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Air India Kanishka Bombing Probe Could End After 41 Years, Families Furious

New Delhi: The development has stunned families who have spent more than four decades seeking answers over the bombing that killed 329 people, including 268 Canadian citizens. A fresh controversy has erupted around the Air India Flight 182 Kanishka bombing, with victims' families raising the alarm over what they describe as a possible decision by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to scale back its investigation into the 1985 terror attack and potentially place the case in an "inactive" status.

Exclusively accessed details of a meeting that was organised with victim families at the request of RCMP top brass earlier this month in which the decision was conveyed.

The development has stunned families who have spent more than four decades seeking answers over the bombing that killed 329 people, including 268 Canadian citizens. Canadian authorities continue to describe the attack as the deadliest terrorist attack in the country's history. The latest warning comes from Sanjay Lazar, a family member of victims and chairman of the Kanishka Foundation, who has written to Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney strongly opposing any move to wind down the investigation in a powerful emotional letter accessed.

Lazar says he lost his father, mother and baby sister in the June 23, 1985 tragedy and has spent decades pursuing justice. In his September 16 letter, he describes being deeply shocked after a September 12 meeting in Toronto at which families were briefed on the future of the investigation.

The letter says families were told of a possible reduction in the task force and a move towards making the case inactive. For the families, that possibility has reopened some of the deepest wounds of a tragedy that has never really left them.

A Bombing That Changed Canada Forever

Air India Flight 182 was flying from Montreal towards London on June 23, 1985, when a bomb exploded over the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Ireland.

All 329 people aboard were killed. The victims included Canadians, Indians and citizens of other countries, with the overwhelming majority being Canadian citizens. The attack remains Canada's deadliest act of terrorism.

At almost the same time, another bomb connected to the same conspiracy exploded at Tokyo's Narita airport, killing two baggage handlers. The two incidents became part of a sprawling international investigation.

The scale of the Air India attack was enormous. It was not only a devastating loss of life but also an attack that exposed serious shortcomings in Canada's intelligence, security and law-enforcement systems.

The later public inquiry led by former Supreme Court Justice John Major examined what went wrong before and after the bombing. Canada's government has acknowledged that the inquiry identified major failures in the country's security and intelligence response.

Now, After 41 Years, A New Shock

The families' latest concern is not about what happened in 1985. It is about what happens now.

According to Lazar's letter, the RCMP indicated at the Toronto meeting that it was considering reducing the size of the Air India task force and effectively moving the investigation into inactive status.

The families say this came as a profound shock. Lazar describes the meeting as the first family briefing in 20 years since the criminal trial. He says relatives were distressed by what they heard, with emotions running high during the meeting.

The issue becomes particularly sensitive because the RCMP itself has previously described the Air India investigation as one of the largest and most complex investigations in Canadian history.

"Heartfelt Gratitude": PM Modi's Thank You Note For Birthday Wishes

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the overwhelming wishes, affection and blessings he received from people across the country and beyond on the occasion of his birthday. In a message shared on social media, the Prime Minister said every word of warmth had deeply touched him and given him renewed strength to continue serving the people of India. "My heartfelt gratitude for the wishes, affection and blessings that have poured in from all across. Every word of warmth is deeply cherished and gives me renewed strength to serve our people," Prime Minister Modi posted.

The Prime Minister also appreciated the efforts of countless citizens who participated in Seva activities throughout the day. He underlined that acts of selfless service form an integral part of the nation's spirit and contribute to strengthening the social fabric.

Highlighting the larger national goal, PM Modi urged citizens to work together in the journey towards a developed India. "Let us together continue to build a Viksit Bharat," he said, reiterating the vision of a prosperous, inclusive and self-reliant nation by 2047. The message comes at a time when birthday celebrations of the Prime Minister are increasingly marked by large-scale voluntary initiatives rather than formal events. Across states, volunteers organised blood donation camps, cleanliness drives, tree plantation programmes, free medical check-ups and distribution of essential items to the needy. Many such activities were coordinated by local organisations, youth groups and party workers as a way of expressing solidarity with the Prime Minister's call for service.

Political leaders, industrialists, artists and ordinary citizens from different walks of life extended greetings through messages and posts. Several state governments and public institutions also organised special programmes focusing on public welfare.

Observers noted that the Prime Minister's emphasis on Seva and the shared goal of Viksit Bharat reflects a consistent theme in his public communication-linking personal milestones with collective national aspirations. By acknowledging both the emotional support he received and the practical service rendered by citizens, PM Modi sought to reinforce the idea that nation-building is a continuous and participatory process.

Anitha Slams YSRCP Over DSC Irregularity Claims

From Our Staff Reporter
Prakasam, September 17: Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha strongly criticised the YSRCP over its allegations regarding the District Selection Committee (DSC) recruitment process. Speaking to the media on Thursday, she said it had been a year since the DSC was conducted and questioned the propriety of YSRCP leaders now alleging irregularities in the process. She criticised former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, alleging that he had made a habit of holding press conferences once a month and making various statements before leaving. She said people were observing the facts and that even those who secured jobs were fully aware of the circumstances. Anitha said the people would give their verdict on the performance of the alliance government through their votes in the upcoming local body elections.

Repeating the Same Lie 100 Times Is Jagan's Nature: Rajesh

TDP spokesperson Appasani Rajesh criticised the YSRCP, alleging that it was making accusations over the DSC to divert public attention from the alleged APPSC scam. He questioned why Jagan was silent on the APPSC issue and asked why the YSRCP had not responded to Minister Nara Lokesh's challenge regarding the DSC. Rajesh alleged that Jagan repeatedly made false claims about the DSC and accused him of making a different allegation every day. He criticised Jagan, alleging that he had failed to conduct even a single DSC during his five-year tenure. Rajesh claimed that courts had dismissed 320 cases filed by YSRCP leaders regarding the DSC. He further alleged that Jagan had undermined the APPSC and claimed that candidates who were supposed to be selected through the commission were instead selected by the then government. Rajesh said candidates from weaker sections had secured a large number of jobs under the sports quota and accused Jagan of making remarks that insulted weaker sections. Rajesh asserted that the DSC appointments were conducted in a highly transparent manner. He also alleged that Jagan had deceived the youth by promising to provide 2.30 lakh jobs and kept them waiting with a "jobless calendar" during his five-year tenure.

El Niño Impact Raises Power Demand in AP: Gottipati

Amaravati, September 17: Andhra Pradesh Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar said the electricity sector was facing a significant impact from El Niño. Speaking to the media on Thursday, he said summer-like temperatures had pushed up electricity demand by an additional 50 million units.

He said power demand stood at 240 million units during the same period last year, but had increased to 290 million units this year. All power generation companies were operating at full capacity, he said, adding that coal stocks sufficient for 15 days had been maintained at thermal power stations. The Minister said technical issues were being addressed as they arose. He added that hydropower generation had come to a complete halt due to the lack of rainfall.

Minister Gottipati said Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had directed officials to ensure uninterrupted power supply to the public, agriculture and industries. He said electricity demand had increased by around 20 per cent compared to last year. Power was being purchased from the open market depending on demand, he added.

The Minister said the impact of El Niño was being felt across all states and that Andhra Pradesh's situation was relatively better compared to other states. He said the government was considering generating solar power during the day, storing it in batteries and using it during peak hours. He said the government would assess future electricity demand and enhance generation capacity accordingly. Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar said the target was to work towards generating 5,500 MW of power.

Irrigation Project Inauguration Festivities to Be Held Over Next Three Years: Nimmala

From Our Staff Reporter
Eluru, September 17: Andhra Pradesh Water Resources Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu said Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had set a target to complete the works on the ECRF dam by March 2027. On Thursday, the Minister inspected the works of the Polavaram project, described as the lifeline of Andhra Pradesh, at the project site. He reviewed the progress of the ECRF dam works and enquired with project officials about the status of various works. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Nimmala said the right connectivity works would be completed by the end of this month, while the left connectivity works were expected to be completed by November.

He said works to connect the right and left banks were being taken up at a cost of Rs.536 crore. He recalled that 10,491 acres had been acquired since June 2024 and said Rs.2,250 crore had been paid as compensation to displaced families. He alleged that not even an acre of land had been acquired during the previous five-year YSRCP government and that no compensation had been paid to project oustees. He further alleged that the Rs.3,850 crore reimbursement received from the Centre had been diverted instead of being spent on the project. The Minister criticised YSRCP leaders, alleging that the irrigation sector had been damaged during the

previous five years, causing serious losses to farmers. Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu announced that a series of irrigation project inauguration celebrations would be held over the next three years. He said that, as promised, the alliance government had completed the Handri-Neeva, Veligonda and Polavaram Left Canal projects, released water and fulfilled a decades-old dream. He said Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu had set a target of completing 36 projects over the next three years by spending Rs.35,000 crore.

Government Schools to Be Modernised: Minister Narayana

From Our Staff Reporter
Nellore, September 17: Andhra Pradesh Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister and Narayana Educational Institutions chairman Ponguru Narayana participated in the 'Yuvatha Bhavitha Ku Bharosa' programme held at KAC Government Junior College in the district. He interacted with college students for two hours, enquired about their problems and resolved several issues on the spot as far as possible. Speaking later, the Minister said the KAC Government Junior College building was old and assured that steps would be taken to renovate it. He promised to provide clean drinking water under the NTR Sujala scheme and establish sports courts within a month for the students.

He also assured that classrooms and toilets would be modernised.

Minister Narayana said a large number of students were studying at KAC College and promised to distribute free bicycles to them through Narayana Educational Institutions. He said 40 computers would be provided to the students within 15 days. In addition, 14 digital boards and dining halls would be established. The Minister said government schools were being modernised with the support of friends and well-wishers. He added that 23 schools under the Municipal Corporation limits would soon be developed to international standards.

AP Liquor Transport Scam: Karumuri Produced in Vijayawada Court on PT Warrant

Vijayawada, September 17: SIT officials produced YSRCP leader and former Minister Karumuri Venkata Nageswara Rao before the Vijayawada ACB Court in connection with the alleged AP liquor transport scam. He was brought to Vijayawada from Chanchalguda Jail on a Prisoner Transit (PT) warrant. The court subsequently extended his judicial remand until September 25. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had registered a case over alleged irregularities and money laundering in liquor transportation tenders conducted through the Andhra Pradesh State Beverages Corporation Limited (APSBCL) during the previous YSRCP government. As per the prescribed rules, Rs.13 per kilometre was to be paid for transportation. However, the ED reportedly found that the tender conditions were altered and payments were increased to as much as Rs.35 per kilometre, allegedly causing a loss of around Rs.195.33 crore to the government exchequer. The ED reportedly found that during Karumuri's tenure as Civil Supplies Minister, he allegedly used his position to facilitate liquor transportation subcontracts for his son and his business associates.

EDITORIAL

BRICS Must Move Beyond Declarations

At a time when geopolitical and political divisions and conflicts are increasing across the world, India hosted the BRICS Summit very effectively. There are several internal differences among the countries in this grouping. It is noteworthy that among the two major wars currently underway, one of the countries involved in BRICS is a victim while another is the country responsible for the war. Despite this, Prime Minister Modi, with his distinctive personal diplomatic style, managed to bridge these differences and successfully conduct the summit. Although member countries held differing views on the situation in West Asia, they reached a consensus on exercising restraint, protecting civilians, respecting the sovereignty of nations, prioritising diplomatic solutions and safeguarding nuclear security. The fact that 11 member countries and 10 partner countries signed a joint declaration can be considered a diplomatic achievement. Through the declaration, BRICS once again made clear its objective of playing a greater role in reforming the global governance system and strengthening the voice of the Global South. BRICS also resolved to further enhance mutual cooperation in areas such as the economy, trade and technological development. However, the joint declaration did not condemn the wars affecting the global economy strongly enough, particularly those disrupting the free movement of oil, natural gas, commodities and other goods through normal maritime routes to countries dependent on such supplies in the eastern regions. One reason for this is that Russia is one of the key members of BRICS. Another factor is that Russian President Putin attended the BRICS Summit for the first time since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine in 2022. It can also be said that India has not yet made sufficient progress in improving its bilateral relations with China. A fundamental difference continues to exist between the two countries over whether priority should be given to developing relations with China across all sectors or to maintaining peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Although the summit created some international opportunities in the field of trade, India could not pay sufficient attention to reducing its trade deficit with BRICS countries. By focusing primarily on hosting the summit, some opportunities were missed. However, the key question is whether BRICS, comprising countries with diverse views and interests, can convert its collective economic and political strength into strategic capability. The crucial issue is whether this can be achieved without forcing all member countries to adopt identical political positions. It is now necessary to translate into action ideas such as promoting the use of local currencies in international payments, financial assistance for development, investment platforms, insurance mechanisms and financial security systems. BRICS countries have opportunities to cooperate in areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), semiconductors, critical minerals, cybersecurity, digital public infrastructure (DPI) and the formulation of technological standards. However, this cooperation should not result in the creation of competing technological sectors or systems. A similar approach should be adopted in the areas of health, food and energy security. The grouping has the capacity to establish strong monitoring mechanisms, medical supply chains, agricultural cooperation and policies to mitigate the impact of sudden fluctuations in commodity and energy prices. These are areas that can provide direct benefits to citizens. There is another important diplomatic responsibility here as well.

