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'THEY ARE IN CHINESE CUSTODY': Ajit Doval Recalls Sikkim Intelligence Crisis



New Delhi: National Security Adviser Ajit Doval here on Saturday recalled a tense episode from his early intelligence career when a team operating along the Sikkim-China border failed to return as scheduled, leaving him worried about the fate of its members and convinced that his own professional career was over. Speaking at the convocation of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee, Doval described himself as a young Indian Police Service (IPS) officer "in his twenties" who was new to intelligence work when he was posted to Sikkim during the territory's transition into the Indian Union. His responsibilities

included overseeing intelligence operations in the border areas and monitoring the movements and activities of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). "I was a young IPS officer, new to the intelligence profession. I was in my 20s, and I was posted as in charge of intelligence in Sikkim. That was not a part of India at that time. It was becoming part of India. I was part of that process where the merger was taking place. But my responsibility also included looking after the border areas and collecting intelligence

about the movement of the PLA, activities of the Chinese Army," Doval said at IIT Roorkee. Sikkim became India's 22nd state in 1975. For centuries, Sikkim was ruled by the Namgyal dynasty, whose monarchs were known as Chogyals, a title often translated as "God-Kings". According to Doval, an intelligence team dispatched across the border failed to return within the expected timeframe. Days turned into weeks, and Doval said he was left struggling. "Once, we had an intelligence mission in the border area, and about eight days

later, they had to return. So, five days went by, then ten days went by, then perhaps 15 days went by. For me, it was a matter of very great concern, not only professionally but also on the human side, that so many people we don't know whether they are dead or alive, and what has happened to them," Doval said. "We got no reports of any avalanche or anything. It was a matter of deep worry and concern. But I got a telephone call from the headquarters, and my boss told me, 'Have you sent some people across?' I said, 'I do not know. They must be coming.

No 'Goonj', Only 'Dhamaka'



New Delhi: "I didn't hear the goonj (echo) but definitely heard the dhamaka (explosion)," said Union Health Minister JP Nadda, in an apparent dig at Congress leader

Rahul Gandhi, after the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) won three of the four key positions in the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) elections. Several

BJP leaders used the outcome to attack Rahul Gandhi, dismissing his recent youth outreach called "Chhatron Ki Goonj". Describing the outreach as the Congress's

BJP's Dig At Rahul Gandhi After ABVP Sweeps Delhi University Polls

"Jhooth Ki Goonj", BJP leaders termed the DUSU poll verdict as an indicator of what students think of the Congress. The results, announced Saturday evening, gave the RSS-affiliated student organisation the presidency, secretary and joint secretary posts. Independent candidate Deepanshu Shokeen won the vice-president's post, leaving the Congress-backed National Students' Union of India (NSUI) without any of the four central panel positions. The NSUI had won the vice-president's position in the previous year's election. "Heartfelt congratulations to all the dedicated workers of the council on the splendid victory of @ABVPVoice in the Delhi University Students' Union elections. This victory reflects the unwavering trust of the youth in the council's ideology of "Nation First" and its commitment to student welfare.

Arvind Kejriwal Missing From Delhi Voter List, Claims AAP. Poll Body Official Responds

New Delhi: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) said on Saturday that the names of former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his family have gone missing from Delhi's voter list, referring to notices issued under the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) by the Election Commission. An EC official later said the names are on the list, and notices have been issued only because they did not map

themselves to the previous SIR list. The final list is scheduled to be out on November 4. A notice was also issued to Chief Minister Rekha Gupta -- the reason being an age discrepancy relative to her parents -- though in her case the Electoral Registration Officer of Shalimar Bagh constituency said details had been verified and she's been added to the final list. In all, over 31 lakh elec-

tors have been issued notices as per details shared on Saturday. The draft voter list has 97.5 lakh names. That draft came after 47.5 lakh voters, almost a third of the total, were removed for varied reasons, such as having permanently shifted or being absent, having died, or being enrolled at multiple places. In the Kejriwal family's case, they are among those who received notices in the New

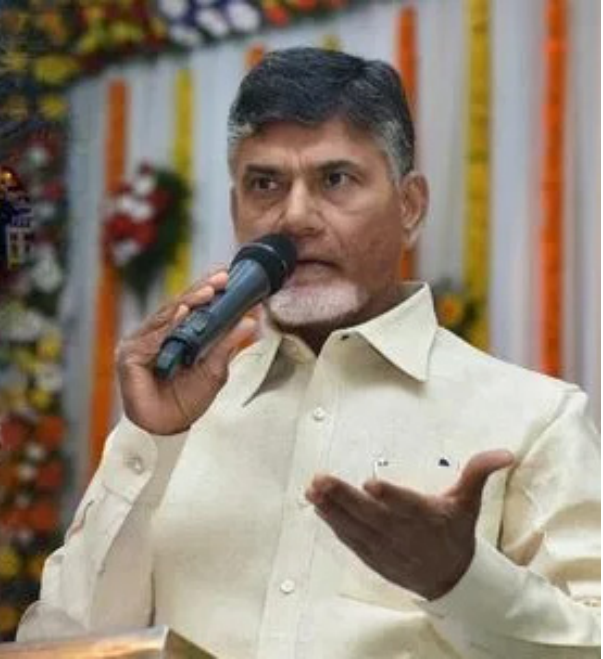
Delhi constituency. Besides Arvind Kejriwal and his wife Sunita Kejriwal, his parents, Gobind Ram Kejriwal and Gita Devi, and son Pulkit are on the list, a check on the Delhi election department website showed. All of them voted in last year's Delhi elections. The AAP official handle on X posted: "How is it possible that the names of three-time Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Ji and



his family members are missing from the Delhi voter list?" Chief Minister Rekha

Gupta, who has been a long-time resident and was a corporator in the past, had her name on the notice list.

Coronation for the poor.. House titles for 28,445 families



From Our Staff Reporter Visakhapatnam: Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu participated in the 'Pedalaku Pattabhishekam' program undertaken by the Andhra Pradesh government. On this occasion, the CM distributed house title deeds to 28,445 families from 11 mandals in Visakhapatnam. Land titles worth a total of Rs. 8,874 crore were distributed to the beneficiaries. The government has regularized 399 acres of land for the houses of the poor. Chandrababu said that with these titles, the uncertainty over houses for decades is being put to an end. He said that from now on, the beneficiaries will have full rights over their houses. 'There is no longer any fear for your homes' Speaking on the occasion, Chandrababu said that having a house of his own is the dream of every person. He said that his government is working with the spirit of NTR that the poor should have their own

houses. 'From now on, all rights to the houses you live in are yours. There is no dispute over your houses.. there is no fear,' Chandrababu said. He said that after getting the pattas, there will be an opportunity to take bank loans on the houses if necessary. He said that by receiving the house title deeds, poor families will have security over their property.

Chandrababu on the development of Uttar Andhra Chandrababu said that the government is giving priority to the development of Uttarandhra. He said that in addition to completing the Polavaram left canal and providing water to Anakapalle, Godavari water will be brought to Visakhapatnam. Chandrababu said that 91 projects have come up in Uttarandhra in the last two years and huge investments have been attracted to this region. He said that a total of Rs. 5.37 lakh crores of investments have been received. CM Chandrababu said that Visakhapatnam city will soon become a global city. He said that Visakhapatnam is one of the fastest developing cities in the country. He said that Bhogapuram Airport will become a game changer for Uttarandhra. He said that a pipeline system will be set up by next year so that there is no water problem in Visakhapatnam and that his government's goal is to ensure that there is no water shortage in the future.

Chandrababu said that Tirupati has 89.41 percent greenery, which is unmatched anywhere in the country, and his goal is to take Visakhapatnam to the same level. Chandrababu alleged that when the coalition government came to power, the state was in debt of Rs. 10 lakh crore and there were many land scams. He said that they are overcoming all of them and putting the state on the path of development. He criticized that peace was disrupted in peaceful Uttar Andhra during the previous government's tenure. He said that the buildings constructed in Rushikonda will be put into use as soon as possible. He made it clear that no matter how many data centers come, Visakhapatnam will not face any water problem. He said that the coalition government is taking every step forward in the reconstruction of the state and that the pattas being given to the poor are like a coronation for the future of their children. Chandrababu said that the steel plant that was

in debt has been brought into profit and that Visakhapatnam will develop further with the arrival of the railway zone. **YSRCP rule is a nightmare: Chandrababu** CM Chandrababu Naidu criticized the YSRCP rule as a nightmare for the state. He accused it of wasting people's lives with low-quality liquor. He said that land grabbing was done everywhere in the state and even Srivari Laddu was adulterated. He said that even after the coalition government came to power, the YSRCP conspiracies did not stop and many cases were filed against Mega DSC. He criticized that they are now spreading lies after the courts gave them a hard time. He accused them of filing false cases to prevent companies from coming to Visakhapatnam. He said that legal complications related to temple lands will be removed. Chandrababu said that 5.50 lakh houses have been constructed in the last two years and another 5.52 lakh houses will be sanctioned next March.

CM Chandrababu Naidu to visit Chittoor district on September 21st and 22nd

Chittoor District, September 19 : Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu will visit Chittoor district for two days on September 21 and 22. On September 21, the CM will attend several programs in Kuppam constituency of Chittoor district. The Chief Minister will reach Tumsi village of Shantipuram mandal of Chittoor district by helicopter from Bengaluru. **CM participating in water conservation program at HNSS canal.** CM Chandrababu Naidu will go to the HNSS canal at Gundisetypalli from Tumsi. Later, he will participate in the Jalaharati program at the HNSS canal. Also, the Chief Minister will lay the foundation stone of the Rythu Bazaar in Thambiganipally, Kuppam Municipality. He will participate in a public meeting and address a public meeting in Kuppam Kothapet. Also, he will launch several development projects. The CM will visit the gallery of development projects and programs. On the night of September 21st, he will participate in a special program at Kuppam Railway Station. After that, he will start the service of Dadar -

Puducherry Express at Kuppam Railway Station. CM Chandrababu Naidu will participate in the flag-off ceremony of Train No. 11005 Dadar - Puducherry Express. On September 22, he will inaugurate the municipality HAM projects across the state in Shantipuram mandal. EC poultry sheds will be inaugurated. On the evening of September 22, the CM will travel to Bengaluru from Tumsi helipad in Chittoor district. He will reach Vijayawada by plane from Bengaluru. That evening, CM Chandrababu will go to his Undavalli residence at 6.20 pm.

back seat of the bus spread to the entire bus within moments and completely burnt

A bus caught fire in Srikakulam district.. a major accident was avoided

Srikakulam District, September 19: A major accident was averted in Narasannapet, Srikakulam district. A private travel bus going from Bhadrachalam to Palasa suddenly caught fire. The incident took place at Narasannapet Jammu Junction. The fire that started in the



it down. Five passengers, two drivers, and a cleaner who were alert immediately got off the bus in a hurry, thus saving lives. Full details regarding the incident are yet to be known. The incident took place at Narasannapet Jammu Junction, causing traffic disruption in the area for some time. Later, the police cleared the traffic.

