in detention.

"Beyond credible reports, his own sons and sisters have been pleading publicly for months over his health and treatment in detention - citing limited medical care, restricted family contact, and minimal access to legal counsel among their concerns. We take no position on the legal or political case against him. That is Pakistan's business. But the treatment of any person in detention is a matter of basic humanity, whatever their politics," the letter stated. When asked about the necessity of writing the letter, Chappell said: "We are concerned that he will die in jail." "This is not the first time international captains have raised this concern. It has been brought to public attention on two separate occasions in the past six months, and the reports since then - now echoed by his own family - suggest the situation has not improved. We would be grateful if the Australian Government could raise this directly with the relevant Pakistani authorities. Mr Chappell has also requested a meeting with you on this matter over recent weeks, and would welcome the chance to discuss it with you directly on our behalf. Thank you for taking the time to consider this," the letter concluded.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar On Sudden Team India Exile: "Realised It's Not What They Said"



Following Royal Challengers Bengaluru's (RCB) back-to-back Indian Premier League (IPL) triumphs, veteran pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar has emerged as a contender for a return to the Indian national team. The 36-year-old, who last represented India in 2022, has also expressed his desire to make a comeback and once again don the national colours. He claimed 17 wickets for RCB in IPL 2025, proving effective with both the new and old ball. He raised his game further in 2026, finishing with 28 wickets, just one short of winning the Purple Cap for a record third time, at an impressive average of 17.89, playing a key role in

RCB's back-to-back title triumphs. "I'm not playing to prove anything, but I'd be happy to play for India again. I have gone past that time when I used to wait for the next series," Bhuvneshwar Kumar said on Jatin Sapru's YouTube channel. Kumar said he initially believed he could return to the Indian team after receiving a call suggesting he might feature in the next couple of series. However, he later realised that was not the case. While the setback was difficult, he said he eventually came to terms with it, with his family playing a key role in helping him cope. "Till a few series. Because I had received a call.

What they said, based on that, I felt maybe the next two series. But then I realised it's not what they said. It wasn't hurtful, because then I knew what was happening, and I made peace with it. It wasn't easy, but family played a big role," he said. The veteran seamer last represented India in the T20I format in November 2022, featuring in the Napier match of the series that followed India's semifinal exit from the T20 World Cup in Australia. Kumar has represented India in 229 matches across formats, claiming 294 wickets at an impressive average of 29.50, including seven five-wicket hauls.

Sachin Tendulkar's ODI World Record Broken By Zimbabwe Star

Zimbabwean wicketkeeper-batter Brendan Taylor has overtaken legendary India cricketer Sachin Tendulkar to become the holder of the longest ODI career in men's cricket, according to Cricinfo. Taylor's ODI career has now spanned 22 years and 148 days, surpassing Tendulkar's 22 years and 91 days. The Zimbabwean achieved the feat after featuring in the first ODI of the ongoing three-match series against Australia in

Harare on Tuesday. Tendulkar has consequently slipped to second place on the list, while former Sri Lanka cricketer Sanath Jayasuriya occupies third spot with an ODI career spanning 21 years and 184 days. Tendulkar, however, continues to hold the record for the most runs in ODI cricket, with 18,426, as well as the most appearances in the format, having played 463 matches. Taylor, 40, made his ODI debut in April 2004 against Sri

Lanka and went on to establish himself as one of Zimbabwe's leading batters. Before Tuesday's match, he had amassed 11 ODI centuries -- a national record -- in 207 appearances, with 6,704 runs to his name. Taylor retired from international cricket in 2021. Four months later, in January 2022, he revealed that corruptors had attempted to lure him into fixing matches in 2019 by offering him cocaine and subsequently blackmailing him.

Big News! Supriya Yarlagadda Gets Key Role In CBFC

Supriya Yarlagadda has been appointed as one of the 18 members of the newly reconstituted Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). The Government of India announced the new board on Wednesday and the appointments have come into effect immediately. The new CBFC board features several well-known names from the Indian film industry. Actors including Manoj Joshi, Suniel Shetty, Preity Zinta, Pankaj Tripathi and Pallavi Joshi have been included in the board. Filmmaker Priyadarshan and Bengali actor Prosenjit Chatterjee are also among the new members. Supriya Yarlagadda is a familiar name in Telugu cinema and has been associated with the film industry through Annapurna Studios and film production. Her



appointment gives Telugu cinema representation in the new CBFC board. The new board has been constituted by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting under the Cinematograph Act. The members will serve for three years or until further orders.

The CBFC plays an important role in the Indian film industry as it examines films and issues certifications before their public release. With several prominent film personalities now part of the board, the new team is expected to bring significant industry experience to the certification process. The inclusion of Supriya Yarlagadda is particularly notable for the Telugu film industry, considering her long association with the cinema business.

Sigma Is About Someone Fighting For His Identity: Sanjay

Tamil Nadu CM Vijay's son Jason Sanjay is making his directorial debut with Sigma, starring Sundeep Kishan as the lead. The bilingual film is scheduled for release on October 2nd with Mythri Movie Distributors releasing it in Coastal Andhra and Nizam and NVR Cinema in Ceded.