With China, India and Russia together forming a grouping within this platform, there is growing dissatisfaction that decision-making power in the present global system remains largely dominated by Western countries. In particular, there is resentment over what is seen as President Trump's unilateral and indiscriminate imposition of tariffs and sanctions in an attempt to dominate the global system. However, BRICS cannot become an effective institution if its sole objective is to oppose Western countries. Even as the world becomes increasingly multipolar, BRICS can enhance its influence only by demonstrating that a multipolar world can also be more stable, representative and capable of resolving problems. BRICS must now move beyond declarations and convert the collective strength and capabilities of the Global South into tangible outcomes. If it succeeds in doing so, it can not only play a meaningful role in reshaping the global governance system but also further strengthen the world's confidence in BRICS.

Trump, Suprisingly, Is Right This Time About Both China And AI

For me, admittedly a layman but someone who has been closely following the progress of AI for some years, I find myself broadly agreeing with President Donald Trump on one part of the AI debate, even though I have been dismayed by many of his actions on the global stage since his return to power. My agreement comes with a caveat, which I will come to in a bit. Indeed, in my living memory, few technological developments have raised a more frightening question than the future of artificial intelligence. The debate has now gripped America. The tech people and policymakers taking decisions today could determine whether AI becomes one of humanity's greatest advances or a technology whose consequences we fail to control.

Trump says he is not worried that AI could eventually kill humanity. He is worried that his country could lose the AI race to China, which, according to him, is only a year behind America. And when he says, "Whoever wins AI, wins," he is not entirely wrong.

AI is already becoming an economic and strategic technology, capable of transforming everything from scientific research and medicine to defence and cyber warfare. But in my view, there is a problem with the way the argument is being covered by the media. The choice cannot be between allowing AI development to continue at full speed or allowing China to overtake America.

There could be a third option. We should slow down, as suggested by Anthropic chief executive Dario Amodei, the most dangerous forms of AI development, and make China slow down with all of us.

Some of the biggest names in the AI industry have now backed Amodei's call for a slower pace of development. OpenAI chief Sam Altman has said progress should be rapid but slower, while Google's Demis Hassabis and Elon Musk have also backed the idea of putting greater emphasis on safety. This is no longer simply an argument being made by AI safety campaigners outside the industry. It is increasingly coming from people inside the companies building the most powerful systems.

We Have Been Here Before

We should take the latest warnings seriously because they have come from inside the AI industry. One of them came from Evan Hubinger, an AI safety researcher who worked at Anthropic. He has put the probability of AI eventually killing all humans within the next decade at more than 10 per cent. Another former Anthropic and OpenAI researcher, Jacob Coxon, has said that people working on these systems are "genuinely frightened" about the future of humanity. Coxon went further. He resigned from Anthropic earlier this month, saying the industry was racing towards self-improving AI without adequate safeguards. His warning helped intensify a debate that had been largely confined to researchers and technology insiders.

Then came Amodei's intervention. He has called for frontier AI companies to allow independent safety evaluators access to their systems, for leading companies in democratic countries to establish common safety standards, and for governments to work together internationally. And now he has gone a step further. Speaking in San Francisco at Salesforce's annual Dreamforce conference, Amodei was asked about his call to slow AI development. He acknowledged that it might be tempting for one company to "attack" its competitors, but argued that the more responsible approach was to establish standards across the industry.

"Let's make our practices better, let's recommit to transparency, let's invest more in safety," he said, arguing that the industry should then organise itself around common standards, with an international component. That is important.

Amodei is not calling for AI to be stopped. He is arguing that the industry needs to create a system in which safety advances alongside capability. And that brings us back to the nuclear age.

When nuclear weapons were developed, the US and the Soviet Union were bitter rivals. Neither trusted the other. Both believed that falling behind could be fatal. Yet, eventually, the world realised that nuclear weapons were too dangerous to be governed entirely by the logic of competition. Surely we know that the result was not an end to the nuclear arms race. Far from it.

But global powers signed treaties, set up inspections and safeguards, and created institutions designed to reduce the chances of a catastrophe that could have consumed humanity. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, nuclear test-ban arrangements, and other agreements are no doubt imperfect. They are frequently violated and contested. But they reflected one fundamental point: there are some technologies whose consequences are too large for individual countries to manage alone.

Known vs Unknown

Advanced AI may eventually belong in that category. There is, of course, a crucial difference. We do not yet know whether advanced AI really can become an existential threat, do we? The warnings are about what increasingly capable systems might become, not what today's AI systems are capable of doing. I hope that distinction is appreciated. I do not think anyone would argue that AI is already enormously useful. It can accelerate scientific research and tremendously improve medical diagnosis. It can help students learn, make businesses more productive and allow individuals to accomplish tasks that previously required entire teams. The question is not whether we should have AI. It is whether we should allow the most powerful forms of AI to develop faster than our ability to understand, test and control them. And that question is now producing some extraordinary political alliances.

The Most Unlikely Alliance

There appears to be bipartisan support for the call to put regulations around AI. Imagine Bernie Sanders on the Left and Steve Bannon on the Right sharing a stage and agreeing on anything. Yet that is exactly what happened on Tuesday at a "Pro-Human" AI gathering in Washington. Sanders, the progressive senator from Vermont, and Bannon, one of the most influential figures on the American right, have found themselves on broadly the same side of the AI debate Bannon himself acknowledged the absurdity of the moment.

"I don't think you could find any two harder partisans than Bernie Sanders on the left and Steve Bannon on the right," he said. "We're trying to rise above partisanship, and we have to because this is a unique [moment]." Then he put it in even more dramatic terms. "This is a hinge in history," Bannon said. "They say this is a Cold War moment. This is like the nuclear age." It is tempting to dismiss this as political theatre. But the fact that such an unlikely coalition has emerged is itself significant. Sanders and Bannon disagree on an enormous range of issues.

US Has Institutionally Weaponised India's Russia Oil Dependence. Can New Delhi Cope?

The US House of Representatives has passed the Lindsey O Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026. The 262-159 vote followed the Senate's 86-11 approval in August. The bill is now with President Donald Trump. For India, the significance lies less in the headline figure of a possible 100% tariff than in the mechanism Congress has created. The legislation can connect India's Russian energy purchases to its access to the American market over a five-year period.

My earlier analysis focused on India's opportunity to influence the legislation before Congress completed its work. That phase has now ended. The question is how India manages a relationship in which economic pressure over Russia has moved from executive action into legislation.

Presidential Action to Statutory Authority

he Trump administration had already demonstrated that Russian oil could become an issue in the US-India relationship. Presidential tariff measures could be changed through executive action and negotiated between governments.

The Graham Act establishes a different framework. Section 113 authorises duties of up to 100% on goods imported from countries meeting specified conditions relating to Russian crude, natural gas, or sanctions evasion. The legislation also provides for reassessments every 180 days based on the preceding 12 months of trade data. That gives the issue a recurring institutional dimension. India's position can thus be reassessed periodically. The five-year sunset provision extends the framework beyond the immediate circumstances surrounding its passage. This is the significant change. ***India's Exposure***

The sponsors have identified China and India among the largest purchasers of Russian crude. Congressional material accompanying the legislation has also identified Slovakia, Hungary, and Azerbaijan among the leading crude purchasers.

India's position has become particularly important because Russian crude became more significant in 2026 as the Iran conflict disrupted energy supplies from the Middle East. In July, Russian crude accounted for 50.83% of India's oil imports, equivalent to 2.47 million barrels per day. The issue thus involves two economic calculations for India: securing affordable and diversified energy supplies, and maintaining access to major export markets. The Graham Act brings these calculations into the same policy equation. There is also considerable scope for interpretation in the legislation. The Congressional Research Service has identified a drafting tension between the provision requiring tariffs within 30 days of enactment and another provision concerning new purchases made after that 30-day period. It has also noted uncertainty over the meaning of purchases that are "knowingly made". These details will make implementation important.

Washington's Statutory Lever

The Supreme Court's February decision in Learning Resources v Trump established that the International Emergency Economic Powers Act does not itself authorise the President to impose tariffs.

Congress has now supplied specific tariff authority through legislation. This matters for India because tariff pressure connected to Russian energy will have a statutory foundation. Congress has established the framework while delegating important powers to the President and the United States Trade Representative.

The legislation also leaves substantial executive discretion. Section 115 permits the President to waive duties, sanctions, or restrictions after certifying to Congress that the action is in the national interest.

India thus retains diplomatic space. The nature of that diplomacy has changed. New Delhi will need to demonstrate how favourable treatment for India serves wider American economic and strategic interests. That argument will need to cover energy security, bilateral trade, technology cooperation, defence relations, and the wider Indo-Pacific relationship.

The Data Will Become Strategic

One of the more consequential features of the Act is the 180-day reassessment mechanism. The United States Trade Representative is required to reassess the leading importers of Russian crude and natural gas using data from the preceding 12 months. Energy statistics can thus become part of foreign policy. India will need to monitor how the American government measures Russian oil purchases, defines the relevant period, and assesses changes in India's energy basket. The legislation also requires written justification and methodology for the imposition or modification of secondary tariffs. India should engage with the agencies responsible for implementation, including Treasury, Commerce, and the United States Trade Representative. It should ensure that Indian data and explanations are available before each reassessment.

This is bureaucratic statecraft with strategic consequences.

The Repricing Of The Partnership

The Graham Act also illustrates a broader change in the US-India relationship. For much of the past two decades, Washington and New Delhi progressively expanded cooperation across areas such as defence, technology, trade, and intelligence, while managing disagreements in other areas. The relationship now contains stronger links between these domains. Russia policy can influence tariffs. Tariffs can influence Indian exports. Export exposure can influence India's calculations on energy, technology, and defence procurement. Interdependence thus carries costs as well as benefits. India's strategic autonomy remains a policy choice. It also has an economic requirement: the capacity to absorb the costs generated when major partners disagree with Indian choices.

This makes diversification important. India needs a wider energy basket, broader export markets, greater refining and storage resilience, and stronger domestic capabilities in critical technologies. The objective is greater resilience within a close relationship with the United States. The US remains central to India's technology, investment, defence, and export interests. Greater resilience gives India more room to manage differences while continuing to deepen cooperation.

The Next Phase Is Implementation

The passage of the Graham Act moves the Russia issue into a new phase. India now has three immediate tasks. First, it should engage the Trump administration over the use of the waiver authority and seek a framework that recognises the breadth of the US-India relationship.

Second, it should engage the agencies responsible for implementation, particularly on the data and methodology behind the 180-day reassessments.

Third, it should accelerate measures that strengthen India's energy, export, and technological resilience.

The conceptual shift is important. India has considerable experience in managing differences with Washington through executive diplomacy. The Graham Act introduces a more institutionalised framework, with Congress establishing the authority, executive agencies implementing it, and the President retaining significant discretion over its application. The Russia question has consequently become part of the statutory architecture governing the economic relationship between India and the United States.

India's task is to operate effectively within that architecture while preserving the strategic choices that underpin its foreign policy.

How AAP's Free Power Drained Punjab Coffers, Triggered Energy Crisis

The biggest promise the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) made to Punjab in 2022 and later fulfilled is now pushing Punjab towards a dark age, as the power freebies have delivered a double whammy for the debt-ridden Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL).PSPCL data shows how the free 300-unit scheme burdened both the exchequer and the power grid. While the exchequer has been overburdened by Rs 5,500 crore to Rs 7,800 crore every year, the power grid experienced a 20.4% increase in domestic consumption, which jumped from 14,538 MU in 2020-21 to 17,510 MU in 2022-23. The state also registered an additional 16.2% increase in domestic power consumption during 2024-25, totalling 20,348 MU, which represents a 40% overall increase. The state's power subsidy bill in 2022-23 was Rs 20,000 crore. Of this, the biggest share was for free farm electricity at Rs 9,063.79 crore, Rs 8,225 crore for the 300 free unit scheme and Rs 2,910 crore for subsidised industrial power. Meanwhile, as the state braces for a possible blackout and power cuts due to shortage of coal, the opposition parties in Punjab have sharpened their attack on the Aam Aadmi Party's 300-unit free electricity scheme, arguing that the poll guarantee has overloaded an exchequer already running a budget deficit of about Rs 24,000 crore. State debt is projected to touch Rs 4.47 lakh crore by March 2027, or roughly 45% of GSDP. Punjab plans to borrow nearly Rs 40,000 crore this year and spend about Rs 42,500 crore on interest and repayment. Officials say the debt-to-GSDP ratio has eased a little since 2022; cash remains tight because power subsidy and old loans still claim a large share of revenue.