MLA warns brokers against irregularities in Polavaram R&R land acquisition

From Our Staff Reporter Polavaram District: MLA Chirri Balaraju has warned that strict action will be taken against anyone who commits any irregularities in the land acquisition and compensation process being undertaken as part of the R&R package of the Polavaram project. He advised the displaced people not to trust the

middlemen in the matter of land acquisition compensation and get cheated. He made it clear that anyone who tries to obtain compensation through fake documents using his name will not be tolerated. The MLA warned that anyone who commits any irregularities in this matter, including officials and middle-

men, will have to face criminal cases. He said that he would bring the allegations related to land acquisition and compensation distribution in the Polavaram project flood zones to the attention of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan. Chirri Balaraju said that a comprehen-

sive investigation will be conducted on this. He said that steps need to be taken to ensure that the compensation to be given to the displaced people reaches only those who are eligible without any irregularities. He suggested that the authorities should work to provide compensation transparently by examining the records

and documents related to land rights. On the other hand, the MLA said that the coalition government has increased the land acquisition compensation by 10 percent. He assured that the government will support genuine displaced persons who are eligible as per the rules and the records related to the land are in order.



EDITORIAL

A Major Crisis from the Space Arms Race

Outer space, which should be used for scientific experiments, global peace, and security, is now gradually turning into a new strategic battlefield as mutual distrust among major powers continues to grow. The concept of a “space war,” until now largely confined to Hollywood science-fiction films, is increasingly entering the real world. The official disclosure by U.S. Air Force Secretary Troy Meink that the United States has deployed space-control weapons in orbit to counter the strategies of rival countries, particularly China and Russia, has triggered concern among nations worldwide. At a time when China and Russia are expanding their military capabilities in space, the U.S. announcement has opened a new chapter in strategic competition beyond Earth. Although China and Russia have strongly opposed U.S. actions, they too are rapidly developing advanced counter-space technologies and hypersonic glide vehicles capable of disrupting the satellites of other countries. India, too, demonstrated its anti-satellite missile capability through “Mission Shakti” in 2019 and has emerged as a significant power in the field of space security. Thus, countries are increasingly seeking to expand their space weapons capabilities amid mutual distrust, fuelling an arms race in outer space. Attacks involving space weapons can destroy satellites. Communication, navigation, weather forecasting, aviation, mobile communication, GPS, banking transactions and several other critical systems across the world depend heavily on satellites. The destruction of satellites could therefore trigger a major crisis on Earth. This is why the world is concerned over the U.S. announcement regarding the deployment of space-control weapons. With the foresight that outer space should not become a battlefield, the “Outer Space Treaty” was concluded in 1967. At least 118 countries, including India, the United States, China and Russia (then the Soviet Union), have signed the treaty. It prohibits the placement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in Earth’s orbit or on the Moon. It also prohibits the establishment of military bases, weapons testing and mineral extraction on celestial bodies. However, the treaty contains no specific provisions concerning conventional space-control weapons, lasers, anti-satellite weapons or other military equipment operating in orbit. Taking advantage of this gap, major powers are now undermining the spirit of the treaty through the use of highly advanced missile technologies.

There are growing concerns that this could lead to a dangerous escalation of the arms race in outer space. Some countries have possessed the capabilities required for space warfare for a long time. In January 1975, it was reported that the Soviet Union had remotely fired 20 rounds from its Salyut 3 space station. In 2007, China, and in 2019, India, destroyed their own defunct satellites using missiles launched from Earth. However, none of these actions violated the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. China and Russia have also developed space-based electronic warfare capabilities. Nevertheless, these developments do not establish that a full-scale nuclear arms race in space has begun.

The U.S. plan to deploy weapons in space was not a decision taken overnight. The process has been underway for many years. In January 2001, the U.S. Space Commission, headed by then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, recommended a space policy designed to serve U.S. interests. It proposed giving the U.S. President the option of deploying weapons in space to prevent threats to American interests and, if necessary, to conduct attacks against such threats. After the United States withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 2002, its scope for developing space-based missile defence systems increased further. These initial steps gained momentum in 2019 during Donald Trump’s first presidential term and eventually led to the establishment of the U.S. Space Force. Thus, the plan to deploy weapons in space has been developing in the United States for the past 25 years. Space weapons are broadly of two types. Kinetic weapons involve missiles physically striking satellites and breaking them apart. Non-kinetic weapons, on the other hand, can use laser beams to damage the sensors of enemy satellites, launch cyberattacks, jam signals and cause other forms of disruption. In these circumstances, the time has come to formulate new international laws and stringent regulations under the aegis of the United Nations, in line with current technological developments, to ensure that outer space remains limited to peaceful purposes.

Narendra Modi@25: Disrupt, Deliver, Dominate

There is a trend of sorts in Indian families to celebrate milestone birthdays, anniversaries, and occasions. The 25th straight year in public life as an administrator is something certainly worth celebrating for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. But sometimes these milestone moments are also an occasion for us to trace back the journey to where it started from. The crucible of this quarter-century began in the autumn of 2001 in Gandhinagar, under circumstances that would have broken a conventional politician. Taking charge of a state reeling from a catastrophic earthquake, an exhausted exchequer, and deep administrative paralysis, Narendra Modi immediately discarded the incrementalism of status-quo governance. Instead, he treated the crisis as a blank slate for structural reinvention. If you look at him now, you will figure out that he has followed this mantra all through. Break the status quo. Always! The way to really understand how PM Modi has kept a fine balance between the art of realpolitik and principled economic decisions. Gujarat is a great test case for this.

Jyotigram Yojana was one of the many successful moves he made as Chief Minister. It was a fairly simple move. How do

you uncouple agriculture power from politics? There were the shenanigans of state electricity boards, rampant corruption at the local level, and a general belief that "promise of electricity" was better than "actual supply of electricity." Narendra Bhai would have none of this. Many old-timers in Gujarat BJP have told me that the basic change Narendra Modi brought in political thinking was that "real delivery" could be converted into "election-winning" mechanism too. Why just talk about doing something during elections? Why not actually go ahead and do it? The vibrant Gujarat summit was his other major disruption to national political discourse. Gujarat has always been a state blessed with a massive NRI population. But it was never converted into an "aspirational form of domestic politics" as Modi managed to do. In 2003, a state event leading to garnering of MoUs worth over 14 billion USD was an unthinkable factor. But Modi managed to do this. If you look back now, the culture of each Indian state from Rajasthan to UP, from Maharashtra to Assam, wanting to compete with each other to attract foreign investment really started from the vibrant Gujarat sum-

mit itself. In its last edition in 2024, a total of 41,299 project MoUs were signed, securing proposed investment commitments totaling Rs 26.33 lakh crore (approximately \$315+ billion USD). Of course, critics will point out to the actual conversion rate, but even a 10 per cent actual realisation over a period of time gives any state a huge momentum.

But the real story of Narendra Modi at 76 is way beyond these numbers. Even after 12 years in power, still managing to be BJP's neta No.1, standing head and shoulders above all opposition leaders requires a special skill set. That skill set in one word could be traced to "connection". Narendra Modi still remains India's foremost "connected" leader. For someone often criticised for not doing press conferences, his ability to connect directly with his electorate through social media and not just political rallies is a masterclass in politics.

But in spite of all this dominance, there is a challenge as well for the Prime Minister. How does he repackage himself for that generation which hasn't really seen the process how he changed the entire character of national politics. For that young generation, formulating its views on



Instagram reels and AI videos, a leader must be seen to be constantly getting subjected to scrutiny. A leader who is accessible but also someone who can answer in unscripted environments. Given the fact that PM Modi has displayed his ability to identify the problems and take course-correction steps immediately, it is just a matter of time before he moves forward on this front too.

In conclusion, these lines are perhaps the best way to capture his life.

A master strategist forging pathways where others only see the stall,

He reads the pulse of millions, watching rivals stumble and fall.

With unyielding focus and a vision bound to outlast the fray,

He reshapes the nation's destiny and quietly leads the way.

Modi@25: Building The Foundations Of A New India

It was October 2001, and Narendra Modi had just been sworn in as the Chief Minister of Gujarat. One of the first questions that he put to his team was whether bureaucrats knew how a sewing machine was procured by rural women. A key reform he brought in was to launch a large-scale cattle inoculation campaign that actually took cattle care to the doorstep of rural farmers, enhancing the lives and incomes of their livestock.

Very clearly, this highlighted his learnings from his earlier days as a Sangh Pracharak - how difficult it is to sustain and create a livelihood. It is the very foundation of governance that defines his 25-year regime.

Working Up Through Basic Fundamentals

Livelihood and Logistics as the basic foundation of a turbo-charged economy - These are the key drivers of 25 years of evolution:

ODOP - A Low-Cost Employment Multiplier

The One District One Product (ODOP) scheme identifies products with local competitive advantage. It supports artisans, farmers and MSMEs. It focuses on improving branding, packaging and quality. Provide market and e-commerce access. Develop district-level export clusters.

Generate employment outside major cities. Today, several public spaces like bus stands or train stations have a shop dedicated to the ODOP scheme. These steps include agriculture, textiles, food processing, handicrafts and minerals.

Setting Logistics Right - The Actual Lifeline

Logistics and Transportation constitute the bedrock of any business. The Railways constitute the lifeline of the Indian population. The administration seems to have paid attention to setting its track record right over there first.

The efficiency of any transport network is measured by its throughput - how many passenger or freight trains can a stretch of track handle in a given period of time. Doubling and electrification enhance speed, thus increasing transformation. The Railways have undergone an incredible transformation program leading to a near 100 per cent electrification of Indian Railways. In 2014, about a third of the Indian Railways network was electrified. Today, by 2026, close to 99 per cent of the network is electrified. Multiple gauges have been avoided. Between 2004 and 2014, the pace of electrification was about 1.42 kms/day.

From 2014 onwards, the pace of electrification has touched a peak of 19.6 km/day in 2022-23, leading to a near total electrification today. In several cases, doubling has been coupled along with electrification.

Distances Never The Same

It has been the speeding of several trains that make commute faster. Railways significantly increased the length of high-speed-capable tracks, with over 80 per cent of the national network now supporting speeds of 110 km/h and above compared to about 40 per cent in 2014. This has meant faster trains. For example, a poor man's Rajdhani -- The Sampark Kranti -- covers the distance between Mumbai and Delhi, with second-class sleeper coaches, in less than 17 hours. Earlier a privilege held only by the Rajdhani passengers.

The Vande Bharat trains have also meant that large mobile populations have moved from the roads or airlines to railways going forward. Some of the most popular Vande Bharat trains have been operational in the south, providing valuable connectivity between key metros such as Chennai, Bengaluru, Mumbai and Ahmedabad, where the trains have almost obviated the need for expensive flight travel, in addition to catering to high-density routes such as Chennai, Tirunelveli, Kochi,

B e n g a l u r u , Thiruvananthapuram and Mangaluru.

A same-day return business travel is now possible between Thiruvananthapuram and Calicut, and Chennai and Madurai, something not thinkable in the pre-Vande Bharat era. The sheer capacity available between Delhi and Varanasi has highly reduced the advance booking period for tickets between these two cities.

Getting External Logistics Right - A Speedy Drive To The Globe

The National Logistics Policy, launched in September 2022, was intended to achieve the following: bring logistics costs to global benchmarks and into single digits and reduce cargo dwell time and improve supply-chain predictability.