Sanjay has deliberately kept the plot under wraps, preferring to let audiences discover the film in theatres. "This is my first film, and I don't want to reveal too many details about it right now. It has interesting elements such as a heist, adventure and a treasure hunt. Despite all that, it is a very relatable and commercial film. The film Sigma is about someone fighting for his own identity." After completing the script, Sanjay wanted to ensure that the story would connect with audiences beyond one language. "When I finished writing the script, one thing I wanted to make sure of was that it should relate to audiences across all languages. I consciously wanted to make it as a bilingual." While he is currently focused on Sigma, Sanjay revealed that acting could be something he considers in the



future. "I felt very happy when my father became a CM. Right now, I am waiting for the release of Sigma. After the release, I may consider acting."

Sundeep Kishan believes the film represents a major milestone for Sanjay and takes pride in being part of his directorial debut. "Sigma is 200% Sanjay's film. He gave me

a bound script and made exactly that film. He never took advantage of the advantages he had. He worked extremely hard and completed the movie within the time frame and within the budget." Sundeep further said that Telugu cinema has always remained his primary market despite his work in Tamil. "Telugu is always my

prime market. I am happy with all the love from Tamil audiences. Sanjay will become an important person in the industry, and I am happy that his first movie is with me." Calling Sanjay's vision a refreshing one, Sundeep added, "He made a Gen Z, jolly film. He never felt the pressure and made a good and beautiful film."

Release Pressures: Director Away From Home For 40 Days

The hype of The Paradise is touching the roofs as the release date draws closer. The team is racing against the time to deliver the content. At one point, the team planned to postpone the film for a week but they did not have the room due to various reasons.

Director Srikanth reportedly did not go home for about 40 days and is working on the Edit, Music, and other works. Only a few days ago, he flew to Chennai to work with Music Director Anirudh. In a recent interview, Srikanth announced



that the film will be Anirudh's Best work till date and so, a lot is expected from the young music director.

He is coordinating with the Direction Department for the rest of the works. The team has taken over all the Editing, DI, and Dubbing Suites at the Saradhi Studios for the last one week. The Direction Department is running pillar to post to finish the work. Nani is also coordinating the work and to help the director. Hopefully all their hard work pays off and they deliver a blockbuster!

Secret Solider Gets A Open Battleground

Secret Soldier is an upcoming Telugu spy-action thriller scheduled to release in theaters. The film is creating a buzz in film circles after the team announced that it is one of three films sent to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Ahead of the film's release on Friday, the team will be holding special premieres tomorrow. Among the new releases, the film is catching attention because of its content. Despite its sensitive concept, the audience said it might have been made in an unconventional way. If the content resonates with audiences, it could get a strong box-office reception. The film is billed as patriotic, and it's been a

while since Telugu cinema has seen patriotic films; they always work well at the box office when done well. The film's promotions are Ok, but the cast isn't very familiar. Even then, the team is expressing that the content will speak volumes, based on the premieres. The film follows Vali and Prudhvi as they get pulled into cross-border conspiracies, satellite surveillance, and a dangerous web of espionage after top-secret national defense intelligence leaks. Nihal Kodhaty, Surya Srinivas, Harshitha Bandlamuri, Kamal Kamaraju, and Srikanth Iyengar are a part of the film's cast. Akki Viswanadha Reddy wrote and directed the movie.



Nani & Kayadu Set The Frame On Fire



Natural Star Nani and director Srikanth Odela's much-awaited film The Paradise is creating strong buzz with its interesting posters and glimpses. The film has already shown its intense world and Nani's mass look. The latest poster now introduces the romantic side of the story. The new poster features Nani and Kayadu Lohar in an unusual and striking pose. Both are seen lighting cigarettes together, making the frame look intense and stylish. Nani appears in a rugged look with injuries on his face, adding to the raw setting of the film. Kayadu Lohar looks calm and simple beside him, creating a different contrast. The poster also hints at the difference between their characters, with Kayadu seen using a cigarette filter. The visual suggests that the relationship between Nani and Kayadu could have an important role in the story. Their chemistry is clearly visible, while the unique presentation makes their romantic track interesting. Produced by Sudhakar Cherukuri under the SLV Cinemas banner, The Paradise also stars Mohan Babu and Raghav Juyal in key roles. The film is set for a grand theatrical release on September 24.

Fauzi Pushing From Dec To Jan?

The release plans for Prabhas' Fauzi are once again becoming a hot topic in industry circles. While the movie was earlier expected to hit theaters on December 3, fresh reports suggest that the release could be pushed to a later date. According to ongoing buzz, the film still requires extensive CGI and post-production work. Although Prabhas is expected to complete his portions by November, director Hanu Raghavapudi isn't willing to rush the final output. He is focusing on quality and wants more time.

As a result, the makers are exploring alternative release options. The latest date being discussed is January 26, 2027, coinciding with Republic Day. Since Fauzi is set in the pre-Independence era, many feel that a Republic Day release could be ideal. A January 26 arrival would also provide a strong holiday advantage and potentially a longer theatrical run. However, several questions remain. Industry insiders are keen to see how OTT agreements, distribution plans, and other



deals will be adjusted if the release date changes.

For now, there is no official confirmation from the makers. But if the film does move to Republic Day, many believe it could be one of the best possible windows. However, fans will be disappointed as Prabhas' other film, Spirit, which is up for release in March, will be postponed as well.