Opponents Hit Out At AAP

"The 300-unit free electricity scheme has completely crumbled because the Punjab government is in no position to pay PSPCL the subsidy against this facility. The promise itself is fake. If any consumer uses even one unit above the fixed 300 units a month, they have to pay the entire electricity bill with no relief," Shiromani Akali Dal President Sukhbir Singh Badal said. State Congress President Amarinder Singh Raja Warring said by providing free power to all domestic consumers, the AAP government was in fact overburdening taxpayers. He said that his party supports free power to the needy but "not at the cost of other consumers". "AAP was shifting the freebie burden onto the taxpayers through surcharges, stealth taxes and unexpected domestic tariff hikes. Ensuring an uninterrupted power supply means increasing generation capacity. For that, you need new power plants. Which new project has AAP installed in Punjab?" Warring asked. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal have always defended the guarantee. "300 units of free electricity per month are being provided to domestic consumers, and around 90% of households are receiving zero electricity bills. The scheme is given without bias, without discrimination. As long as AAP is in power, people will keep getting free power and 24x7 supply," Bhagwant Mann said.

Punjab Braces For Prolonged Outages

While the exchequer and the power grids were experiencing higher demand for power, the shortage of coal has prompted the state government to announce longer power cuts. The state's current power demand is about 15,900-16,000 MW. Own generation is only 4,200-4,900 MW; the rest, about 10,800-11,500 MW, is drawn from the northern grid. The state government claims it had purchased power to meet the demand, but there was a peak-hour gap of 1,500-2,000 MW, managed through cuts. Coal-linked losses add about 1,850 MW: 1,193 MW less from central thermal stations and 660-670 MW shortage because the Rajpura power plant is at half load. A blackout threat looms over Punjab based on the timeline flagged by Power Minister Tarunpreet Singh Sondh. Private thermal plants in the state have only about two days of coal left. If fresh supplies do not arrive in the next day or two, generation at these plants will stop.

Punjab Power Minister Blames Centre

Meanwhile, Punjab Power Minister Tarunpreet Sondh has blamed the Union Government for the power shortage in the state. "Over the past two to three days, I received numerous calls from industrial associations and farmer unions. As I explained in my press conference three days ago, some of the strain came from coal supply cuts by Coal India under the Central Government, along with a shortfall of nearly 1,000 MW from our entitled share in the central power pool. Power was also scarce in the open private market, even though we had kept Rs 2,000 crore reserved to buy electricity if needed," Sondh said while informing that the "state has already stocked sufficient coal from its own Pachhwara mines for the state's thermal units. Even then, unexpected technical faults occurred at the Talwandi Sabo and NPL Rajpura thermal plants." Sondh, while sharing the previous year's power consumption data, said a delayed monsoon was also responsible for the increased power demand in the state. "A remarkable trend was observed this September. In previous years, power demand during September typically hovered around 13,100 MW. This year, peak demand surged to 16,600 MW - an unprecedented rise of 3,500 MW in a single month. Whether one attributes it to El Nino or a delayed monsoon, this is a historic and remarkable milestone. Despite that sudden extra load of 3,500 MW, the PSPCL department navigated the challenge and overcame it. That is a major achievement for the Punjab Government," he said.It is worth mentioning that the state's thermal plants have a combined generation capacity of 5,680 MW. Of this, three government-owned plants account for 2,300 MW, while two private plants can produce 3,380 MW. If the private plants shut down, the state government will be compelled to buy more power from the central pool. Erratic power supply doesn't only affect domestic consumers. Industrialists have threatened to shut their units and shift business elsewhere. They also say that despite paying higher power tariffs compared to neighbouring states, unscheduled power cuts have hit production hard. "Unscheduled power cuts range between three and 12 hours. Our night shifts have been hit. We have deferred the night shifts as there is no power. Our raw material gets damaged and labour sits idle," Pranay Kapoor, a Mohali-based industrialist, said.

NDTV Impact: Maharashtra Minister Calls 2,800% Pharma Profits 'Blunder', Orders Probe

Taking note of NDTV reports on pricing patterns of medical devices sold in retail and trade markets, and unchecked profiteering, the Maharashtra government has promised a high-level probe.Calling up to 2800% profit margins on common medical devices "a blunder", Maharashtra Revenue Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule has assured a detailed investigation. "This is not just negligence. This is a blunder. We will take NDTV campaign forward and initiate a major investigation," the Minister told NDTV. The minister added that such a huge margin between the cost and price to patients is "a massive betrayal". "This is playing with the lives of patients."He also promised that he will raise this issue at the next Cabinet meet of the state government and also take it up with the Central government. NDTV had reported on Wednesday the findings of an extensive market survey conducted by the Maharashtra State Price Monitoring Resource Unit (MSPMRU) under the state Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) to assess pricing patterns of medical devices sold in retail and trade markets. The findings point to what officials describe as unchecked trade-level profiteering. The survey found significant disparities between procurement costs and printed maximum retail prices (MRPs) across several categories of medical devices used in inpatient departments (IPDs).The Maharashtra survey examined IV sets, syringes, nebuliser oxygen mask, and miscellaneous devices and found mark-ups of up to 29 times the procurement cost on essential inpatient medical devices. For example, The 'Medifusion IV set' by Mediplus Haryana had a purchase price of Rs 11.05 and an MRP of Rs 325 -- adding up to profits to the tune of 2,841 per cent. Another manufacturer, Lyvofusion, showed margins of 2,091 per cent.A standard 10 ml syringe manufactured by Lifelong Meditech in Delhi was being sold for Rs 57.2 against a purchase price of Rs 6.75. An adult nebuliser mask kit manufactured by Vinjoh Healthcare is priced at Rs 45 but was sold to patients for Rs 652.Defining the price hike as "irrational and unjustified", Maharashtra FDA Commissioner Tukaram Mundhe has urged the Centre to review the pricing of commonly used hospital consumables. Mundhe has written to the National Pharma Pricing Authority under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, asking for intervention. While pharma or any other industry will not work to incur losses, he said there needs to be transparency. "A trade margin of 2800 per cent is by any terms not acceptable, either as a consumer or as a hospital or as a regulator," Mundhe told NDTV.

2 Terrorists Killed In Encounter In J&K's Udhampur, Search Ops On

At least two terrorists have been gunned down by the joint forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district. Officials said that after suspicious movement was reported from Majalta of Udhampur district on Wednesday evening, joint forces launched a cordon and search operation, following which contact (Exchange of Gunfire) was established with the terrorists. "During the ensuing gunfight, two terrorists have been killed. The operation is still going on in the area. The exact identity of the slain terrorists is being ascertained," the officials said. The operation was initially started by J&K Police and the special Para troopers of the Army. Reinforcements were rushed to the area immediately after the encounter started there. A joint team of the Indian Army, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Jammu and Kashmir Police was conducting searches in the area. The operation comes amid heightened security activity in the Pir Panjal region following the recent busting of an alleged overground worker (OGW) network linked to the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in Rajouri. On September 15, Rajouri Police arrested three people in connection with an alleged terror module operating in the Pir Panjal region. The accused were identified as Zakir Hussain, Mohd Azam, and Mohd Mushtaq.Security forces have intensified searches using sniffer dogs and aerial surveillance to sanitize the area and track any remaining terrorists. High alert, vehicle checking, and tight cordons remain in place across strategic routes in the Udhampur-Reasi range. The hilly areas of Udhampur, Reasi, Ramban, Kathua, Poonch and Rajouri districts have been under special focus of the security forces because of the reported movements of hardcore Pakistani terrorists in these inaccessible areas. While these anti-terrorist operations have been continuing for more than six months, there have been successes for the security forces, as a few top terrorists were neutralised in these operations. The bigger advantage of these operations is that the terrorists are kept constantly on the run without being able to get a foothold to plan and carry out attacks against the security forces, the Army, and civilians.

Supreme Court's Strong Remarks Against Tamil Nadu's Opposition To Hindi

New *Delhi:* *The Supreme Court has rejected the Tamil Nadu government's petition to recall an interim order on finding land for building Navodaya Vidyalayas in every district in the state. The matter is linked to Tamil Nadu's opposition to the Hindi language, which would be taught in the proposed Navodaya schools. The court told the state government to find land in three months. There is a need for a change in mindset, the Supreme Court told the Tamil Nadu government. "Hindi cannot be kept out of the state's soil," it said. The state should hold talks with the Centre on the language issue in the spirit of cooperative federalism. The Tamil Nadu government alleged setting up Navodaya schools across the state was an attempt to impose the Hindi language and make it predominant over Tamil. The Supreme Court's observations came during the hearing of the petition by Tamil Nadu challenging the Madras High Court's order to set up Navodaya schools in each district. The top court declined to recall its interim order to identify land in each district to build the schools. Justice BV Nagarathna said Navodaya schools are not against the state's policy. She said Tamil Nadu must hold talks with the Centre on the language issue. Senior lawyer Jaideep Gupta, who appeared for Tamil Nadu, said the Navodaya policy goes against the state's language policy and may make Hindi predominant over Tamil. Justice Nagarathna pointed out Tamil Nadu cannot simply refuse to accept a central government policy.The state government, however, argued that the policy was optional and courts cannot force a state to implement a government policy while at the same time the Supreme Court highlighted the need for dialogue and cooperative federalism. The next hearing is on December 14. Tamil Nadu is the only state without a single Navodaya school. Its opposition is rooted in the apprehension that these schools were an attempt to impose the Hindi language.*

Raids At Premises Linked To Haryana Ex-Minister Gopal Kanda In Rs 248-Crore 'Fraud' Case

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday raided the residence and farmhouse of former Haryana minister Gopal Kanda in Gurugram as part of a money laundering investigation linked to an alleged real estate fraud worth Rs 248 crore. The searches were linked to a case against realty company Vatika Limited, which allegedly induced investors in commercial projects on assurances of timely possession, assured returns, lease rentals and execution of sale deeds. The four projects under investigation involved the collection of approximately Rs 248.46 crore from 661 investors, without handing over possession or executing the promised sale deeds to date. Based on the financial trail and suspected diversion of home buyers' funds, the probe agency searched the home, farmhouse and office of Kanda in Gurugram. It is suspected that diverted funds were subsequently transferred to various companies linked to Gopal Kanda, officials said. Last month, the ED had searched seven residential and business premises of Vatika Limited in the Delhi-NCR region and seized three high-end luxury vehicles and jewellery and froze bank accounts/ securities worth nearly Rs 33 crore. The ED's Gurugram Zonal Office conducted search operations on August 25 against the company and its officials in a money laundering matter linked to alleged fraudulent inducement, non-delivery of residential plots, and other related offences. The ED had earlier recorded an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) under the PMLA, 2002, against Vatika Limited, its promoter-directors, namely Anil Bhalla, Gautam Bhalla and Gaurav Bhalla, and others. The probe so far has revealed a common pattern in transactions relating to the projects "Vatika India Next" and "Vatika India Next-2", wherein substantial amounts were received upfront from complainants towards the allotment and sale of residential plots. Still, a significant portion of the promised plots was not delivered even after multiple deadlines lapsed, the ED said. Against Rs 260.30 crore received from the victim entities between 2010 and 2012, plots worth approximately Rs 120 crore were delivered. However, the remaining plots were not delivered even after 14 years, despite several attempts by the victim entities to obtain them, the probe agency said. The investigation has also revealed the involvement of various land-owning/ group entities and key persons associated with the Vatika Group. In the same project, the accused also sold 14 plots to third parties without taking due consent from the victim company.

Rs 92 Crore via 1,000 Debit Cards: US Christian Group Charged With Illegal Funding, Link To 'Extremism'

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case against US-based Christian evangelist organisation The Timothy Initiative (TTI) and six local persons for allegedly withdrawing foreign funds worth about Rs 92.55 crore in cash from ATMs across India, using debit cards issued by an American bank, without even being registered under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA). These funds were allegedly used for "training, preaching and brainwashing of poor people leading to left-wing extremism", as per the first information report (FIR). The CBI registered the FIR on August 27, naming Jonathan S Rajan, Micah Mark, Ajit Verghese Mathai, Bablu Kurmi, Supreme Joy, Varghese Chacko, TTI, and other as-yet-unknown persons as accused. The debit cards were issued by Truist Bank in the United States, through which $99,95,240 was withdrawn from November 2025 to April 2026, as per the CBI. These transactions span Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, and Assam, besides other states.

The TTI, which lists "a church in every village, everywhere" as its goal, has not yet reacted. Nor have the other accused and the bank.

How 'Scam' Came To Light

Officials from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) intercepted Micah Mark at Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru on April 18, apparently on his tail for a while. They found him in possession of 24 foreign debit cards of Truist Bank, many "printed only in the name of Santosh Kumar". This name was used allegedly on Mathai's instructions "to avoid suspicion". The ED noted in its letter to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) that Santosh Kumar is "a very generic name in India". The FIR says Mark made multiple such foreign trips and returned with debit cards. He is described as a key person in the financial operations of TTI in India."Over 1,000 such debit cards have been distributed in India over the past few years," the FIR says.

ED officials seized Rs 37 lakh in cash from Mathai's premises in Bengaluru that had allegedly been withdrawn using the foreign debit cards.