ULIP (Unified Logistics Information Platform) connects 44 systems belonging to 11 ministries. The Digital Visibility systems implemented in India are similar to the ones implemented in the United States. It offers more than 2,000 data fields through 136 APIs. More than 1,700 companies have registered. Private companies have developed more than 200 applications. The system had processed over 200 crore API transactions by the end of 2025. Logistics Data Bank now provides visibility over container movement at 18 ports, 31

terminals and approximately 5,800 railway stations.

The DPDP scheme represents two components - DPD - a movement from port terminal directly to the importer and DPE - exporters moving factory-stuffed containers directly to the port terminal. The objective is to bypass unnecessary CFS (Container Freight Station) movement and reduce handling and lift-on/lift-off charges, storage, dwell time, truck movements, Inventory Carrying Costs and Congestion around ports. Inland waterway tonnage has exceeded the 2030 target.

With this, ports have seen a vast improvement in cargo handling capacities and dwell times. Over the past decade, cargo handling times have improved. Indian ports have significantly improved their operational efficiency, with average vessel turnaround times dropping from 96 hours to under 49 hours over the past decade.

Container dwell times have improved significantly. They have dropped to under 3 days, outperforming major logistics hubs like the US (7 days) and Germany (10 days).

Synchronous - A Responsive Nervous System For The Government

Gati Shakti is essentially an infrastructure-planning platform. It was expected to make ministries plan projects jointly. Prevent situations where a port

is completed without a rail line or a logistics park without highway access. Use GIS data to identify missing links. Reduce land-acquisition, approval and project-execution delays. Avoid duplication of infrastructure. Improve first- and last-mile connectivity.

By August 2026, 58 ministries and departments were integrated. More than 3,291 data layers were made available. 396 projects worth approximately Rs 18.66 lakh crore had been evaluated. 256 projects had been sanctioned. 198 were under implementation.

Dedicated Freight Corridors - Unblocked Arteries

What it was expected to achieve: Separate freight trains from passenger services. Permit longer, heavier and faster freight trains. Enable double-stack container movement on the Western DFC. Improve rail reliability and transit time. Shift long-haul cargo from road to rail. Reduce fuel consumption, congestion and emissions. Release capacity for passenger trains on existing railway lines. As of September 2026, the government announced the completion of the entire 2,843-km Eastern and Western DFC network. A silent re-orientation of the economy from its very inner annals has been at the core of the 25 years of the public life of PM Modi. Like the proverbial tree is known by its fruits, the future shall bear testimony to the foundational 25 years of governance of PM Modi.

Can Problems Be Resolved Through Double Standards?

Do the United States, Europe, India and several other countries genuinely believe that the vast seas and straits of the world belong to no one and should remain open for freedom of navigation? Or do they uphold this principle only when it suits their interests?

The Americans have claimed South America, Central America and the Atlantic region as their sphere of influence through the Monroe Doctrine and what may be described as the “Donroe Doctrine.” They have asserted that they have the authority to decide what can and cannot be done in those regions, and they continue to act accordingly. The recent blockades of countries such as Venezuela and Cuba, which do not suit their interests, through maritime routes are examples of this. The same is evident in the Pacific. The island groups stretching from Japan in the north and eastward and southward to the Philippines are described as the First Island Chain and Second Island Chain, with the argument that Chinese vessels

should not be allowed to cross them. Military bases have been established throughout the region in allied countries.

Certain statements are repeated so often that they create the illusion of being unquestionable truths. This is a common phenomenon, and it applies to international affairs as well. Once such an impression is created, certain facts are pushed into the background. There is little need to point out that this is precisely the intention of those who promote such narratives.

Take, for example, the issue of freedom of navigation. Although the expression has existed in general usage for a long time, it came into widespread prominence during the Iran war. Even ordinary people who had never heard the phrase before are now familiar with it. How did this happen? On February 28, the United States and Israel launched surprise attacks on Iran. This was an development that not only Iran but the world as a whole had not expected. Why launch attacks in the middle of negotiations over

Iran’s nuclear programme, when those talks were reportedly progressing satisfactorily?

This issue has been discussed many times, so there is no need to go into it here. However, when two powerful militaries launched attacks, the immediate question was how Iran could withstand them. After several days, when Iran had carried out a sufficient number of retaliatory strikes against the United States and Israel, there was talk that it could resort to asymmetric warfare. Asymmetric warfare has long been a strategy used by the weaker side against a stronger adversary. The well-known story of David and Goliath is an example. The lesson traditionally drawn from it is that, by adopting such a strategy, the weaker side can ultimately prevail.

What did Iran do accordingly? It closed the Strait of Hormuz, through which oil and other commodities are transported to much of the world. This led to fuel shortages, increases in the prices of fuel and other goods, and widespread

distress. Pressure mounted on the United States. After several weeks of developments, the attacks were halted, except for occasional incidents. In other words, Iran’s asymmetric warfare strategy had an effect.

There is an interesting point to be made here. The story of David and Goliath mentioned above originated in the context of the Philistines, who were enemies of the Israelites. The Philistines and Palestinians are distinct peoples, although the region is the same. The story comes from the Bible. In that ancient account of asymmetric warfare, David, who defeated Goliath, belonged to the Israelite side. The story has now been strangely reversed: Israel has assumed the role of Goliath, while Iran has taken on the role of David.

The reason for discussing all this is that Iran has been successfully using the Strait of Hormuz as part of its asymmetric warfare strategy. More recently, the Houthis, an allied group, have begun using the Bab al-Mandeb Strait in a similar manner.

Ladakh Leaders Withdraw Protest Plan Amid Progress In Talks With Centre



The Central Government is holding the next round of talks with the leadership of Ladakh in Kargil on constitutional safeguards and a unique model of governance for the region. The political groups in Ladakh have reciprocated by withdrawing the proposed protests to mark the first anniversary of the killing of four persons last year. Instead, a symbolic march will be held in Leh and a rally in Kargil on September 23. Climate activist and member of the Leh Apex Body, Sonam Wangchuk, said that calling off the protests was due to the prevailing weather conditions and some warmth in politics. "Due to prevailing weather conditions with cold nights, we're making it into a symbolic 20 Km march on 23rd September. followed

by martyrs day event on 24th. Inconvenience regretted, look forward to joining you and marching together," Sonam Wangchuk said in a post on X. Sajjad Kargili, Co-Chairman of the Kargil Democratic Alliance, said that they have called off the march from Kargil to Leh that was scheduled to start today. He said the KDA had decided to hold a rally in Kargil on September 23. "The process of talks with the centre is underway. The central government is holding the next round of talks in the first week of October in Kargil. So instead of going ahead with a long march, we have decided to hold a rally on September 23," said Sajjad Kargili. The central government has agreed to grant constitutional safeguards

under Article 371 to Ladakh. The Union Territory will also have an elected body to govern the Himalayan region under a 'sui generis' model, the first such experiment in India. Following the latest round of talks early last week, Ashish Kundra, Chief Secretary of Ladakh, told NDTV that Parliament will amend Article 371 to provide adequate constitutional safeguards to Ladakh. He said the Union Ministry of Home Affairs has already started the process of granting constitutional safeguards and establishing an elected body for Ladakh. Article 371 of the Indian Constitution grants temporary, transitional and special powers to certain states to meet their unique regional and social needs. Kundra said that it is a unique model the Centre is working

on. Under the new model, Ladakh will get an elected body to govern the Union Territory, but it will not be a Union Territory with a legislature. "It's a 'sui generis' model of governance. Ladakh will have an elected body, but it will not be UT with legislature or state with legislature," Kundra told. A 'sui generis' model is a standalone legal framework created to govern a unique situation. The Latin phrase sui generis means "of its own kind" or "unique." Kundra is part of the central government team holding talks with Ladakhi leaders. On Tuesday, the two sides held talks in Delhi. Following the headway in talks, several Ladakhi leaders have urged the Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance not to go ahead with the protests. Former MP from Ladakh, Thupstan Chhewang, has said that the recent meeting between the Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance with the Ministry of Home Affairs was "fruitful and witnessed positive discussions on several key issues concerning Ladakh."

1st District-Level Data Reveals Wide Gaps In Female Workforce Participation



New Delhi: India's first district-level labour market estimates released by the National Statistical Office on Friday showed wide differences in employment participation across the country, with nearly 58 per cent of districts recording a female labour force participation rate of at least 40 per cent, and unemployment rates across most of the country stayed within a moderate 0.5 per cent to 5.5 per cent band. The data, released under the revamped Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), provide district-level estimates of labour force participation rate (LFPR), worker population ratio (WPR), unemployment rate (UR) and NEET (youth not in employment, education or training) for the first time. Surat in Gujarat recorded the highest labour force participa-

tion and worker population ratios among major districts, at 68.6 per cent and 67.8 per cent, respectively, followed by Araria in Bihar and Salem in Tamil Nadu. Darbhanga in Bihar posted the lowest levels on both measures. More than three-quarters of districts reported NEET rates - the share of youth aged 15-29 not in employment, education or training - below 30 per cent. Labour force participation and worker population ratios for people aged 15 and above fell within the 40-80 per cent range in roughly 98 per cent of districts nationwide. Among the country's 100 most populous districts, worker population ratios ranged from 37.3 per cent to 76.7 per cent. The distribution nevertheless differs within that broad band. More than half of districts - 52.7 per

cent - recorded LFPR between 60 per cent and 80 per cent, while 54.3 per cent had WPR between 40 per cent and 60 per cent. The data showed substantial differences in women's participation in the labour market across districts. Among the districts selected from each state's 10 most populous districts by female population, Hamirpur in Himachal Pradesh recorded the highest female LFPR at 80.9 per cent, followed by Budgam in Jammu and Kashmir at 71.4 per cent, Mayurbhanj in Odisha at 71.8 per cent and Surguja in Chhattisgarh at 69 per cent. At the lower end were East Delhi at 18.9 per cent, Siwan in Bihar at 24.7 per cent and Patiala in Punjab at 39.3 per cent. Overall, around 57.8 per cent of districts recorded female LFPR of 40 per cent or higher, pointing

to considerable differences in women's engagement with the labour market across regions. District unemployment rates were also concentrated at relatively low levels. About 43.1 per cent of districts recorded unemployment between 0.5 per cent and 3 per cent, while another 34.7 per cent fell between 3 per cent and 5.5 per cent. Only 14.9 per cent of districts recorded unemployment above 5.5 per cent, while 7.2 per cent reported rates below 0.5 per cent. Among the 100 most populous districts, South 24 Parganas in West Bengal and Araria in Bihar recorded the lowest unemployment rate at 0.9 per cent, followed by Ahmedabad at 1.1 per cent. The data also provide a district-level picture of young people aged 15-29 who are not in employment, education or training. About 76.2 per cent of districts recorded NEET rates below 30 per cent, but nearly one-fourth - 23.7 per cent - had rates above 30 per cent. Ernakulam in Kerala recorded the lowest NEET rate among the 100 most populous districts at 9.6 per cent, followed by Coimbatore at 14.5 per cent and Bengaluru Urban at 15 per cent. The figures suggest that labour-market outcomes vary substantially even among large population centres, with differences extending beyond headline unemployment to participation and youth engagement.