Who Did What

The FIR also sets out the roles of the other accused, among whom Rajan is described as the "overall Operation In-charge" of the TTI in India. He is the one who allegedly ensured the ATM withdrawals were used for the activities of TTI across India.

The ED letter to MHA names Mathai as the "overall Finance Head of the India operations of TTI, USA, through various front/shell entities like Lead LLP and Crosswise LLP, having registered office in Bangalore". It states that the foreign debit cards were distributed "under his direct supervision".

Chacko, Joy and Kurmi are described in the FIR as "field-level functionaries". It says they withdrew the funds and used for TTI activities.

The ED letter says the cash withdrawn "squarely falls within the definition of 'foreign contribution' under section 2(1)(h) of the FCRA, 2010". Thus, TTI qualifies as a "foreign source". According to the documents, Rajan, Mark and Mathai are based in Bengaluru, Joy in Mysuru, Kurmi in Goalpara, Assam, and Chacko in Dhamtari, Chhattisgarh. TTI is listed at a post office box in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Data Wiped During Search: ED The FIR alleges that after the searches, TTI's global portal, ttiglobal.org, "became inaccessible for India". "The data, which is maintained on cloud, as well as in the seized laptop has been deleted from the backend through remote access of the servers and laptop, which are maintained by TTI, USA," it adds. The ED's report of April 19 says that the day earlier, access to India-specific payments data was restricted. A laptop that was "fully accessible" was also found "completely wiped-out" at 13:30 hours. On accounting software QuickBooks, full access was recorded at first, but India-specific data was disabled within hours. The ED searched the premises of the accused on April 18 and 19 under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) and the Income Tax Act. On June 4, ED deputy director Sohrab Singh Chauhan wrote to the joint secretary of the MHA's FCRA wing and sought "appropriate action including registration of FIR". By June, the MHA entrusted the case to the CBI, which eventually registered the FIR.

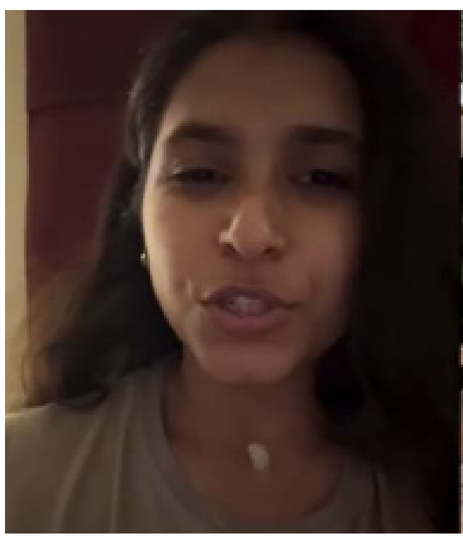
2 Navies, 2 Ways Of Doing Business At Sea - Beyond India-Pak Ship Collision

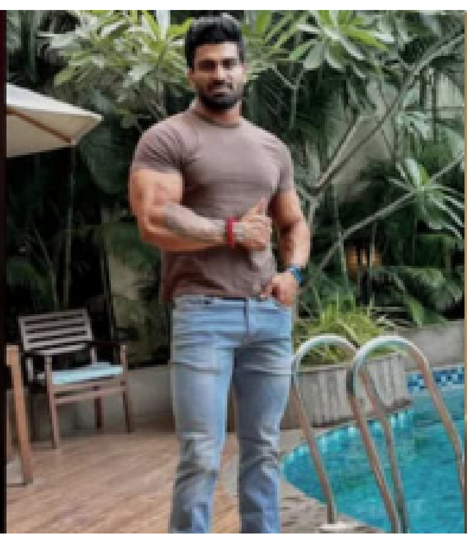
New Delhi: Every time Indian and Pakistani warships end up close enough to touch, the story that follows tends to get told as one about rivalry - two militaries, two flags, another round in a decades-old contest. That framing isn't wrong, exactly, but it skips past a more useful question: What does a navy actually owe the sea and the people on it, separate from who it happens to be facing that day?

A warship's job doesn't stop at being combat-ready. It also has to navigate safely, keep its manoeuvres predictable, honour whatever confidence-building arrangements its country has signed onto, and be willing to help a stranger in trouble regardless of the flag they sail under. Judged against that fuller checklist rather than just the headline of 'collision', the comparison between how India's and Pakistan's navies have behaved in the same waters starts to look like a story which is less about rivalry and more about professionalism. Start with the precedent everyone keeps returning to: the 2011 encounter between INS Godavari and PNS Babur in the Gulf of Aden. India's account was that Babur closed dangerously on Godavari and broke navigational safety rules, along with Article 10 of the 1991 bilateral agreement. Pakistan's account was different. It maintained that Godavari had interfered with a Pakistani humanitarian operation involving the hijacked MV Suez, and that the dangerous manoeuvring ran the other way. The reason Article 10 exists is worth restating. The rule requiring naval vessels and submarines to keep a minimum distance of three nautical miles isn't about affection between the two navies. It assumes the opposite. It assumes India and Pakistan will keep disagreeing strategically, and it creates a rule that reduces the odds of an accident. Distance buys time - to identify what the other ship is doing, to radio a warning, to correct course before anything touches. Close the distance suddenly and unexpectedly, and that time disappears, which can be genuinely dangerous between two states that both carry nuclear weapons. It would be easy to turn one bad manoeuvre into a claim that Pakistan simply doesn't respect maritime treaties. The record doesn't support that. Pakistan ratified UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) in 1997 and has folded major IMO (International Maritime Organization) instruments - SOLAS (Safety of Life At Sea)-related conventions, STCW (Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping) among them - into its own domestic law.A sweeping claim about treaty rejection is not just harder to prove; it's the wrong charge. The question is narrower and, because it's checkable against radar and radio logs, more serious: did the Pakistani vessel involved in the recent incident hold a safe speed, keep a safe distance, answer the warnings it was given, and stick to the bilateral mechanism Islamabad signed? In January 2024, INS Sumitra rescued 36 people - 19 of them Pakistanis - from two separate hijacked fishing vessels in under 36 hours, checking on their condition once the ships were secured. Seven weeks later, INS Kolkata led the operation against the hijacked bulk carrier MV Ruen, combining surveillance aircraft, warships and MARCOS commandos until all 35 pirates surrendered and the 17 crew still aboard came home unhurt - one other original crew member had already been evacuated earlier, after being injured, by INS Kochi during an earlier phase of the same standoff.

In April 2025, INS Trikand's medical team boarded a fishing vessel in the central Arabian Sea to suture and splint a badly injured Pakistani sailor and hand over medicine before the boat carried on its way. Different missions, same underlying habit: an Indian warship treating a person in danger as the priority, ahead of who that person's passport says they are.

Special Team Formed To Probe Gurugram Hit-And-Run, Top Cop Says





Gurugram: Gurugram hit-and-run accused Kalyan Bainsla and his cousin, Lavnish, who was with him in the car, were sent to two days of police remand by a city court on Wednesday, an official said.

The police had sought a two-day remand to recreate the crime scene, a request the court of Nidhi Beniwal granted.

The next hearing in the matter has been scheduled for September 18.

Gurugram Police Commissioner Sibash Kabiraj also announced the formation of a special investigation team, or SIT, to investigate the case.

The SIT will work under the leadership of ACP (Crime Against Women) Sushila Devi.

Sector-56 SHO Inspector Manoj Yadav, CIA Sohna In-charge sub inspector Vinay, and two assistant sub inspectors, Jagbir and Narender, of Sohna crime unit, will be its part.

On Sunday, Bainsla, a gym owner, grazed his car with biker Shivani Chauhan, alias Sia, on the Golf Course road, coming at speed from behind. The contact knocked Chauhan off and sent her skidding down the road in a life threatening situation.

At the hearing, Bainsla's counsel Lalit Bindal argued that his client had already been in police custody for 24 hours, during which time the scene could have been recreated.

"Allowing the remand application filed by the police today, seeking two days of police custody, the court has awarded two days of police custody, with the next hearing scheduled for September 18," Bindal said.

Bainsla and Lavnish, aged 33 and 34, were caught from Rajgarh in Rajasthan, a short distance from Gurugram, on Tuesday.

Chauhan said Bainsla's arrest was not enough and demanded strict action against him and others who were allegedly in the car at the time of the incident.Speaking to the media on Tuesday night after recording her statement in the district court, Chauhan also hit back at Bainsla's cousin, Kamal, who claimed that she was playing the victim card.

The 27-year-old said that if Bainsla secures bail in three days, it cannot be considered strict action.

"There were two other people in the car. They should be arrested as well. They must be punished. If they aren't, such incidents will continue to happen," she said.

Kamal told PTI Videos that his cousin is innocent.

"The girl is playing the victim card. Kalyan is innocent. They are influencing people to ride bikes at high speed," he said.

Chauhan took exception to the allegation that she was doing this for the sake of followers.

"I contested the municipal election from Kalkaji, Delhi, in 2022. I was the youngest candidate. Everyone in Delhi knows me. After the incident, I didn't want to reveal my identity, but now it has been revealed. I will stand firm for myself. I don't care what their followers are saying. Their mentality is simply flawed," she said.

Chauhan said she told the court that an attempt was made on her life and how she could have even died."I have sustained some injuries, and the doctors have advised me to undergo an MRI and X-rays," she said.On Tuesday, after his arrest, Bainsla tried to escape custody on the pretext of urinating, but fell and got hurt, police said. He was given first aid at a hospital.

Bainsla was driving a Maruti Suzuki Ciaz, and Chauhan was riding an Aprilia RS 457, when the incident happened.

The police have impounded the car, registered in the name of an acquaintance.

Addressing the media on Tuesday, Gurugram DCP (East) Sandeep Kumar said the victim claimed that Bainsla also hurled a slur at her before the incident and tried to kill her.

"It can be clearly seen that he deliberately hit (the biker) from the side after an argument ... The intent was to kill the victim. The victim has also told the police that the intention was to kill her," he said.

Gurugram Police Commissioner Sibash Kabiraj said Bainsla was booked under an attempt-to-murder charge after a scrutiny of Instagram videos and CCTV footage.

Earlier, after giving an interview to the media, Bainsla switched off his mobile phone and absconded. Three teams constituted to track him caught him in Rajasthan.

According to the police, on September 14, a female biker shared a video on Instagram showing that she had been struck by a car on Golf Course Road the previous morning.

The Gurugram Police tried to contact her, but as there was no formal complaint, it filed a suo motu case at the Sector-56 Police Station, the officer said.Following Bainsla's arrest, the biker joined the police investigation.

Silver Lord Ram Statue, Gold-Plated Art Among Items At PM Mementos e-Auction

New Delhi: Nearly 1,500 mementos presented to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on various occasions are set to be offered through the online auction from tomorrow as the eighth edition of the Prime Minister's Mementos e-Auction starts on the day.

The latest edition features 1,498 mementos representing India's artistic traditions, traditional craftsmanship, cultural practices, spiritual traditions and sporting achievements, Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said.

The collection has been sourced from different parts of the country, with larger representations from states including West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Assam, Bihar and Odisha.The eighth edition also features 50 identified "Hero Objects", described by the Culture Ministry as some of the distinctive pieces in the collection. These include a silver memento of Lord Ram from Karnataka with a base price of Rs 13.50 lakh, a silver replica of the Kakatiya Kala Thoranam with a base price of Rs 9 lakh, a framed Tree of Life Gond art painting priced at Rs 7.50 lakh, a Jagannath Parivar on Chariot with a base price of Rs 6 lakh, and a 99.99 fine gold-plated framed Radha Krishna artwork with a base price of Rs 5.40 lakh.

The auction will be conducted through the official PM Mementos portal, while an accompanying exhibition will allow visitors to view the objects before participating in the online bidding process. The National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) in New Delhi has coordinated the documentation, exhibition and operational aspects of the initiative.The auction has also previously attracted significant bids for sporting memorabilia. In the 2021 edition, Neeraj Chopra's javelin, which he had presented to the Prime Minister after winning the Tokyo Olympics gold medal, received the highest bid of Rs 1.5 crore.Other high-value sporting memorabilia included fencer CA Bhavani Devi's signed sabre, which fetched Rs 1.25 crore, and Paralympic gold medallist Sumit Antil's javelin, which fetched Rs 1.002 crore.

The proceeds from the auctions are transferred to the Namami Gange Programme for the rejuvenation and conservation of the Ganga.

4% Merchant UPI Payments Are Over Rs 2,000 But Drive 66% Of Total Value

New Delhi: *For years, paying through UPI has felt almost like using cash: scan a QR code, enter the amount and pay without thinking about any extra charge. But this is going to change from October 15: a 0.4 per cent Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) will apply to specified Person-to-Merchant (P2M) transactions above Rs 2,000. Payments up to Rs 2,000 will continue to have zero MDR. For transactions of Rs 75,000 and above, the MDR will be capped at Rs 300. Person-to-Person payments will remain free, regardless of the amount.*

But Why?

Why introduce it now? UPI has grown far beyond its original role as a convenient way to transfer money. It now handles a huge number of payments between customers and businesses every day. Running this network requires payment infrastructure, security systems, fraud prevention and constant upgrades. The new MDR is meant to provide a revenue stream to the payment ecosystem and make the system more financially sustainable.

UPI Transactions

The scale of the shift can be seen in how people use UPI today. In FY26, UPI recorded 24,162 crore transactions, and about 63 per cent were Person-to-Merchant (P2M) payments. Around 15,200 crore transactions involved customers paying businesses, rather than transferring money to another person. But not all merchant payments are large. Around 4 per cent of P2M transactions are above Rs 2,000. At the same time, these higher-value transactions account for roughly 66 per cent of the total value of P2M payments. So there is a clear difference between the number of payments and the amount of money involved: high-value payments are relatively few, but they move a much larger share of the money. P2M itself has become a much bigger part of UPI. It rose from 446 crore transactions in FY20 to around 15,200 crore in FY26. Its share of total UPI volume increased from roughly 36 per cent to 63 per cent during this period.

Houthi Threat Reaches Mecca, Pakistan Hides Behind 'Ops' To Avoid Saudi Fight

Islamabad:For the first time in history, the Islamic holy city of Mecca was put on emergency alert, warning of a possible aerial attack as fighting between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Houthi rebel group intensified. Though the alert was lifted within minutes, it has sparked outrage across the Muslim world and deepened the conflict roiling the region.

It has also laid bare the fractures within the much-talked-about Mecca pact between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Turkey as Riyadh turned to Tel Aviv for help after Islamabad backed out of the fight in self-interest.

The Unlikely Alliance

Israeli media reported that Israel and Saudi Arabia have held talks mediated by the US Central Command (CENTCOM), where Riyadh sought Tel Aviv's help to defend itself against Houthi attacks through intelligence assistance, as cited by The Jerusalem Post. Saudi Arabia and Israel do not have formal ties, as the kingdom has not joined the Abraham Accords, maintaining that formal normalisation with Tel Aviv requires a clear, irreversible path toward Palestinian statehood. Despite that, the report said the kingdom had to seek Israel's assistance focused on intelligence support to develop a broader picture of Houthi military deployments in the area and identify potential plans for future operations.

Unkept Promises

This came after Islamabad avoided joining Saudi Arabia in military strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen, saying the newly signed Makkah Joint Defence Agreement was still being firmed up and should not yet be viewed in terms of its operationalisation. Pakistan's Dawn newspaper last week reported that Pakistan's Foreign Office stressed that the possibility of Pakistani forces striking Houthi targets inside Yemen was, at present, only a hypothetical situation. However, after backlash over the stance, Pakistan's Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said any attack on Saudi Arabia could activate the Mecca Defence Alliance. He said he is unaware whether Riyadh has reached out to Islamabad, but reiterated that "we are bound to help or react according to the agreement."

Hollow Words

Islamabad, meanwhile, sent a word of 'condemnation' over Houthis making holy Mecca a possible target. In a post on X, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said he "condemns in the strongest possible terms the dastardly and heinous attempted drone attack against the Holy Site of Makkah Al-Mukarramah." He gave a "salute" to the "extraordinary vigilance, courage, and professionalism of the Royal Saudi Armed Forces, for their swift and heroic action", but did not commit to any possible help for the kingdom. "Pakistan stands unwaveringly, shoulder to shoulder with the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in the defence of its sovereignty, and territorial integrity, as well as for the security and sanctity of the Haramain Sharifain - a duty that every Pakistani carries close to their heart," he added.

Self-Interests

The fighting between Saudi Arabia and Yemen represents the first major test of the mutual defence alliance that was signed between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey last month, adding to a pre-existing pact between Islamabad and Riyadh. Under the arrangement, an armed attack on any one of the three countries is to be regarded as an attack on all.Pakistani officials reportedly worry the Houthi threat is more likely to draw Islamabad into a war than Iranian missile strikes on Saudi energy infrastructure were earlier this year.

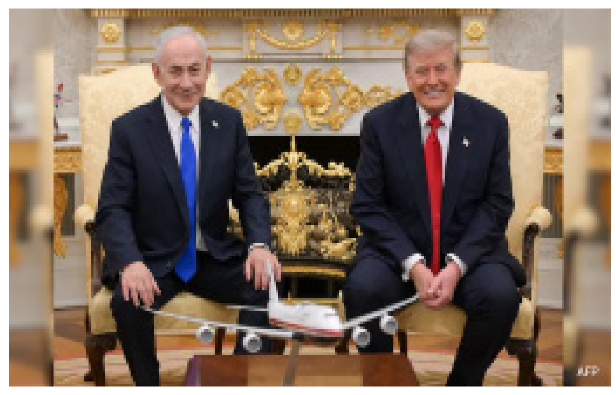
Reuters in July reported that Pakistani soldiers were deployed near the Saudi border with Yemen, increasing their direct exposure.

Defence deals with Gulf nations have been a key part of Pakistan's plans to boost its fledgling economy after years of crisis and have often been accompanied by parallel or subsequent talks about Gulf investments. However, Pakistan also relies on oil and gas shipments through the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea -- routes that Iran and the Houthis have shown they can disrupt -- giving Islamabad reason to avoid alienating Tehran even as it deepens ties with the Gulf.

The New Frontier in the Middle East

Houthis, however, rejected Saudi's claim that the group launched a drone toward the holy city of Mecca, calling the allegation "fabrications and lies" and asserting that its operations target Saudi military and oil facilities away from Islamic holy sites. In a statement posted on Telegram, Houthi military spokesperson Brigadier General Yahya Saree called out the Al Saud regime of Saudi Arabia, calling the attempt a deception, while denying that the rebel group posed a threat to the holy sites. Saree said Houthi operations were directed at "its oil facilities and military bases, which are far removed from the sacred sites." The statement came after the Saudi-led coalition said its air defences intercepted and destroyed a drone south of Mecca on Tuesday evening before it entered the prohibited airspace around the holy city. Coalition spokesperson Major General Turki Al-Malki described the incident as a "hostile and terrorist act" and said the security of the Two Holy Mosques and pilgrims was a "red line." Al-Malki said the incident was the second attempt to target Mecca, referring to a ballistic missile launch in July 2017. Rejecting Riyadh's account, Saree alleged that Saudi aircraft had carried out more than 450 airstrikes across several Yemeni provinces during the week. He said the strikes involved F-15 and Typhoon aircraft operating from Khamis Mushait and Taif and claimed they had caused civilian casualties. Saree also claimed that Houthi forces had shot down a Saudi F-15 fighter jet over Marib using a locally manufactured surface-to-air missile. He further said Houthi forces conducted a defensive operation against two Saudi formations of F-15 and Typhoon aircraft searching for the wreckage of the aircraft, forcing them to retreat.

MK 84s, BLU-117s: Inside Trump's Plan To Sell Mega-Powerful Arms To Israel



Washington:The Donald Trump administration is reportedly planning to sell 2,000-pound bombs to Israel in the largest single sale of the controversial munition in recent years. The $2.8 billion package includes 40,000 of the bombs that weigh 2,000 pounds each, including 20,000 MK 84s and 20,000 BLU-117s, agencies reported, citing US officials.

News about the sale of the package was first reported by the Washington Post. The report said the deal, which would be purchased with US taxpayer dollars, also includes 20,000 I-2000 Penetrator warheads.

The Gaza Concerns

MK-84 is among the most destructive munitions in Western military arsenals. Its explosion sends large metal fragments in every direction for thousands of feet, ripping through metal and thick concrete. It's so powerful that it often creates large craters in the earth.

Israel has used these 2,000-pound bombs regularly in Gaza as well as in Lebanon, drawing scrutiny from rights experts and prompting concerns about the possibility of mass casualties in Gaza, following which the Biden administration paused its delivery two years ago. Trump lifted that hold when he took office again.

Trump-Netanyahu Ties

The package comes as Israel has faced increasing international isolation over its war in Gaza in response to the deadly October 7, 2023, attacks by Hamas. The US Congress has been informally notified about the pending deal, most of which is to be paid for with foreign military financing, in which US taxpayers' money is given to Israel to turn around and buy the weapons from the United States.

The proposed sale is just the latest in a series of Trump administration steps to improve Israel's military capacity. It signals that some warmth may have returned in the increasingly deteriorating personal ties between President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, especially since the two countries launched the war against Iran in February.

Last year also, the Trump administration bypassed a normal congressional review process and approved a nearly $3 billion sale to Israel that included more than 35,500 of the bombs. The administration then approved a new series of arms sales to Israel totalling $6.67 billion in January.

Israel's Record

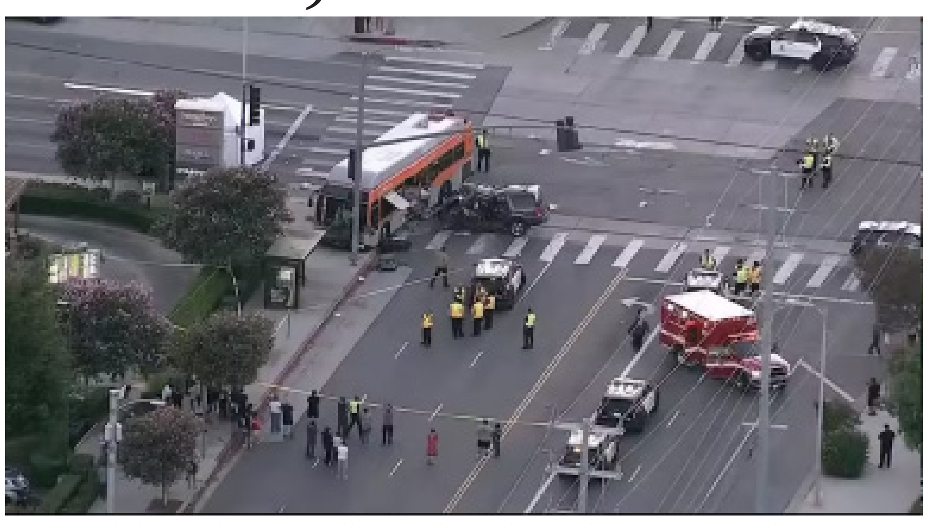
Though the Israeli military has offered few details about what bombs and artillery it has used in Gaza, experts analysing strike footage and blast fragments found on-site believe the US-made bombs have been used there, targeting a tunnel network used by Hamas but also killing people in densely populated areas.

While the heaviest fighting in Gaza has subsided since the fragile ceasefire took hold in October, Israel has continued to carry out strikes in the territory. That is even after Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and a key Middle East negotiator, met with Netanyahu last month in an effort to push the ceasefire deal forward and asked Israel to reduce its attacks.More than 73,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's military campaign, according to Gaza health authorities. A US inquiry determined that Israel had committed genocide in Gaza, a charge Israel rejects.Tel Aviv calls its actions self-defense after Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people ?and took more than 250 hostages in an October 2023 attack.

US News Helicopter Covering Deadly Bus Accident Crashes, 3 Killed

Los Angeles: At least three people were killed after a helicopter being used by NBC news crashed into a parking lot in Los Angeles on Tuesday, officials said. Speaking during a live broadcast, NBC4 Los Angeles anchor Colleen Williams confirmed that the station's helicopter crashed just before 7 pm. "We're going to take a couple of minutes to process this," Williams said, her voice shaking. Moments later, NBC4's coverage was abruptly interrupted. The helicopter crashed near a storage facility in Chatsworth, a neighborhood in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley, while news crews were covering a bus crash that killed at least two people and injured six others, according to the Los Angeles Fire Department. Another person was taken to the hospital after the helicopter crash, although their condition was not immediately known,. A video recorded from inside the helicopter appears to show its final moments. The aircraft can be seen hovering over the site of the bus crash before the camera suddenly begins shaking violently as the helicopter comes crashing down. The helicopter crashed into or near several parked vehicles in the parking lot of a large one-storey building, Los Angeles Fire Department spokesperson Capt. Branden Silverman said.

It was not immediately clear how many of those killed were inside the helicopter. At least one person who died was outside the aircraft in the parking lot, Silverman said. "We're trying to determine how many patients were inside the helicopter," he said. More than 50 firefighters responded to the crash. The fire damaged four vehicles and two storage containers before being brought under control by Tuesday evening. Silverman described the helicopter as "pretty well destroyed", adding that firefighters would have to



sift through the wreckage to determine how many people were on board. The National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Administration will investigate the crash. Earlier Tuesday, two people were killed and six others injured after an SUV crashed into a city bus in Los Angeles, officials said. Photos and videos from the scene showed about half of the SUV lodged into the side of an MTA bus, with a large number of firefighters responding to the crash.

Yemen's Houthis Claim They Shot Down Saudi F15 Fighter Jet

Yemen: Yemen's Houthis on Wednesday said they shot down a Saudi fighter jet, claiming a locally made munition was used to target the warplane.