Fuel Pumps Warn They Won't Accept UPI Payments Above Rs 2,000 Over New Fee

Petrol pump dealers in Madhya Pradesh and other parts of the country have raised concerns over the proposed merchant discount rate (MDR) on UPI transactions, with some dealers warning that they may stop accepting UPI payments above Rs 2,000 from October 15. According to NDTV Profit, petrol pump dealers have threatened to halt large-value UPI payments unless fuel

retailers are exempted from the proposed 0.4% MDR. The move could affect customers who regularly use UPI to make higher-value fuel payments. The dealers are seeking a complete waiver of MDR on UPI transactions at petrol pumps. They have argued that rising operating costs, along with unchanged fuel commissions, have made it difficult for them to absorb any additional transaction

charges. The All India Petroleum Dealers Association, as reported by ANI, has also sought a complete exemption from MDR on UPI payments made at petrol pumps. Meanwhile, IANS reported that petroleum dealers in Madhya Pradesh have demanded the withdrawal of the proposed UPI tax and called for fuel sales to be exempted from MDR. The issue has also drawn concern

from the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT). PTI reported that CAIT described the proposed move by Madhya Pradesh petrol pump dealers to stop accepting UPI payments above Rs 2,000 as a serious concern. If implemented, the proposed restrictions could make it more difficult for consumers to use UPI for larger fuel purchases, particularly at petrol pumps that adopt the limit.

3 Suicides In 7 Months: IIT Bombay Students Call For "Action, Accountability"

New Delhi: IIT Bombay, a place with academic excellence and social prestige, has been witnessing massive protests today over the death by suicide of a second-year student after he was caught using an AI platform on his mobile phone to seek answers during an examination. This was the third suicide case on the campus within a span of seven months. In February, a second-year IIT Bombay student died by suicide in his hostel room at the institute's Powai campus. In July, a 20-year-old student similarly died by suicide. Last evening, Sahil Wakode was caught uploading his examination question paper to ChatGPT to seek answers. Officials said that the university did not initiate any disciplinary action against him, and instead counselled him and assured him it would not affect his career adversely. Hours later, he was found dead in his hostel room.

Protests at IIT Bombay

More than 400 students staged a protest inside the IIT Bombay campus over Wakode's death. A group of students alleged that the institute's authorities had threatened Wakode with a one-year suspension, adding that it could have required him to leave the hos-



tel and stay outside the campus. Students claimed that disciplinary action of this nature could potentially have delayed completion of his engineering course beyond the standard four-year duration. They also alleged that the administration had not disclosed all details surrounding the circumstances of the student's death. One of the students said that several such incidents had occurred on campus this year and questioned whether sufficient steps were being taken to understand their causes. Another demanded action and accountability from the administration. "I am a 3rd-year undergraduate student in the Electrical branch at IIT Bombay. We are protesting today because a suicide

occurred at our college. We have come out to demand accountability and transparency from the administration. This isn't the first incident. There have been many this year, with two occurring in just the last two months. We are completely in the dark about why this is happening or what the underlying reasons are," the student said. He added, "We simply want the Dean, the Director, and the administration to provide a report assuring us that they will look into the matter, ensure accountability and transparency, and guarantee that such incidents do not happen again on their watch."

IIT Bombay's statement on student's death

The institute, in a statement, said that the circum-

stances surrounding the student's death are being "looked into" by the authorities. "IIT Bombay is deeply saddened by the loss of a student. The Institute is extending support to the student's friends, classmates, faculty members, and others affected by this tragic incident," it said. It added, "No disciplinary action was initiated against the student. The matter was also discussed with the student by the instructor and the Head of the Department, who counselled him and assured him that the incident would not adversely affect his academic career. The student subsequently returned to his hostel room. Later in the evening, he was found dead in his room."

IIT Bombay Student Warned Of 1-Year Suspension For Using ChatGPT In Exam? What Institute Said

Mumbai: Sahil Wakode, a second-year Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay student, died by suicide hours after he was caught using a mobile during an exam on Friday. The institute said that Wakode was caught uploading the examination question paper on ChatGPT to seek answers during the examination. After his death, many students held protests in the institute, claiming that he was threatened with a one-year suspension. The officials, however, said that no disciplinary action was initiated against him.

What IIT Bombay Said

"A second-year student of the Department of Energy Science and Engineering at IIT Bombay died by suicide today evening. Earlier in the day, during an examination, the student was found using a mobile phone in the exam hall. He had uploaded the examination question paper on ChatGPT to seek answers," the IIT Bombay said in a statement. "No disciplinary action was initiated against the student. The matter was also dis-



cussed with the student by the instructor and the Head of the Department, who counselled him and assured him that the incident would not adversely affect his academic career," the statement read. The institute said that Wakode had subsequently returned to his hostel room. "Later in the evening, he was found dead in his room," the institute said. **Protests Against Suicide Inside Campus** Following the incident, students began protesting on the IIT Powai campus, and alleged that the insti-

tute was not revealing the complete truth about the circumstances surrounding the incident. Students claimed that he had been threatened with a one-year suspension. They said that if suspended, the student would have had to vacate the hostel and live outside the campus. According to the students, such action could also have extended the student's engineering course from four years to five years or longer. The protesting students alleged that fear and pressure over the disciplinary action may

have contributed to Wakode taking the extreme step. However, this claim has not been independently verified. The protesting students demanded "accountability" from the institute's administration. "The reason for our protest is that a suicide took place in our college today. That is why we have gathered to protest, to demand accountability, transparency, and answers from our administration," a student said. Mumbai Police have now registered an FIR in this case.

2 Ganesh Idols Decked Up In Rs 2.9 Crore In Cash In Telangana



B h a d r a d r i Kothagudem: Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations in Telangana's Palvancha drew huge attention this year after two Lord Ganesha idols were decorated with Indian currency notes with a combined face value of Rs 2.9 crore. One of the displays was organised by members of the Kapu community, who

decorated their Ganesha idol with currency notes worth Rs 1.4 crore. Meanwhile, the Team Ekadanta organisation decorated its Ganesha idol with currency notes worth Rs 1.5 crore at another location in Palvancha. The idols and their surroundings were decorated with Rs 10, Rs 20, Rs 100, Rs 200 and Rs 500 denominations,

drawing huge crowds at the locations. One of the idols even had its garland and crown made of the currency notes. The two installations attracted large numbers of devotees, turning the currency-note decorations into prominent attractions during the festival. According to the organisers, the decorations were arranged with

contributions from local traders. Bankers also supplied fresh currency notes for the elaborate displays at the pandal with a "Gajapathi" idol. This is not the first time the industrial town has seen such a unique decoration of its Ganesha pandals and idols. In 2024, the Kapu Sangham Ganesh Utsav Committee at the Ambedkar Centre decorated a Ganesha idol and its stage with new currency notes valued at Rs 1.1 crore. The decoration used Rs 500, Rs 200 and Rs 100 denominations arranged into floral designs, with a large currency garland also placed on the idol. Additionally, the stage of the Ganesha festival organised under the Kapu Sangham was decorated with Rs 1.5 crore in currency. Before that, in 2023, currency notes valued at Rs 1 crore was used for decoration in one of the Ganpati pandals.

Massive Fire At Jaipur's UNESCO-Recognised Parkota Bazar



A fire broke out Thursday morning in Purohit Ji ka Katla near Badi Choupad in Jaipur's Parkota Bazar -- a market that UNESCO has listed as a World Heritage site. The blaze, which started roughly 100 metres from the iconic Hawa Mahal, has raised serious questions about safety arrangements. Firefighters took about four hours to bring the flames under control. The fire started around 7 am, and there were no casualties. During day-time hours, the market is normally packed with thousands of people and many

foreign tourists; had the fire occurred then, it could have caused major loss of life.

The biggest concern is the firefighting infrastructure. About three-and-a-half years ago, the municipal corporation installed firefighting equipment at a cost of Rs 4 crore, but the systems were apparently never tested and no mock drills were conducted. When Civil Defence and the fire brigade arrived after the alarm, they found the installed systems switched off and inoperative, which hindered and delayed firefighting operations.

Fire personnel said all the hydrants were jammed and dry -- there was no water. They had to bring hoses from outside and, because the market's narrow, old lanes cannot accommodate fire trucks, crews had to lay pipes by hand, which took additional time.

Police are investigating the cause of the fire; initial indications point to a short circuit in a shop. A shop owner, Rajiv Kumar Jain, said he owns five shops and pays lakhs of rupees annually as trade tax. "We collectively pay Rs 40 lakh to the corporation. Doesn't

the corporation have any responsibility? We pay our duties and taxes - so why don't they maintain safety? Goods worth Rs 2.5 crore of mine have been destroyed," he said.

NDTV's inspection at the site found rusted, sealed hydrants and tangled hoses. Traders had draped clothes and bags over several hydrants, showing clearly that the systems were not in use.

Kamal Kishore Pitalia, president of Purohit Ji ka Katla traders' association, said they have repeatedly raised the issue with the municipal corporation but officials have not acted. "All corrupt officials must be held accountable," he demanded. Former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot visited the market today to meet traders and said he had learned that municipal officers had issued NOCs under pressure from BJP leaders. He urged the government to take action against such lapses and to inspect fire-safety systems at all similar sites.

Peculiar Symbol, CCTV Footage: Inside Delhi Police Probe In Rape-Murder Case

New Delhi: A peculiar symbol noticed on a tempo after analysing 50-camera CCTV footage proved handy in the probe of the alleged gang rape and murder of a teenage girl here, whose decomposed body and the absence of a missing complaint by her family posed serious challenges for the Delhi Police. A girl, aged around 15-17 years, was allegedly raped, stabbed to death and dumped in an open field by four people, including three minors, after she went with them in the tempo. They were known to each other and allegedly drank together before the incident, the police said. The body of the girl was found in the field near Jaipal Rana's field on Kushak Road on September 13. It was so highly decomposed that the gender could not be immediately ascertained, while some parts of the body had also been eaten by stray dogs and one hand was found separated from the body, police said. The family had not filed a missing complaint, as the girl would often leave home and return



after a few days, according to police. Her parents are daily wage labourers, and the family did not have documents to establish her exact age. A doctor subsequently opined that her age was between 15 and 17 years, police said.

With no apparent eyewitness or immediate clue about the identity of the victim or the perpetrators, investigators initially faced difficulty in establishing what had happened and identifying those involved. There were also no CCTV cameras in the immediate vicinity of the spot. However, a camera located some distance away captured a

vehicle moving around the relevant time. The vehicle was identified as a tempo, but its registration number could not be seen because of darkness, police said. Investigators then began tracking the tempo across different CCTV locations. The only distinctive clue available was a peculiar symbol visible on the left side of the vehicle, which was used to identify and follow it through footage from around 50 cameras covering the area and adjoining routes. "We shortlisted the vehicle based on a round ring type symbol and AC unit attached to it," a senior po-

lice officer said. The painstaking CCTV analysis eventually helped police trace the suspected tempo to Khadda Colony in the Swaroop Nagar area during a night-long operation on the intervening night of September 15 and 16. The driver was identified and questioned, following which the investigation led to the apprehension of four persons, including three juveniles, allegedly linked to the crime. The accused has been identified as Shivam alias Sudama alias Chuchu, a resident of Khadda Colony, while the three juveniles are aged 16 and 17, police said.