"The Yemeni Armed Forces, with Allah's aid and grace, succeeded in shooting down a Saudi F15 fighter jet while it was carrying out hostile operations in support of its military mobilisations in the airspace of Marib province," Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said on social media, while accusing Saudi Arabia of launching 450 strikes.

He said the jet had been targeted "using a locally made air-to-air missile".

The spokesman also dismissed Saudi claims that the Houthis had targeted the holy city of Mecca this week. "Our operations target its oil facilities and military bases, which are far removed from the sacred sites," he said.

The Houthis have been engaged in renewed fighting with Saudi-backed Yemeni government forces since Yemen's civil war reignited in July.

The group have also declared a maritime blockade on Saudi Arabia and have been targeting its ships in the Red Sea.In a lightning offensive last week, the Houthis seized control of the entirety of Yemen's Red Sea coast and the Bab al-Mandab Strait.

The strait has become vital to Saudi crude exports as the wider Middle East war chokes the Strait of Hormuz in the Gulf.

Nightmarish Scene After Iran Plane's Cabin Roof Liner Detaches

New Delhi: Passengers of an airline in Iran found themselves in a nightmarish situation for a few intense seconds on the runway when one of the two engines of a Boeing 737 failed, leading to severe vibration.

Local media reported that a tyre burst during the take-off run likely threw debris into the engine and damaged it.

This is suspected to have led to severe vibration and the subsequent chaos. The full impact of the scare was visible in mobile videos taken by passengers.

The cabin's roof liner had come off over many seats. Passengers screamed in fear. No injuries were reported and the passengers were evacuated safely.

It was a routine domestic flight.

60 Killed In Sudan Gold Mine Collapse, Several Missing

Sudan:*A gold mine collapsed in southern Sudan, killing at least 60 small-scale miners, two survivors told AFP on Wednesday, while many more are missing and feared dead under the rubble.Shafts began collapsing in the Al-Zaraa mine near the town of El-Nahud in West Kordofan on Tuesday, and by the following morning 60 bodies had been retrieved.*

"We don't know how many more are still inside," one of the survivors, Khair al-Sayyed Jabara, told AFP after an all-night rescue operation with fellow miners, using the same rudimentary tools they use to mine.

"Everyone's working very hard to retrieve the bodies or any survivors, but it's difficult. We need heavy machinery to clear the rock and soil."

Since war erupted in April 2023 between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, the war efforts of both sides have been largely funded by the gold industry, in addition to foreign backers.

The conflict has devastated Sudan's already fragile economy and left much of the country out of work, pushing many into a dangerous gold rush. Artisanal and small-scale mining, which takes place in unofficial zones or decommissioned mines, accounts for the majority of gold extracted.

Al-Amin Suleiman, another miner who was working at the rim of Al-Zaraa on Tuesday, told AFP that "the shafts here are all close together, if one collapses, it brings down all the ones next to it". "This is what happened here. So far, 60 bodies have been pulled out but there are people still trapped underground since yesterday. I don't think they are alive." Sudan is suffering the world's largest hunger and displacement crises, with nearly 20 million people facing crisis levels of hunger.

Pregnant women may get online lower-berth booking option; Delhi HC seeks Centre, IRCTC reply

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday, September 16, issued notices to the Centre and the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) on a PIL seeking an online option for pregnant women to request lower berths under the existing railway reservation policy.A bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia asked the Centre and IRCTC to clarify their stand on the issues raised in the petition. The matter will be heard next on September 30.

The petition, filed by advocate Anunay Sahay, has sought directions to the Railways and IRCTC to create a proper online system through the IRCTC website and mobile app where pregnant women can request a lower berth, subject to availability and suitable verification.

Online booking option

The plea questions why pregnant women have to visit a physical Passenger Reservation System counter to avail the facility when similar reservation benefits for other eligible categories are available online.According to the petition, railway rules already allow pregnant women to be considered for lower berths, depending on availability. However, the petitioner said they currently have to submit a pregnancy certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner at a PRS counter to use the facility.

The petitioner has contended that this creates an additional physical barrier for pregnant women despite railway reservation services having been substantially digitised.

"Lower Berth/Senior Citizen" quota

The plea further points out that IRCTC's own terms and conditions recognise a "Lower Berth/Senior Citizen" quota on its e-ticketing platform. It argues that the digital platform, being a mode of implementing the underlying railway reservation system, should not result in exclusion of pregnant women from a facility available under the reservation policy.The petitioner has alleged that the arrangement is arbitrary, unreasonable and discriminatory and has invoked Articles 14, 15(3), and 21 of the Constitution.

The plea says that the authorities could instead introduce mechanisms such as online self-declaration, uploading of a certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner, or booking subject to subsequent verification by the Ticket Examiner during the journey. It has also suggested modifying the existing lower-berth allocation algorithm to recognise pregnant women as an eligible category, subject to availability.

Before approaching the High Court, the petitioner said he had raised the issue with the Railway Minister, Railway Board and IRCTC on August 30, 2026.

According to the petition, IRCTC responded on September 1 that the suggestion had been noted for future enhancements and that it would give it "very serious thought".The petition seeks a direction to the authorities to devise a reasonable, non-discriminatory and technologically feasible mechanism for verification of pregnancy without making a visit to a physical reservation counter mandatory merely for availing the lower-berth facility. It also seeks disclosure by the respondents, through an affidavit, of the steps being taken to implement such a mechanism along with the proposed timelines.

Meanwhile, the Indian Railways is preparing additional train services for the upcoming festive season as passenger demand is expected to rise during Dussehra, Diwali and Chhath Puja. Northern Railway has announced several special train services connecting Delhi with important destinations in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The additional services are aimed at providing more travel options to passengers and easing pressure on regular trains, which are expected to remain busy during the festival period.

NSE IPO opens September 17: Check price band, lot size, allotment date, how to apply and key details

NSE IPO: The much-awaited initial public offering (IPO) of the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) is set to open for subscription on Thursday, September 17, giving retail and institutional investors an opportunity to buy shares of India's largest stock exchange.The three-day bidding window will remain open until Monday, September 21. The IPO has been priced in the range of Rs 1,700 to Rs 1,785 per share, with the issue estimated to raise between Rs 21,494 crore and Rs 22,569 crore at the upper end of the price band.

The issue is entirely an offer for sale (OFS), meaning NSE itself will not receive any proceeds from the IPO. Instead, existing shareholders will sell up to 12.64 crore shares as part of the offer.

NSE IPO: How much is reserved for retail investors?

Of the net offer, 50 per cent has been reserved for qualified institutional buyers (QIBs), while 15 per cent has been earmarked for non-institutional investors (NIIs). Retail investors will have access to 35 per cent of the net offer.

The lot size has been fixed at eight shares. At the upper price band of Rs 1,785, a retail investor would therefore need a minimum investment of Rs 14,280 to apply for one lot. Eligible NSE employees will get a discount of Rs 170 per share.

NSE IPO: How to apply

Retail investors can apply for the NSE IPO through their preferred brokerage platform using the Application Supported by Blocked Amount (ASBA) facility.

Under ASBA, the application amount is blocked in the investor's bank account during the IPO process. The funds are debited only to the extent of shares allotted, while the remaining amount is released after the allotment process.

NSE IPO allotment and listing date

The NSE IPO allotment is expected to be finalised on September 22. The shares are proposed to make their stock market debut on September 24.

NSE shares will be listed on the BSE. The exchange cannot list its own shares on its platform, making BSE the proposed listing venue.

Anchor investor bidding is scheduled for September 16, a day before the issue opens for public subscription.

NSE IPO: Book-running lead managers

The book-running lead managers to the issue include Kotak Capital, JM Financial, Morgan Stanley India, Citigroup, HSBC Securities, JPMorgan India, SBI Capital, Anand Rathi Advisors, Avendus Capital, Axis Capital, DAM Capital, Equirus Capital, HDFC Bank, ICICI Securities, IDBI Capital, IIFL Capital, Motilal Oswal, Nuvama Wealth, Pantomath Capital and 360 ONE WAM.

With the IPO opening on September 17, NSE's long-awaited entry into the listed market is now entering its final stage, with investors set to track subscription demand, allotment and the proposed September 24 listing.

Volatility in GMP

Last week, market expert Anil Singhvi said NSE shares saw regular trading in the grey market, resulting in significant liquidity and activity. The grey market premium, however, remained volatile in recent sessions.

According to Singhvi, the premium earlier moved to around Rs 250-350 before declining sharply. It fell from nearly Rs 325 to around Rs 200 and later recovered to about Rs 275-280.

He said discussions around a possible reduction in the IPO size and price band contributed to the volatility.

Commercial coal mine auction: 16th round to launch tomorrow; 147 mines auctioned in six years

The Ministry of Coal is set to launch the 16th round of commercial coal mine auctions on September 17, 2026, in New Delhi, opening another set of coal blocks for commercial mining as the government looks to increase domestic production and attract fresh investment into the sector.Minister of State for Coal and Mines Satish Chandra Dubey will attend the launch as the chief guest. The latest auction round comes six years after commercial coal mining was opened up in 2020. Since then, the Ministry has completed 15 rounds of auctions, through which 147 coal mines have been successfully auctioned. The programme has also brought 44 new companies into the commercial coal mining sector, according to the ministry.

Rs 47,500 crore annual revenue expected

The mines auctioned across the 15 completed rounds are expected to generate annual revenue of around Rs 47,500 crore. The government also estimates that these mines could attract nearly Rs 55,000 crore in capital investment.

The auctions are expected to generate around 4.9 lakh employment opportunities across coal-bearing states, providing an economic boost to regions where the mines are located.

The government has been using commercial coal auctions to expand the pool of companies involved in coal production and bring additional capacity into the sector.

What is on offer in the 16th round

The 16th round will include a new set of fully explored and partially explored coal blocks. The Ministry of Coal is retaining the liberal terms under which commercial coal mining operates. There are no end-use restrictions, allowing successful bidders to decide how the coal produced from the mines is used. The framework also permits 100 per cent foreign direct investment through the automatic route, potentially allowing overseas investors to participate without requiring prior government approval for FDI. Another feature is the relatively low upfront payment requirement. The upfront payments can be adjusted against future revenue share, reducing the initial financial burden on bidders. According to the ministry, these provisions are intended to make the sector accessible to smaller and first-time bidders while continuing to attract established mining companies and technology-driven enterprises.

Push to increase domestic coal availability

The commercial coal auction programme is part of the government's broader effort to increase domestic coal production and availability.Over the past six years, the programme has helped bring new players into the sector and is expected to contribute to reducing India's dependence on imported coal. The government has also linked the initiative to the broader Aatmanirbhar Bharat objective, with greater domestic production aimed at strengthening the country's supply chain and reducing reliance on overseas sources. The 16th round is expected to add to this pipeline by bringing more coal blocks into production over time. Apart from increasing coal availability, the new mines are expected to generate additional investment and employment in coal-bearing states.

Energy security in focus

For the government, expanding domestic coal production remains closely linked to India's energy security requirements.

The Ministry of Coal said it remains committed to ensuring a reliable and affordable energy supply for the country. Bringing more coal blocks into commercial production is expected to support this objective while creating opportunities for greater private-sector participation. The launch of the 16th auction round on September 17 will therefore mark another step in the government's commercial coal mining programme, which has already resulted in 147 coal mines being auctioned since its launch in 2020.

Rs 29,693 for 144 Modaks to Rs 15,406 on Kaju Katli: Swiggy reveals how Indians ordered sweets during festivals

Festive celebrations saw Indians place some unusually large food orders this year, with customers spending thousands of rupees on traditional sweets, Modaks, chocolates and restaurant meals, according to data shared by food delivery platform Swiggy.From a Mumbai customer ordering 144 Modaks worth Rs 29,693 during Ganesh Chaturthi to a Bengaluru diner running up a bill of Rs 2.54 lakh on Raksha Bandhan, the orders show how food remains a major part of festive celebrations.

Before the quick commerce era, people went to sweet shops to purchase sweets during the festival season, which was the only accessible mode. But this has changed now. Instead of going out on the streets to purchase, people are preferring to order sweets online via online quick commerce platforms.

144 Modaks in one order

Traditional sweets also saw strong demand during Raksha Bandhan on August 28.Swiggy said orders for sweets increased 22.8 per cent compared with Raksha Bandhan last year, with demand averaging more than 11,500 orders per hour.

Kaju Katli, Gulab Jamun, Rasmalai and Motichoor Laddoo were among the most ordered sweets.

One customer in Noida spent Rs 15,406 on 12 boxes of Kaju Katli. Another customer in Pune ordered 35 sugar-free milk cakes for Rs 11,550.Gulab Jamun was another popular choice, with Swiggy delivering an average of 1,640 orders every hour. A customer in Jodhpur ordered 14 boxes of Gulab Jamun.

Rs 12,000-plus order for chocolates and desserts

Ganesh Chaturthi emerged as a major occasion for Modak orders on the platform. The platform delivered 103,380 Modak orders on September 14, the first day of Ganesh Utsav. Orders were up 13.3 per cent from last year, with demand concentrated between 7 am and 11 am.