AAP's Dalit Paradox: Ambedkar On The Wall, And A Minister Facing Grave Questions



Chandigarh: Punjab is home to the largest proportion of Dalits in its population among all states, and some recent developments have put the politics concerning them on the boil, giving the Opposition ammunition to fire at the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). A party that displays Dalit icon and eminent jurist Bhim Rao Ambedkar's portraits in its offices is now in the dock for a Dalit man's death. And it's linked to the drug crisis and rural distress, which have emerged as major issues on their own, six months ahead of the state polls. Gulzar Singh was a resident of Toor Banjara village that fell under the Dirba assembly constituency, from where Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema is the MLA. This area falls in Sangrur, the home district of Chief Minister Bhagwant

Mann. Gulzar Singh's death has raised questions over the state's high-decibel campaign 'Yudh Nasheyen Virudh' (War On Drugs). On September 6, 2026, Harpal Cheema, a Dalit himself, was present in Toor Banjara when Gulzar Singh confronted him publicly and asked why drugs were openly being sold in the village. Instead of supporting Gulzar Singh for providing information about drug smuggling in the village, the minister, staff, and locals allegedly moved him aside. Later that evening, Gulzar Singh was allegedly summoned and subjected to severe pressure, intimidation, and demands to issue an unconditional public apology for questioning the minister. Distressed, Gulzar Singh consumed a poisonous substance on September 8 and died. Before his death, he recorded a video

statement (dying declaration) naming minister Cheema and local panchayat members regarding the intimidation he faced. The minister has denied any role, and a case has been registered against some local leaders. The death triggered massive statewide political outrage and demands for accountability. He'd said his son was a drug addict. He not only told the minister publicly that his village was stressed due to the availability of drugs but also said three young men had died due to addiction. Opposition parties had already dubbed the anti-drugs campaign as mere propaganda, and are now accusing the AAP of double standards regarding promises made to the Dalit community and protecting their rights. Police charged the sarpanch, her husband, and three others with abetment to suicide and under the SC/ST Act, but Harpal Cheema is not named in that FIR, despite the man having made a dying declaration in a viral video clearly naming him as the reason behind his death. The political fallout is

larger than one FIR. The Congress, BJP and Shiromani Akali Dal have all called the FIR a "cover-up". AAP calls it "vulture politics". Another AAP minister, Laljit Singh Bhullar, had resigned from the cabinet on March 21, 2026, following allegations that he abetted the suicide of a state warehousing official. The Opposition wants action against Harpal Cheema along those lines.

Opposition Attacks AAP Over "Promises Not Kept"
Since Dalits form 32 per cent of the population, parties made a beeline to console Gulzar's family. The AAP government did swing into action and announced compensation of Rs 5 lakh besides promising employment to a member of his family. But the Opposition wants Cheema's resignation and action against him. "Sangrur is the district that elected the Chief Minister and the Finance Minister to the Assembly. The deceased, Gulzar Singh, complained in front of Harpal Cheema that 'chitta' (heroin) was being sold in his locality, that three children in his neighbourhood had already died of drug overdose, and that his own child was also taking drugs. Instead of investigating the accused and acting against the drug mafia, the Finance Minister sends his goons, pressure is put on the family, and

Gulzar Singh is pushed to the point of suicide," BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Tarun Chugh alleged.

Congress's Punjab affairs in-charge Sachin Pilot also put Cheema in the dock. "The point at which the state of Punjab stands today is a matter of concern for the entire country," he said, "The Chief Minister of this government had said we will end the drug problem in three months. Today four and a half years have passed, and more drugs are being sold than before."

"Today a poor Dalit daily-wage earner, Gulzar Singh, took his own life. Which human being takes his own life except when hope is already finished? That man's crime was that he spoke about his children's drug problem. He committed the crime of asking a question, and under pressure, he was forced to take his own life," he added. "We have no caste enmity with Harpal Singh Cheema, but he is the Finance Minister," he further said. "A man is taking his life and making a video saying he is taking his life with his own hands because of that person. Does the law not even require that there should be an investigation?" he asked, reminding AAP of its poll promise to appoint a Dalit MLA as Punjab's Deputy Chief Minister. Punjab Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa of the Congress said

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal is trying to "hide Harpal Cheema's sins", as the party had earlier dropped another cabinet minister, Laljit Singh Bhullar, who was also accused of abetment to suicide. "There cannot be two laws in this country. District manager (of Punjab State Warehousing Corporation) Gagandeep Singh Randhawa had also died by suicide. In his dying declaration, he named a cabinet minister, Laljit Singh Bhullar. The minister was arrested and has been in jail for seven months. Gulzar Singh clearly stated that Harpal Cheema was responsible for his death. Five people were arrested, but Harpal Cheema was not arrested," he noted. "Harpal Cheema is Kejriwal's adopted son. We will ensure his resignation. We will come onto the streets. From the Punjab and Haryana High Court, there will be his resignation, there will be his arrest, and he will also go to jail," Partap Singh Bajwa said.

What Cheema, Mann Said
Cheema has accused Opposition parties of trying to frame him. "The Opposition has turned a family's tragedy into vulture politics. The BJP, SAD and Congress have joined hands to frame a minister and play politics over a dead body. That is a conspiracy, not a search for

truth," he said. "I have enough evidence to answer every allegation. I will place it on record when the police and the SIT finish their work. I will not try this case on a microphone. The High Court has already said a minister cannot be dragged in merely because someone makes a statement. Gulzar Singh's own words are in the public domain. What the Opposition is running is a calculated campaign to exploit a death for votes," he added. On the issue of drugs, Harpal Cheema put the onus on previous governments. "Who pushed Punjab into the swamp of drugs and who trapped Punjab's youth? Ask in any village, any city, any bazaar of Punjab about that dark period from 2007 to 2017, when the BJP and the Akali Dal ran a coalition government. When did Punjab first hear the word 'chitta'?" he said.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann backed Cheema. "Talk about Punjab's roads! Talk about changing Punjab's picture! If you have a new plan, bring it. Otherwise, wherever some small incident has happened, all of you rush there, asking for resignations. This vulture politics that starts wherever there is even a faint smell of a corpse ought to stop," Bhagwant Mann said.

Punjab Government Announces 8% DA Hike Ahead Of 2027 Polls

Chandigarh: The Bhagwant Mann government's decision to increase Dearness Allowance by 8 per cent for around 8 lakh government employees and pensioners comes as a significant relief for the ruling AAP at a time when employees' grievances have emerged as a persistent political challenge.

Government employees were an important constituency for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the 2022 Punjab Assembly elections, with issues such as restoration of the Old

Pension Scheme forming a significant part of the party's pre-election pitch. After coming to power, the Mann government announced an in-principle decision to restore the OPS in October 2022 and subsequently notified the scheme in November. At the time, the move was widely linked by political observers to the importance of the employee vote.

But relations between the government and sections of the employee community have remained contentious. Staff unions

have repeatedly raised demands over pending DA, arrears, pension-related issues, allowances, probationary-period salaries and implementation of the OPS. In recent weeks, protests by employees, pensioners and scheme workers intensified.

Against this backdrop, the 8 per cent DA hike announced on September 18 assumes significance. The government says the increase will benefit around 8 lakh employees and pensioners, with the two 4 per cent instalments being

reflected in accounts from October.

The announcement also comes with a broader attempt by the Mann government to reset its engagement with employees.

Mann has announced compulsory monthly meetings with employee representatives to address grievances, while promising to examine long-pending demands including the 2.59 pension multiplication factor, OPS-related issues, restoration of allowances and Assured Career Progression.

Urgent Repairs Ordered On Key Bengaluru Stretch Facing Congestion

Bengaluru: Road repair work has begun along parts of Bengaluru's Varthur-Gunjur stretch following an NDTV report showing deteriorating infrastructure and severe traffic congestion, particularly affecting schoolchildren and daily commuters. DS Ramesh, Commissioner for Bengaluru East City corporation under Greater Bengaluru Authority, today directed officials to take up urgent repairs to ease traffic problems that have persisted along the busy corridor. The directions came after visited Varthur to report on traffic congestion and

the poor condition of the roads. Pothole-filling work has begun along Varthur-Gunjur roads following the report. The commissioner has asked officials to address the issues on priority. Among the immediate instructions is a directive to resolve the culvert slab issue on Gunjur Road. Officials have also been asked to explore an alternative route to ensure the smoother movement of vehicles, and repair potholes at Varthur Junction. The directions also include strict action against people illegally dumping waste, coordination with



traffic police during road repair works and the establishment of a smoother entry and exit system at Gunjur Palya. Daily traffic conditions on the route connecting Varthur and Gunjur with Whitefield have been a cause of concern for thousands of

commuters. The corridor serves a large number of residential communities and educational institutions, with school buses forming a big part of the daily traffic. The problems have become particularly visible during school commuting hours.

When The Rupee Fell, India Turned To NRIs. What Happened Next



Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a message for hundreds of overseas Indians gathered at Paris' Salle Pleyel concert hall in June: India was counting on its overseas community to send back dollars. As the war in Iran raged, the world's third-largest oil importer was staring at a surging energy bill. This raised concerns about India's need for greenbacks to pay for imports and sent the rupee to a record low. "I would urge all of you to deepen your engagement with India," Modi told the packed crowd at a community event in the French capital. "This will give new strength to India's development journey, while also giving you an opportunity to serve the land of your ancestors." Back home, Indian authorities had already begun laying the groundwork to support the rupee, which had weakened to an exchange rate near 97 per

dollar, from about 86 a year ago. Reserve Bank of India Governor Sanjay Malhotra and other senior officials at the central bank had been meeting with commercial financial institutions. One idea was to raise dollars through state banks, according to people familiar with the discussions who asked not to be named because the talks were private. That move was ruled out as bankers warned that borrowing when the rupee is weak could be seen as a sign of stress, spooking investors and ultimately making the borrowing more expensive. And so policymakers turned to a familiar move: encouraging commercial banks to attract foreign-currency deposits from Indians living overseas. The RBI would cover banks' cost of protecting against swings in the rupee, in effect allowing them to offer higher rates. A similar measure proved highly ef-

fective in 2013, when expectations of tighter US monetary policy triggered an exodus of foreign capital from emerging markets and sent the rupee plunging. The response was emphatic again. The Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) deposit plan, or FCNR (B), attracted \$127 billion, a record for such Indian programs, allowing authorities to close the hedging-cost incentive a month before schedule. The success highlights how India's 35 million-strong overseas community has grown into an economic powerhouse and a key financial backstop. The RBI didn't respond to a request for comment. The overseas community has transformed over the past three decades. Once dominated by blue-collar workers mainly in the Persian Gulf, it's now thick with well-heeled professionals from the likes of Alphabet Inc.'s