Swiggy said it received an average of 11,500 Modak orders every hour during this period.

The biggest Modak orders came from Mumbai, which accounted for the top five highest-value orders nationally. The largest single order was worth Rs 29,693 and included an assortment of 144 Modaks.

Maharashtra accounted for 41 per cent of all Modak orders placed on the platform, with Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Nashik and Amravati leading demand in the state.

Rs 15,406 spent on Kaju Katli

Not all festive orders were centred around traditional Indian sweets. A Mumbai customer spent more than Rs 12,000 on an order containing a box of 12 chocolates, six macarons and Chocolate Hazelnut Mousse. The data shows the mix of traditional mithai and modern desserts being used for festive gifting and celebrations.

A Rs 2.54 lakh dining bill

Festive spending was not limited to food delivery.

Swiggy's Dineout service recorded a 28.5 per cent rise in bookings during August 28-29 compared with August 8-9 last year, the corresponding Raksha Bandhan weekend.

Bengaluru led bookings among metros, while Ahmedabad topped the emerging-city segment.

The highest restaurant bill recorded on Raksha Bandhan was Rs 2,54,798 from a customer in Bengaluru.

Janmashtami pushes demand for Peda

Janmashtami also triggered a sharp rise in demand for traditional sweets.orders for traditional sweets and mithais increased 33 per cent on September 4 compared with Janmashtami last year.

Kaju Katli, Milk Cake and Mathura Peda were among the most ordered items.Peda orders were nearly four times higher than the previous day, while demand for Mathura Peda alone increased 46.4 per cent from Janmashtami last year.

India's rooftop solar capacity may rise from 17 GW to 132 GW by 2030: ISMA

India's rooftop solar market has significant room to grow over the next few years. According to the Indian Solar Manufacturers Association (ISMA), rooftop solar capacity could increase from the present 17 GW to as much as 132 GW by 2030. The industry body expects annual demand to remain in the range of 9 GW to 15 GW during this period.

Residential segment has around 115 GW of untapped rooftop solar potential The report said the residential segment alone has nearly 115 GW of untapped rooftop solar potential. If this demand is realised, it could also support domestic manufacturing of solar cells, modules, inverters and other equipment used in rooftop solar installations. ISMA prepared its estimates after looking at household electricity consumption, housing patterns and power tariffs across different states. Based on these factors, the association believes the residential rooftop solar market is now moving into a period of steady growth, with installations expected to pick up further between 2026 and 2030. The projected installation pace of 9 to 15 GW annually pointed to a pipeline for Indian component manufacturers seeking to reduce reliance on foreign supply chains. The report also pointed to the "Affordability Effect" initiated by the central government's PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana. The scheme broadened adoption into regions beyond states where natural economic viability previously drove installations, expanding the consumer base and supporting local supply chains. Amit Manohar, Secretary General of ISMA, highlighted the operational impact of central interventions across regional markets. "PM Surya Ghar has played an important role in expanding residential rooftop solar adoption, particularly in markets where project economics remain challenging," Manohar stated.He further emphasized the necessity of administrative clarity for upcoming policy phases as the existing guidelines moved toward scheduled timelines.

"As the current programme approaches March 2027, providing early clarity on its next phase, including consideration of PM Surya Ghar 2.0, preferably by December 2026, would help maintain market continuity and provide greater visibility to consumers and industry stakeholders," Manohar added. The association stated that uninterrupted policy support past March 2027 remained essential to preserve deployment momentum. The report mentioned that institutional visibility served as a requirement for manufacturers to commit long-term capital investments, expand factory capacities, and secure local supply chains across the domestic ecosystem.

India's First Soil Carbon Payments Put Farmers at the Centre of Regenerative Agriculture

Over Rs.2.9 Crore to be Disbursed to More Than 2,500 Farmers in Punjab and Haryana

New Delhi, Sept., 17 (PIB): India's agricultural carbon market has moved from policy to the farm level, with more than 2,500 smallholder farmers in Punjab and Haryana set to receive digital payments for adopting regenerative farming practices. The first payments were released at a programme organised at Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana, marking a new link between sustainable agricultural practices and additional income for farmers. Dr M. L. Jat, Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) and Director General, ICAR, initiated the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) to 2,550 farmers from Punjab and Haryana. The payments are part of 'Aadi', a Grow Indigo farmer carbon programme launched in 2019 with technical guidance from ICAR. Under the programme, farmers adopted practices such as Direct Seeded Rice (DSR), reduced tillage, and crop residue management between 2019 and 2022. The resulting greenhouse-gas reductions and increases in soil carbon were measured and independently verified before carbon credits were issued. The programme covers more than two million acres and over 100,000 farmers across seven states and has issued agricultural carbon credits under the Verra VM0042 methodology.

The programme builds on a broader transition towards regenerative agriculture in Punjab and Haryana, including crop residue management, water conservation, and farming systems aimed at improving soil health and climate resilience. ICAR institutions have contributed scientific and field expertise in areas including greenhouse-gas accounting, crop-simulation modelling, soil-sampling protocols, device validation, field-team training and satellite and remote-sensing approaches. ICAR–Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi, has contributed to these processes, while Grow Indigo is also working with ICAR–Agricultural Technology Application Research Institute (ATARI), Zone 1, to promote regenerative agriculture. During his visits to Punjab under the Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan and subsequent engagements with farmers and agricultural institutions Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan has emphasised farmer-centric agricultural research and field-level adoption of sustainable technologies. He highlighted the importance of direct-seeded rice and residue-management practices. During his June 2025 visit to Punjab, he interacted with farmers and reviewed farming practices as part of the campaign.

Dr M. L. Jat, Secretary, DARE and Director General, ICAR, said that the initiative demonstrates how climate-smart farming practices, backed by scientific assessment and rigorous verification, can create additional income opportunities for smallholder farmers while contributing to water conservation and improved air quality. He congratulated the participating farmers and acknowledged the contribution of ICAR institutions to the scientific framework supporting the initiative. The carbon payments provide an economic incentive for practices that can also generate environmental benefits. Direct Seeded Rice can reduce irrigation requirements compared with conventional transplanting, while improved crop-residue management can help reduce stubble burning and associated air pollution. For enrolled fields during 2019–2022, the programme estimates savings of 45 billion litres of water and more than two lakh tonnes of crop residue kept out of fires, avoiding an estimated 1,000 tonnes of PM2.5 emissions.

Farmers were paid according to their share of the carbon credits generated from their fields. Grow Indigo released the payments digitally from its own funds before the credits were fully sold, enabling farmers to receive the payments without waiting for sale proceeds. Farmers could choose between an assured upfront payment and 75 per cent of the net carbon revenue after the credits were sold. The first issuance covered around 30,000 acres and more than 50,000 carbon credits, with participating farmers receiving approximately ?3,000–?15,000.

The payments followed a multi-year process of measurement and independent verification. Farmers who joined the programme after 2022 are part of the next monitoring cycle and will receive payments as their carbon credits are issued. Dr Usha Barwale Zehr, Executive Director, Grow Indigo, described the payment as the first instance in India of farmers being paid for carbon stored in their soil and acknowledged the trust and patience of participating farmers during the scientific assessment and verification process. Farmers Harinderjeet Gill of Nurpur Bet, Ludhiana, and Amandeep Kaur of Sangrur also shared their experiences, highlighting the economic and environmental benefits associated with continuing regenerative practices and avoiding crop-residue burning. The initiative forms part of a wider agricultural transformation supported by ICAR, agricultural universities, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and State institutions. Field-level experiences are providing a foundation for wider adoption of practices such as residue retention, minimum soil disturbance, DSR, diversified cropping, improved soil biology and efficient water use, with the objective of integrating sustainability and productivity in farming systems.

Government Eases RCMC Requirement for Export Consignments up to Rs 3 Lakh

New Delhi, Sept., 17 (PIB): The Government has introduced a de minimis exemption from the requirement of Registration-cum-Membership Certificate (RCMC) or Certificate of Registration for small-value export consignments up to ?3 lakh. The measure is aimed at reducing the compliance burden for new and small exporters and facilitating exports through Postal, Courier and other emerging channels. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has amended Para 2.57 of the Foreign Trade Policy, 2023 to provide that RCMC or Certificate of Registration will not be required for export consignments having a Free-on-Board (FOB) value of up to ?3 lakh, wherever such certificate is otherwise required under the Foreign Trade Policy. Export consignments exceeding ?3 lakh will continue to require a valid RCMC or Certificate of Registration, wherever applicable.

Historical data for the last five years (2021-22 to 2025-26) indicates that low-value exports account for a significant share of shipping bills but a very small proportion of the overall export value. Consignments up to USD 3,000, for instance, account for 43 per cent of shipping bills but only 0.86 per cent of India's total merchandise export value. The exemption is therefore expected to cover a substantial number of small-value export transactions while having only a marginal impact on the overall value of exports. At present, exporters are generally required to obtain an RCMC or Certificate of Registration from the relevant Export Promotion Council or Commodity Board, wherever applicable under the Foreign Trade Policy. For new or occasional exporters undertaking small-value consignments, this involves an additional compliance step, including identifying the appropriate registering body, submitting the prescribed documents and completing the registration process before undertaking exports.

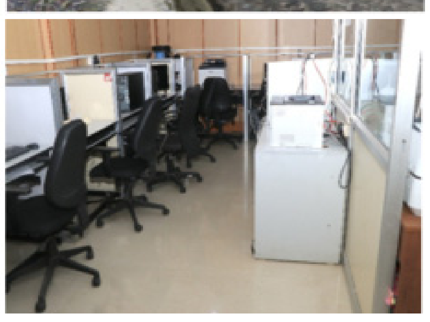
The measure provides MSMEs, artisans, small businesses and first-time exporters with a simpler entry point into international markets by removing the requirement to obtain an RCMC upfront for eligible small-value consignments. This will enable emerging exporters to test overseas markets and establish an export track record with lower initial compliance requirements. As exporters expand their operations and their consignments move beyond the ?3 lakh threshold, they can obtain membership of the relevant Export Promotion Councils or Commodity Boards and access export promotion, market access and other institutional support services.

The measure offers lower entry barriers for new exporters, enabling first-time and occasional exporters to undertake eligible small-value exports without obtaining an RCMC upfront. It is particularly beneficial for MSMEs and small businesses, as small manufacturers, artisans, entrepreneurs and emerging exporters will be able to explore overseas markets and build an export track record with lower initial compliance requirements. The exemption will also facilitate e-commerce and other emerging export channels. It is expected to support low-value exports through Postal, Courier and other emerging channels that are increasingly enabling businesses to reach international customers.

The measure will support the gradual integration of emerging exporters into global markets. As exporters scale up and undertake higher-value consignments, they can obtain RCMC membership and access the wider range of export promotion and institutional support provided through Export Promotion Councils and other prescribed bodies. At the same time, the existing framework for larger exports remains unchanged. The exemption is limited to small-value consignments, while the requirement of RCMC or Certificate of Registration will continue for consignments exceeding ?3 lakh, wherever otherwise applicable.

The measure will also help broaden the base of Export Promotion Councils and Commodity Boards by encouraging greater participation of MSMEs in exports. By lowering the initial compliance barrier, more MSMEs will be able to enter international markets and, as their export operations scale beyond the Rs.3 lakh threshold, obtain RCMC and become members of the relevant EPCs or Commodity Boards to access export promotion activities, market access initiatives and other institutional support. The measure reinforces the Government's commitment to reducing the compliance burden, broadening participation in exports and making international trade more accessible to MSMEs, first-time exporters and emerging businesses.

DARE/ICAR Committed Towards Swachhata and Reducing Pendency During Special Campaign 6.0



New Delhi, Sept., 17 (PIB): The Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) will undertake Special Campaign 6.0, being observed by the Government of India from 2nd October to 31st October 2026, with a focus on Swachhata and reducing pendency in Government offices. During the previous Special Campaign 5.0, DARE/ICAR undertook sustained efforts towards the disposal of pending references on a monthly basis and strengthened its focus on timely redressal of public grievances. During the campaign, the Ministry disposed of the maximum number of Public Grievances and Public Grievance Appeals, reflecting its continued efforts towards reducing pendency and improving grievance redressal.

As part of Special Campaign 5.0, awareness about the campaign was created across branches of DARE/ICAR throughout the country. Various activities were undertaken with emphasis on health, food safety, waste-to-wealth initiatives, hygiene and sanitation, tree plantation, enhancement of office premises, environment-friendly practices, beautification, space management and conservation measures. DARE/ICAR also continued its efforts towards paperless functioning through the e-File system. During the campaign, targets relating to the disposal of physical files and review and closure of e-Files were achieved as part of record-management practices. These efforts resulted in the freeing up of office space and disposal of accumulated scrap and waste. Building on the experience and outcomes of Special Campaign 5.0, DARE/ICAR is committed to further strengthening its efforts during Special Campaign 6.0, with continued emphasis on cleanliness, efficient record management, reduction of pendency, paperless functioning and better utilisation of office spaces.