Sundar Pichai and International Business Machines Corp.'s Arvind Krishna as well as doctors and bankers. Beyond bank deposits, remittances to India - typically cash sent home by workers to family - were more than \$150 billion in 2025, according to World Bank data. That's more than twice the amount sent to Mexico, the world's second-largest recipient. Remittances do more than bolster India's supply of foreign currency. They support household consumption, savings, education and health care, providing a steady source of income even during economic shocks. Abu Dhabi-based engineer Avijit Chatterjee is one of the overseas savers drawn to the FCNR (B) program. He put in \$40,000 in June. Chatterjee, 46, says his foreign-currency deposits now total \$100,000, driven purely by the prospect of higher returns as he builds a nest egg for retirement in India. When the RBI was offering its incentives, commercial banks offered rates as high as 7.75% for depositors willing to tie up their money for a few years. "I need dollars without any exchange-rate risk, also to help sustain my son's education abroad," Chatterjee says over a Zoom call. Piyush Jhunjhunwala, the 44-year-old founder of Stockify Fintech in Dubai, says patriotism played a part in his decision to put \$1 million in an FCNR (B) plan, with the help of lever-

age from also borrowing dollars at a lower rate than the deposit pays. Such leverage can squeeze returns if short-term borrowing costs move the wrong way, but it can also amplify gains as the deposit pays more than the loan. "When I heard of the FCNR scheme, it was exciting because this is like a once-in-a-decade kind of an opportunity," says Jhunjhunwala, who's lived in Dubai for two decades. "This is our opportunity to give back and help our homeland." As the overseas community has grown wealthier, Indian banks, asset managers and property developers are competing for its accumulated savings in Dubai and Singapore, as well as Europe. They're also tapping investment funds by using international financial hubs, such as India's Gujarat International Finance Tec-City, or GIFT City. The special economic zone has its own regulatory and tax framework to attract global capital. In July, bankers at HSBC Holdings Plc held roadshows for high- and ultrahigh-net-worth Indians in Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore and the Middle East, in an effort to attract deposits, according to a person familiar with the events who was not authorized to speak to the news media. Dozens of prospective clients attended one gathering in Manila, another person said. They asked bankers about using leverage, its risks and how their dollars would be de-

ployed. HSBC did not respond to a Bloomberg email seeking comment. At Singapore-based investment firm Lighthouse Canton, nonresident Indians, or NRIs, now account for about half of its \$7 billion global assets, from a minuscule amount about eight years ago, says Shilpi Chowdhary, the firm's group chief executive officer. They're increasingly dipping their toes into equities, startups and venture capital funds, moving beyond long-popular property investments. "India will always be a preferred choice because we understand India," Chowdhary says. "It's a known devil." In 2024, Indian regulators relaxed restrictions on NRIs investing in foreign funds set up in GIFT City. Since then, overseas community investments there have topped \$7 billion. There are also signs that overseas community wealth could provide a particularly durable source of capital. Zerodha, one of India's largest stockbrokers, says its more than 50,000 NRI clients tend to invest more and hold for longer than domestic counterparts. Earlier this year their accounts were worth almost 10 times as much on average as those of resident investors. Property remains a major draw. Inflows into India's property market reached a record of more than \$14 billion in 2025, according to CBRE Research, with foreign investors - including high-

net-worth individuals and NRIs - making up about a quarter of the total. At DLF Ltd., India's largest real estate developer, NRIs accounted for 27% of sales in the year through March 2025, up from 23% a year earlier. The Indian rupee climbed the week the fundraising came to an end, but the flood of money from the overseas community wasn't enough to trigger a strong rally. That's partly due to India's waning appeal among foreign investors: The country replaced Indonesia as Asia's least-preferred stock market in an August survey of fund managers by Bank of America Corp. Many experts argue that India should put greater emphasis on attracting more long-term and less expensive sources of dollars, especially foreign direct investments - that is, active ownership stakes in businesses. Unlike bank deposits, dollars from FDI don't have to be paid back. India attracted almost \$100 billion of gross foreign direct investment in the year ended March 2026, according to official figures. That's less than the \$150 billion-plus in remittances in 2025, which help too. Former RBI Governor Duvvuri Subbarao referred to remittances as "good money" given they have grown from a modest source of foreign exchange into an important buffer for India's external finances. "We need to make it easier for the overseas community to send

money here," Subbarao says, suggesting easing the tax burden and lowering transaction costs among potential measures. "It makes sense to bank on the diaspora. Devesh Kapur, a professor of South Asian studies at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, refers to the overseas community as "insurance." But he says direct investment would make it even more powerful. He draws parallels with Chinese living outside the mainland, which historically sent less money home through remittances. Instead, entrepreneurs in Hong Kong, Taiwan and elsewhere in East Asia helped finance factories in the mainland, Kapur says, bringing manufacturing expertise, supply chains and international networks that led to China's emergence as an export powerhouse. There are also questions about whether the overseas community can be a reliable backstop indefinitely. A global immigration crackdown is slowing the flow of Indians overseas. Second- and third-generation Indians may have weaker ties to their ancestral homeland and weigh investment opportunities elsewhere, fund managers warn. The challenge for India will be to maintain their ties. "Provided we can tap them and ensure that they maintain an emotional connect with India," Subbarao says, "that will be good for India."

We Have A Possible Mayday": Pilot Reported Bird Strike Before US F-16 Crash

"An F-16 pilot safely ejected before the fighter jet crashed Thursday in rural Michigan, sending plumes of smoke into the sky and triggering temporary evacuations for nearby residents after police said hazardous chemicals spilled from the wreckage. Sgt. Derek Gutierrez, a public affairs specialist with the 149th Fighter Wing at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, said the pilot was receiving medical treatment at a local hospital. Gutierrez declined to release details about the pilot's identity or any injuries, citing military policy. The pilot was conscious and speaking to law enforcement at the hospital, Grand Traverse County Sheriff Michael D. Shea said in a press briefing. The plane was participating in training exercises at a National Guard base in Alpena, about 190 miles (305 kilometers) north of Detroit. Another pilot told air traffic controllers that he believes his wingman hit a bird and crashed, according to audio posted by www.liveatc.net. "We have a possible Mayday. My wingman I believe may have taken a bird," the pilot reported. The controller offered to direct him to a nearby airport in Frankfort or Traverse City, but the pilot said his wingman had already crashed. Gutierrez said he hadn't heard anything about a possible bird strike, and said the crash is under investigation. "Once we get some more information and it's approved, we can release it to you," he said. Nathan Smith was working at a construction site about a mile from the crash. He said he started recording the passing fighter jet because something about its flight path struck him as odd. "It was strange to see a jet flying that low and slow," Smith said. "A



few seconds after the video cuts, I heard a loud 'bang,' which I believe now to be the pilot ejecting, but I didn't think of that at the time." Wendy Sobeck said she and her husband heard a "very loud crash" down the road, minutes from their rural home. "We thought there was a car accident outside our house. We saw big billowing black smoke. We couldn't tell what it was, so my husband got into his pickup truck and saw what happened," Sobeck said. "You could see the plane debris in the field. Explosions kept happening." Fred Sobeck, 65, said he drove down the road and

saw a "big fireball in the field" near a house and a camper, which were not hit. "Police told me to get out of there because of explosions," he said. Emergency officials first directed nearby residents to shelter in place, but a short time later the Michigan State Police evacuated people within one mile because of a hazardous chemical spill related to the crash. The state police did not release details about the nature of the spill, but F-16 jets use hydrazine, a toxic chemical, as a component of emergency power unit fuel. The jet was one of several F-16 aircraft from the Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland,

Texas, taking part in the Michigan training exercises, Gutierrez said. The military began flying the first F-16s in 1979. There have been at least 14 "Class A mishaps" involving F-16s since 2000, according to the Air Force Safety Center. The Class A mishap designation is generally used when the damage totals more than \$2 million, when an aircraft is destroyed or when a service member is killed. In December, an F-16C Fighting Falcon with the Air Force's elite Thunderbirds demonstration squadron crashed in the Southern California desert, and the pilot in that crash was also able to eject safely.

Zelensky Says Russia Tried To Attack His Plane Twice To 'Intimidate' Him: Report

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has claimed that Russia targeted his presidential aircraft twice in recent weeks, alleging that the incidents were part of an attempt to intimidate him and other foreign leaders. Speaking to CBS News on Tuesday, Zelensky said his aircraft was in Moldova when the first incident took place. He claimed a similar incident occurred when he travelled back through the country. "In Moldova, my presidential jet was there, and that's why they attacked Moldova. When we went back home, again through Chisinau, they did the same", he said. Zelensky also revealed that one or two drones entered Moldovan airspace during his return journey to Ukraine a few days later. Ukrainian officials later said that everyone travelling with the presidential delegation was safe. At the time, it was not clear whether the drone activity was intentional. Zelensky, however, said he believed the incidents were part of a wider Russian strategy aimed at sending a warning to him and other international leaders. The Ukrainian president's claims came amid another drone incident involving foreign visitors to Ukraine. On Sunday, a Russian drone struck a passenger train carrying a delegation of foreign dignitaries travelling in Ukraine. The group included senior European officials and former CIA Director David Petraeus. The passengers were forced to evacuate near the Polish border following the strike. Zelensky said he was unsure whether the Russian side knew that American and European officials were aboard the train, but said he did not believe it was accidental. "

Sikh Driver Stabbed 17 Times In US Amid Row Over Team Trump's 'Mr Singh' Post

A Sikh truck driver was stabbed multiple times in the US after a man allegedly followed him into a bathroom and attacked him without warning, leaving him seriously injured and hospitalised. Speaking from his hospital bed, Singh, who asked to be identified only by his last name because he fears for his safety, said he remains shaken by the violence and cannot understand why he was targeted. "I don't know why this happened," he said. "I don't know why they attack[ed] me," he told US-based news organisation NPR. The attack unfolded early Sunday while Singh was driving to Pennsylvania. According to Singh, he stopped at a rest area in southern Wyoming to use the restroom. As he walked inside, he noticed a man behind him but did not think much of it. Moments later, the man allegedly attacked him. Singh said the stranger began beating him before pulling out a knife and stabbing him repeatedly. He suffered wounds across several parts of his body, including his neck. After the attacker fled, Singh managed to make his way outside. Bleeding heavily from his injuries, he collapsed on the pavement and waited for help. The attack comes days after criticism of a now-deleted Department of Homeland Security social media post that depicted an Indian truck driver and used the surname Singh, prompting accusations of stereotyping from members of the South Asian community. The Department of Homeland Security had posted the image with the caption, "Get off our roads. You don't know how to drive Mr Singh."

'They Gave Me Second Life'
Singh said a Hispanic



family who happened to be at the rest area came to his aid and helped save his life. "They [gave] me the second life," he said. The family rushed to help after finding him seriously wounded, tending to his injuries and seeking emergency medical assistance until first responders arrived. Singh said their actions gave him a chance to survive the attack. As of Wednesday night, he remained in hospital recovering from multiple lacerations as well as injuries to his chest and ribs, NPR reported.

Suspect Arrested, Charged With Attempted Murder

Authorities have arrested 45-year-old Andrew Kris Bzdak in connection with the stabbing. According to charging documents obtained by NPR, Bzdak has been charged with attempted first-degree murder.

The documents do not identify a motive for the attack or explain what may have led to the alleged assault. The Sweetwater County Sheriff's Office and local prosecutors did not immediately respond to requests for additional information. Indian-American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi condemned the attack, saying he was "horrified" by the violence and concerned about what he described as rising hate directed at Sikh and South Asian Americans. In a post on X, he said, "I'm horrified by the brutal attack on a Sikh truck driver who was stabbed 17 times at a Wyoming rest stop. This comes amid rising hatred targeting Sikh and South Asian Americans, with even the Trump Department of Homeland Security recently posting a racist caricature of a Sikh

truck driver telling him to "get off our roads" and "self-deport or find out." "Those spreading this hate, including officials in our own federal government, need to stop. Those who turn it into violence must be held accountable. And all of us need to stand together against both. America must be better than this. I'm praying for Mr. Singh's full recovery and grateful to the family whose quick action helped save his life." "N Rep. Mike Thompson, representing California's 4th Congressional District also condemned the stabbing incident. In a post on X, he said, "This is horrible. This incident must be thoroughly investigated and the person responsible must be brought to justice. My thoughts and prayers are with Mr. Singh and his family during these difficult times." "M

Prince Harry Makes First Public Appearance Since Moving Back To Britain

Prince Harry on Thursday made his first public appearance since his shock return to Britain from the United States with his family three weeks ago. Harry, who left Britain for California six years ago with his wife Meghan amid tensions with his family, attended a fundraising evening for his Invictus Games for wounded veterans in London. Dressed in a smoking jacket adorned with his military decorations, the 42-year-old prince took selfies with injured former soldiers at the event. Meghan did not accompany him. Along with their two children, Harry and Meghan landed back in the UK on August 26 and have kept a relatively low profile since. Speculation abounds over the reasons for their return, given that the Duke and Duchess of Sussex left in the middle of a falling-out with his family, which only worsened after Harry published his tell-all memoir "Spare". His appearance at the event comes after the brother of Princess Diana, Harry's mother, unleashed a barrage of stinging criticism against King Charles III's behaviour towards his ex-wife.

India climbs to 26th in Global Real Estate Transparency ranking: Report



Mumbai: India has moved up five places to rank 26th globally in real estate transparency, emerging as one of the five most-improved markets worldwide and the top improver in the Asia-Pacific region, according to a JLL report. The latest Global Real Estate Transparency Index (GRETI) places India in the middle of the “Transparent” category. The improvement reflects progress across areas including regulation, real estate transaction processes and sustainability-related measures.

Radha Dhir, Chief Executive Officer, India, JLL, said, “Our steady progress—fourth-best globally over 10 years and third-best over 20 years – positions India to enter the 'Highly Transparent' tier as we advance toward aligning with the world's most transparent markets.”

“The next chapter is about scale-extending what is working in our gateway markets to every market where global capital wants to invest,” she added.

Real estate investment rises

The improvement in transparency has come

alongside strong investment activity in India's real estate market. Private equity investment in the sector stood at \$10.5 billion in 2025, registering a 17 per cent increase from the previous year. In the first half of 2026, private equity investment reached \$4.3 billion, up 25 per cent year-on-year.

India's office REIT market has also expanded considerably. The office space represented through REITs increased from 104 million sq. ft in 2024 to 164 million sq. ft in 2026. Nearly half of the country's Grade A office stock is now considered REIT-worthy.

Regulatory transparency sees strong improvement

India recorded its biggest improvement in the regulatory and legal parameters, climbing from 37th place to 19th globally.

According to the report, the improvement was supported by the maturation of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA), liberalisation of foreign direct investment (FDI) rules and the digitisation of land registries.

The country's data centre sector is also expected to see significant expansion. Capacity is projected to rise from 1.6 GW to 6 GW by 2029, requiring an estimated investment of \$110 billion. Global hyperscalers have committed more than \$50 billion towards AI-ready facilities.

Transaction process ranking

India retained its strong standing in the Transaction Process parameter, ranking 10th globally and third in the Asia-Pacific region.

The availability and reliability of data on commercial real estate financing conditions have also improved. JLL attributed this to rising institutional investment, the expansion of the REIT market and a stronger regulatory framework. The BSE Realty Index and India REIT Index have increasingly served as important benchmarks for investors. Meanwhile, quarterly financial reporting and annual disclosure requirements have become more established across REITs and publicly traded flexible-space operators, contributing to greater transparency

across India's real estate sector.

Global real estate transparency trends

The JLL report also highlights broader shifts in real estate transparency worldwide.

Markets in the “Highly Transparent” category are continuing to pull ahead. Transaction volumes across the 13 countries in this tier grew 20 percentage points faster over the past two years than in the rest of the world. These markets now account for 56 per cent of global income-producing real estate and more than 80 per cent of direct investment. Overall, around two-thirds of markets recorded improvements in transparency. Factors such as digitisation of land registries, better data availability for alternative real estate sectors and clearer building-efficiency standards contributed to these gains across markets including Colombia, Kenya, Mexico and Qatar.

Asia-Pacific emerged as the leading region for improvement, with India, Vietnam, South Korea, Australia and Thailand together accounting for half of the top 10 global improvers.

The Gulf markets have also maintained their longer-term progress. Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Qatar feature among the markets that have recorded the strongest improvements over the past decade, despite regional disruption.

The report identifies alternative real estate sectors, debt markets, artificial intelligence and energy performance as some of the fast-

est-moving areas for transparency. Data availability is improving across alternative sectors and credit markets, while more than 90 per cent of occupiers and investors now use AI tools. Building energy-performance tracking has also emerged as one of the factors showing the strongest global improvement this year.

According to Puri, EPF can provide a foundation for a retirement corpus through long-term compounding, but employees may also need additional investment avenues such as equity mutual funds or direct equity to build a larger retirement corpus.

EPF wage ceiling hike: What it means for employees

The higher EPF wage ceiling can mean a greater monthly deduction from salary in the short term, with the employee contribution based on the ceiling rising from Rs 1,800 to Rs 3,000. But if the additional contribution remains invested over a long period, it can compound into a substantially larger retirement corpus.

The illustrative calculations explained by the experts show the potential difference clearly: over 30 years, the corpus could rise from around Rs 33.5 lakh to Rs 56 lakh, while over 35 years it could increase from around Rs 51 lakh to Rs 85–86 lakh. The pension calculation explained by experts similarly showed a rise from around Rs 6,857 to Rs 11,429 for a 30-year service example, although the actual pension outcome will vary by employee.

Government relaxes sugar stockholding limit for bulk consumers to 30 days ahead of festive season



Mumbai: The government has relaxed the sugar stockholding limit for bulk consumers from 15 days to 30 days, it said in an official release today, September 18. However, any stock kept beyond the existing 15-day limit will have to be sourced only from sugar imported under the Advance Authorisation Scheme (AAS) and Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ). The limit for sugar purchased from the domestic open market will remain unchanged at 15 days of consumption. Bulk consumers will also have to declare their sugar stocks every week, with details to be updated every Friday on the Department of Food and Public Distribution's online portal.

The decision follows consultations with major bulk sugar consumers. The government said their suggestions were considered while framing the revised norms, to maintain stability and ensure orderly movement of sugar in the domestic market.

What is the current rule for sugar stockholding?

At present, bulk consumers using or consuming more than 10 MT of sugar per month as a raw material for production, consumption or use are permitted to hold sugar stock for a period not ex-

ceeding 15 days of their consumption. Bulk consumers have represented that the existing limit may be enhanced, particularly in view of the upcoming festival season.

They also suggested that they may be permitted to directly source sugar from importers holding sugar imported under the Advance Authorisation Scheme and Tariff Rate Quota, to ensure uninterrupted availability of sugar for industrial consumption without adversely affecting domestic supplies.

The move is aimed at balancing the needs of bulk sugar consumers with the need to keep the domestic market stable. It will give industrial users more flexibility to maintain stocks during the upcoming festive season, while ensuring that any additional requirement is met through imported sugar instead of putting extra pressure on domestic supplies.

Retail sugar prices declined by 10%.

Retail sugar prices have declined by around 10 per cent from their peak of Rs 65 in August to Rs 58.50. However, ex-mill prices have already declined by nearly 25 per cent, the release said. The Government observed that the slower decline in retail

prices indicates that the benefit of the reduction in ex-mill prices has not yet been fully transmitted through the supply chain to the consumer.

In a joint meeting held today with representatives of ISMA, the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories and sugar trade, Secretary, Department of Food and Public Distribution, underlined that the reduction in ex-mill prices has not yet been reflected fully in retail prices.

Government urges traders to pass price cuts

The government has asked sugar traders, wholesalers and retailers to quickly pass on the benefit of lower ex-mill prices to consumers, especially ahead of the festive season. It said retail prices should reflect the fall already seen at the mill level. The government also said its sugar policy aims to balance the interests of both farmers and consumers.

From October 1, 2026, sugarcane farmers will receive a higher Fair and Remunerative Price of Rs 365 per quintal.

It added that sugar availability and prices will continue to be monitored to ensure adequate supply for households as well as food-processing and other industries.

Delhi Metro sees record 82.44 lakh passenger boardings



New Delhi: The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), announced that around 82,44,903 passengers travelled through the metro, recording its highest-ever single-day footfall. Informing on X, DMRC wrote, “DMRC Records Highest-Ever Passenger Boardings of 82,44,903 on 17th September 2026 #DelhiMetro.”

Celebrating the development, DIG of the CISF Unit at DMRC, Santosh Chalke, declared that the milestone reflects the joint commitment of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and the DMRC in providing seamless security and facilitating

the movement of passengers smoothly across the National Capital Region. “Handling 82,44,903 passenger boardings in a single day is not just a milestone number; it is a true reflection of the joint commitment of the CISF and the DMRC in providing seamless security and passenger facilitation across the National Capital Region. Our personnel work day in and day out to continuously elevate security standards and enhance the overall commuter experience at one of the world's busiest transit systems,” said Chalke.

DTC bus strike drives Metro rush

The development comes as private agency drivers

working with the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) continued their strike for a fourth day, demanding higher wages along with medical and social security benefits. Thousands of buses remained off the roads, with drivers from depots such as Rani Khera, Rajghat, Nehru Place, Burari, Wazirpur, Ghumanhera and Sarita Vihar joining the protest.

In view of the strike and the expected rise in commuter traffic, Delhi Metro had already stepped up services on September 16 by adding 20 extra train trips across its network to handle the additional passenger rush. In a post on X, the DMRC stated that eight

extra trains were deployed based on operational demand, aiming to accommodate the increased rush, particularly during peak hours, and facilitate smoother transit for passengers. “Delhi Metro Makes Extensive Arrangements to Manage Additional Crowd amid Ongoing DTC Bus Strike

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) today put in place extensive arrangements to manage the anticipated surge in passenger footfall on its network due to the ongoing Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus strike. To ease pressure on the system, DMRC has increased 20 train trips across its network. A total of eight additional trains were operated today as per requirement. These measures are aimed at accommodating a higher number of passengers, particularly during peak hours, and ensuring smoother travel for commuters. The same enhanced arrangements will continue tomorrow, 17 September 2026. Eight extra trains will be

inducted and operated between 08:00 hrs and 20:00 hrs, as per operational requirements. DMRC remains committed to providing reliable and efficient services and requests passengers to plan their journeys accordingly,” said DMRC. Established on May 3, 1995, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) functions as a joint venture between the Union Government and the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, running the rapid transit system across New Delhi and the broader National Capital Region (NCR). The organization manages a large network of about 416 kilometres with 303 stations, which includes the Noida to Greater Noida Corridor and Gurugram's Rapid Metro line.