Ministry of Coal to Launch 16th Round of Commercial Coal Mine Auctions

New Delhi, Sept., 16 (PIB): *The Ministry of Coal will launch the 16th Round of Commercial Coal Mine Auctions on 17th September 2026 in New Delhi. Shri Satish Chandra Dubey, Minister of State for Coal and Mines, Government of India, will grace the occasion as the Chief Guest. Commercial coal mining was launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in 2020. Over the past six years, across fifteen completed rounds, 147 coal mines have been successfully auctioned, bringing 44 new companies into the sector. The auctioned mines are expected to generate annual revenue of approximately Rs 47,500 crore, attract capital investment of nearly Rs 55,000 crore, and create around 4.9 lakh employment opportunities across coal-bearing states. The 16th round will offer a fresh set of fully explored and partially explored coal blocks. The framework continues to operate under the most liberal terms, with no end-use restrictions, 100 percent FDI permitted through the automatic route, and low upfront payments adjustable against future revenue share. These provisions are designed to keep entry accessible for smaller and first-time bidders while remaining competitive for established mining companies and technology-driven enterprises.*

The commercial coal mine auction programme has steadily increased domestic coal production and availability, reduced dependence on imports, and supported the broader objectives of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. The 16th round is expected to carry this progress forward by bringing additional coal blocks into production, generating further employment, and attracting new investment into the sector. The Ministry of Coal remains committed to ensuring a reliable and affordable energy supply for the nation in line with India's long-term energy security goals.

Department of Defence intensifies cleanliness and workplace improvement initiatives under Swachhta Abhiyan

New Delhi, Sept., 17 (PIB): The Department of Defence (DoD) conducted 2,229 cleanliness drives across its attached and subordinate offices between November 2025 and August 2026, in continuation with the Special Campaign 5.0 which was held in October 2025. Through these drives, the department was able to free up 45,448 square feet of space and generate ?97.07 lakh through the disposal of scrap and other unserviceable materials. The cleanliness and decluttering activities have been carried out with active participation from various organisations under the Department, including the Directorate General Defence Estates (DGDE), Directorate General Armed Forces Medical Services (DGAFMS), Border Roads Organisation (BRO), Controller General of Defence Accounts (CGDA) and Canteen Stores Department (CSD), among others. Through these sustained efforts, the Department remains committed to fostering a clean, organised, efficient and productive workplace, while institutionalising Swachhta as a regular feature of official functioning.

Indian Defence Service of Engineers celebrates 77th Raising Day

New Delhi, Sept., 17 (PIB): Officers of the Indian Defence Service of Engineers (IDSE) under Military Engineer Services (MES), Ministry of Defence celebrated their 77th Raising Day by organising a day-long conference in New Delhi on September 17, 2026. Themed 'Ethics, Accountability and Excellence towards achieving the aim of Viksit Bharat @ 2047', the conference was attended by dignitaries of various departments and ministries such as Ministry of Railways, Central Vigilance Commission, Defence Accounts Department, National Highway Authority, and Public Sector Undertakings. Addressing the gathering, Engineer in Chief, MES Lt Gen Vikas Rohella highlighted the steps taken in MES to strengthen ethics and accountability, including the introduction of the Electronic Measurement Book. All the stages of public procurement and discretion exercised must be qualified with ethical principles, he said. The entire fraternity of MES, including senior officers of Corps of Engineers and representatives of cadre associations such as Surveyor, Architects, Barrack and Stores, Administration, were present on the occasion.

India Welcomes Passage of New Zealand Legislation to Give Effect to India-New Zealand FTA

India-New Zealand FTA Provides Duty-Free Access for 100 Per Cent of Indian Exports

New Delhi, Sept., 17 (PIB): India welcomes the passage of legislation by the Parliament of New Zealand on September 16, 2026, to give effect to the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA), signed in New Delhi on April 27, 2026. The passage of the legislation marks an important step towards bringing the Agreement into force and reflects the shared commitment of India and New Zealand to deepen and broaden their economic partnership. The visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to New Zealand in July 2026, the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to New Zealand in four decades, provided momentum to the bilateral relationship. During the visit, the two Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to deepen economic engagement and emphasised the importance of early implementation of the India-New Zealand FTA.

India and New Zealand share longstanding and close relations, anchored in strong people-to-people ties and expanding cooperation across trade and investment, agriculture, education, sports, technology and other areas. The FTA represents a significant step in further strengthening these ties and creating new opportunities for businesses and communities in both countries. The Agreement provides duty-free access for 100 per cent of Indian exports to New Zealand from the date of entry into force, opening new opportunities for Indian exports including textiles and apparel, leather and footwear, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and processed food products. At the same time, it provides enhanced and preferential access to the Indian market for New Zealand exports including wood, wool, sheep meat and leather raw hides. The Agreement also creates new opportunities in services, investment and professional, student and youth mobility, including enhanced pathways for Indian professionals and students. It provides for facilitating USD 20 billion of investment into India and strengthens bilateral cooperation in areas including agricultural productivity, pharmaceuticals and medical devices, traditional medicine and AYUSH, technology and trade facilitation. India and New Zealand are working closely to complete their respective domestic processes and to facilitate the early entry into force of the Agreement.

Trivikram Dropped From Hanuman Ansh Telugu Version?

It was announced that Director Trivikram Srinivas will be presenting the Telugu Version of the blockbuster film, Hanuman Ansh. It was a distribution deal with some percentage of the Telugu collections to Trivikram for giving his name and the movie was supposed to release through Mythri Film Distribution. The Telugu Version was announced for a September 18th release, and even a venue was announced for the Teaser launch. But everything was canceled at the last minute. They said the postponement is because of dubbing delays but all the tweets regarding the film were deleted from Trivikram's Fortune Four Cinemas X handle. Sources say that Trivikram is not happy with the producer adding new conditions into the deal one after the other just before the agreement signing. The producer is apparently new to the industry but things operate here differently. So, the ace director decided to drop off from the deal.

We will have to see if they can find a new buyer or the Telugu version will come out only on the OTT. There is also not enough space at the box office with big films coming up.

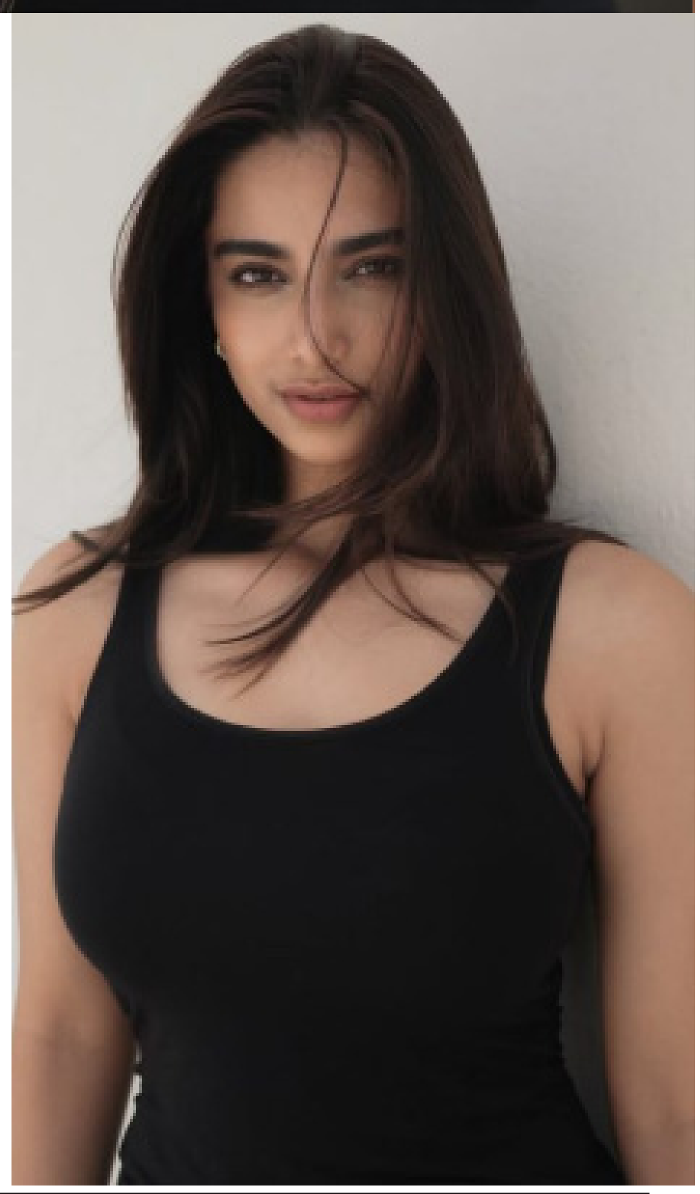
The Paradise Doesn't Underestimate Us: Nani

Natural Star Nani's The Paradise, directed by Srikanth Odela and produced by Sudhakar Cherukuri of SLV Cinemas is up for release on the 24th of this month. During the film's Chennai press meet, Nani spoke at length about his deep connection with Tamil Nadu, his transformation into Jadal, and why The Paradise holds a special place in his career. According to Nani, the film has been designed to balance emotion with the theatrical experience. "The Paradise doesn't undermine us, underestimate us, or look down at us. It doesn't believe that audiences will be satisfied with just a few gimmicks. Instead, it genuinely portrays a story with very strong emotion, while also delivering theatrical moments." His relationship with the Tamil audience, he explained, goes beyond film promotions. "Every time I come to Chennai, I say the same thing—it feels like home and family. The way the Tamil audience has owned me since Naan Ee and the kind of love I have received here is something very special. I make sure the quality of the Tamil dubbing is excellent and that the Tamil release is given the same importance." For Nani, the film has demanded an extraordinary level of commitment. "The Paradise is the most tiring film of my career. It is the film for which we have put in the most hard work, and it is also the most anticipated film of my career." The actor also spoke about his recurring musical partnership with Anirudh Ravichander, recalling how Jersey and Gang Leader became memorable collaborations. "I hope our relationship continues for a long time because I always feel that the kind of stories we choose to tell and the kind of heart Anirudh brings to the table make us a great combination." Director Srikanth Odela revealed that the emotional foundation of the film comes from a mother-son relationship. "The Paradise is a revolutionary film with a mother-son emotion. Nani played a rebellish character. How he fights for his mother, his emotions, and his land for their existence is the core emotion of the film." They also clarified that actress Kayadu Lohar is busy with other commitments, and she will join The Paradise promotions in a couple of days.

Tamannaah's Off-Shoulder Saree Look Slays Hard

Tamannaah Bhatia turned up the glamour at the trailer launch of her upcoming film "The Vvaan," and her look instantly became the talk of the town. The actress picked a bright yellow saree with a bold multicolour Kalamkari-inspired border, paired with an off-shoulder blouse, gold jhumkas, and stacked bangles. Her open wavy hair and soft glam completed a look that felt festive yet effortless. The event also had a warm moment between Tamannaah and her co-star Sidharth Malhotra. The two, who share screen space for the first time in "The Vvaan," exchanged playful compliments, with the interaction quickly going viral among fans online. "The Vvaan," a folklore-fantasy drama directed by Deepak Mishra, also stars Sunil Grover, Shweta Tiwari, and Manish Paul. The film is set to release in cinemas on September 25.

Meenakshi Oozes Raw Swag In Frames



Meenakshi Chaudhary, who is currently gearing up for her upcoming film Vrushakarma opposite Naga Chaitanya, has treated her fans to a fresh set of portraits. In the pictures, the actress opts for a simple black tank top paired with denims, keeping the styling minimal yet chic. Her hair is left loose and tousled, adding an effortless, breezy vibe to the look. What stands out the most, though, is her expression. Meenakshi gives the camera a soft, sultry gaze, with a hint of a smile playing on her lips, striking a balance between confidence and charm. The natural lighting and plain backdrop keep the focus entirely on her, letting the expression do all the talking.

Dulquer Salmaan's AOT: Heartwarming entertainer on Nov 20th

Dulquer Salmaan's Aakasamlo Oka Tara has finally locked its theatrical release date, with the makers announcing a grand worldwide release on November 20. The film brings together director Pavan Sadineni, producers Sandeep Gunnam and Ramya Gunnam, and presenters Swapna Cinema and Geetha Arts for a promising emotional entertainer. Following the impressive glimpse that generated strong buzz, the team has begun planning a wide promotional campaign to connect the film with audiences ahead of release. The makers are confident that the film's emotional story and refreshing narrative will stand out this festive season. The first single, Chitti Chitti Cheema, has already become a favorite among music lovers. The soothing melody, emotional lyrics, and beautiful presentation have given audiences a glimpse into the film's heartfelt world and increased excitement for what's to come. Featuring Dulquer Salmaan alongside Satvika Veeravalli and Shruti Haasan, Aakasamlo Oka Tara promises meaningful storytelling with strong emotional depth. G.V. Prakash Kumar's music is expected to be one of the film's biggest strengths as it heads toward its November release.

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