Beyond its work in the capital, the DMRC also manages the operations and maintenance of metro networks in other cities, including Mumbai Metro Line 3, Chennai Metro Phase 2, and the Patna Metro, showing its expanding role across the country.

Ditch the queue! See latest iPhone 18 Pro, Pro Max deals on quick commerce apps



Mumbai: The recently launched iPhone 18 Pro and iPhone 18 Pro Max are now available for purchase in India through online retail and quick-commerce platforms. Customers can buy the smartphones through platforms such as Blinkit, Zepto and Instamart, along with Apple's official stores and other retail channels. With this, customers in supported locations can also opt for fast home delivery. The iPhone 18 Pro series is priced between Rs 1,64,900 and Rs 3,29,900, depending on the model and storage option. The iPhone 18 Pro was launched in India and other global markets last week on September 9. The company also launched the iPhone Duo, AirPods 5 and Apple Watch Series 12 at the event.

iPhone 18 Pro offers on Blinkit, Zepto, Instamart

Blinkit, Zepto and Instamart are offering bank discounts of up to Rs 7,000 on select Axis Bank, ICICI Bank and SBI credit cards and EMI transactions.

Customers can also get EMI options of up to 24 months. The platforms are also offering up to six months of no-cost EMI options. Zepto is additionally offering an Open Box Delivery option. This allows customers to check the package at the time of delivery. The quick-commerce platforms are also promoting fast delivery of the iPhone 18 Pro series in select locations.

Heavy crowds at Apple Store in Delhi

In Delhi, the Apple Store at Select CityWalk Mall in Saket witnessed a heavy crowd as customers gathered outside the store. The early-morning footfall in-

cluded customers who had come to collect their pre-booked devices and purchase the new Pro models.

Some buyers also reached the store before it opened. Similar scenes were reported at Apple stores in other major cities, including Mumbai, Gurgaon and Bengaluru, as the iPhone 18 Pro and iPhone 18 Pro Max went on sale in India.

iPhone 18 Pro, iPhone 18 Pro Max price in India

The iPhone 18 Pro starts at Rs 1,64,900 for the 256GB storage variant. The 512GB model is priced at Rs 1,89,900. The 1TB and 2TB variants cost Rs 2,39,900 and Rs 3,14,900, respectively. The iPhone 18 Pro Max starts at Rs 1,79,900 for the 256GB variant. The 512GB, 1TB and 2TB models are priced at Rs 2,04,900, Rs 2,54,900 and Rs 3,29,900, respectively. Both smartphones are available in Black, Silver, Glacier and Burgundy colour options.

iPhone 18 Pro specifications and features

The iPhone 18 Pro and iPhone 18 Pro Max run on iOS 27 out of the box.

The iPhone 18 Pro has a 6.3-inch display, while the iPhone 18 Pro Max features a 6.9-inch screen.

EPF Wage Ceiling Hiked to Rs 25,000: How much can your retirement corpus increase

EPF Wage Ceiling Hiked to Rs 25,000: The increase in the EPF wage ceiling from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000 can have a significant impact on employees' retirement savings over the long term. A higher contribution base means more money can be

accumulated in the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), while the pension component under the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS) can also increase for eligible employees. Employees generally contribute 12 per cent towards EPF, with the con-

tribution calculated based on the applicable wage ceiling or, where permitted, the full basic salary. With the wage ceiling increasing from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000, the monthly employee contribution based on the ceiling rises from Rs 1,800 to

Rs 3,000.

However, the higher contribution also means a lower take-home salary in the short term. The change can be viewed as a short-term reduction in take-home pay in exchange for potentially higher retirement savings

and pension benefits over the long term, experts told Zee Business.

EPF wage ceiling: How much can your retirement corpus grow?

The impact becomes more significant when the higher contribution is al-

lowed to compound over several decades.

For example, over a 30-year period, an EPF corpus of around Rs 33.5 lakh at a Rs 15,000 wage ceiling could increase to approximately Rs 56 lakh when the contribution is calculated

on a Rs 25,000 ceiling. This represents a difference of roughly Rs 22 lakh.

Over 35 years, the corresponding corpus could rise from around Rs 51 lakh to approximately Rs 85–86 lakh, resulting in a difference of about Rs 35 lakh.

The larger corpus over a longer period highlights the role of compounding in retirement savings.

Mrin Agarwal, founder of Finsafe, highlighted compounding as one of the biggest benefits of long-term EPF savings.

India faces tougher compound archery challenge at Asian Games: Dave Cousins



Kolkata: “Once the dam breaks, the river will flow.” That is the verdict from India’s new national compound archery head coach Dave Cousins, who insists a historic first Olympic medal is only a matter of time. The American coach is currently tuning the team for the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games ahead of a major push for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. A former US world champion and one of the most accomplished compound archers in the sport, Cousins spoke to PTI from Kurobe, Japan, in his first interview since taking charge as India’s chief compound coach. The 49-year-old spoke about the changing Asian landscape, his long-term plans and the bigger challenge of following Sergio Pagni, who led India to a historic clean sweep of all five gold medals, along with one silver and one bronze, at Hangzhou. “Well, one thing to remember is that during the Hangzhou Asian Games, the (compound) archery scene in Asia was much, much different than it is now. You have a lot of developing countries that are producing a very high standard at the moment,” Cousins said when asked whether India can match its five-gold medal haul from the last Asian Games. “You have a lot of developing countries that have become elite-level competitors very fast. So we’re up against a totally different set of challenges

now than he (Pagni) was.” “I can’t predict a number. All I know is that these athletes will go out and they’ll execute their process the way that they’ve been trained, and they’re prepared for anything,” added Cousins, a holder of 20 world records. This shift in the Asian archery landscape towards the compound section followed the landmark April 9, 2025, IOC announcement that compound mixed team archery was added to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics roster. Since then, the sport’s global landscape has exploded, with traditional recurve powerhouses South Korea and China immediately embracing the discipline, pouring massive funding into grassroots programmes and transitioning elite talent. But Cousins, who took charge before the World Cup in Madrid in July, is highly impressed with the Indian archers, both established and upcoming, and says they possess a work ethic that is second to none. “India has been on my radar for a very, very long time. I know they have a tremendous depth of field and a tremendous level of talent, being the most populous country on earth. “They work harder than anybody else, do exactly what’s required, and it’s a refreshing, young, talented squad. It’s been a real treat to work with them.” “I think it’s a great opportunity to help polish some of those elite-level

athletes and really help them find another level and also help to inspire the remaining archers who will continue to form the pipeline to fill the ranks of this team.”

First Olympic medal will have cascading effect

Having said that, why do you think India is still looking for its first-ever archery medal at the Olympics? “I can’t nor will I speak for the recurve side. The only thing I can say on the recurve side is that right now they have a very high standard with a young man (Dhiraj Bommadevara) who just won the World Cup Final. “He’s also won a World Cup already this year. So the standard is definitely there. But as far as why, I don’t have any frame of reference, nor will I speak on that. It’s not my place.” “However, it’s only a matter of time before India lands its first Olympic archery medal. Once that happens, it will trigger a cascading effect of international success for both programmes — once the dam breaks, the river will flow,” said Cousins, whose India contract runs till LA28. For Cousins, this is his first full-time appointment with a national team, but the American has spent 25 years working internationally as a technical and coaching expert, following an illustrious career spanning more than two decades during which he won the World Championships in 1999 and 2003, as

well as World Archery Field Championships, World Archery 3D Championships and World Games gold medals.

Jyothi giving 100 per cent

As for the compound section, it has been a steady decline for Indian archers after the Asian Games in Hangzhou, especially for Indian stalwart Jyothi Surekha Vennam, who has failed to win any medal in this season’s World Cup. Cousins, however, dismissed the idea of judging Jyothi, a winner of a hat-trick of gold medals at the Hangzhou Asiad. “The global situation among women’s compound right now is extremely competitive. So things are certainly changing. “There are literally dozens of women who could win a World Cup at any time. But I can assure you her physical, mental and technical preparation is spot on and she gives 100 per cent every single day.” He also had high praise for 17-year-old Prithika Pradeep, who stunned world No. 10 Hazal Burun after coming back from two sets down to win her maiden World Cup bronze in Madrid. “She faced a very difficult match against the American Liko Arreola, who began with nine perfect arrows. And she was actually behind by several (three) points in the closing end, but she closed that match with three X’s that gave her the confidence and ability to make it to that bronze medal match.” Trailing after two ends, Prithika was “scared”, and Cousins’ words made the difference. “She came back from the shooting line during one of the ends and she made a confession to me: ‘Coach, I’m scared’. I looked at her and said we both can’t be scared. One of us has to be brave. And she laughed and said, okay, coach, ‘I’ll be brave’. And she went out and won the match.” The men’s team is the most inexperienced this time without Abhishek Verma and Ojas Deotale, the triple gold medalist in Hangzhou. But Cousins feels Sahil Jadhav, Kushal Dalal and Mani Ratnam Thirumuru Ganesh are “growing, learning and maturing every day.”

Ryan Williams set for special India homecoming at Bengaluru’s Kanteerava Stadium

Hyderabad: Three years after beginning his Indian club career in Bengaluru, Ryan Williams is set to walk out at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium wearing the national colours for the first time. Having earned two caps and scored a goal since his international debut in March this year, he will be looking to make his third appearance as the Blue Tigers open their international window against Panama on Friday, September 25, 2026. For Williams, the next Friday marks a sentimental homecoming — returning to the venue where he spends his time running down the flanks for Bengaluru FC. He will still be in blue, but that of India this time, reports AIFF Media. “It’s going to be special in every way, shape and form. I started my Indian footballing career here in Bangalore, and who would have thought three years ago that I would have been pulling on the jersey for India. It’s amazing. It’s a real full-circle moment,” said Williams. The Panama fixture is the first of three heavyweight games for India, with the team then heading to Kolkata to face South American giants Brazil on October 3 and inaugural World Cup winners Uruguay on October 6. The magnitude of this international window tells only half the story for Williams. Unlike the standard 10-day international breaks, India have a three-week block under head coach Khalid Jamil, giving them the luxury of time together. The 32-year-old believes this period is set to pay dividends on the pitch. “Usually it’s 10 days, but we have three weeks together, which is valuable time for us to connect more, get the ideas from the



coach and try different things in training,” he said. Facing a trio of FIFA World Cup 2026 participants will provide an immediate test of the Blue Tigers’ extended training camp. Williams, however, is relishing the challenge, viewing the high-profile line-ups purely as a priceless yardstick. “First of all, the feeling is excitement. Obviously, the time together is re-

ally good for our preparation and for us going forward,” he said. “Three massive games that are obviously a huge test for us. But that’s what we want. That’s what we’re after — to see how these bigger teams do it, what we can take from these games, see how much we can learn and see how we use them going forward. “I’m super, super excited to

play at the Kanteerava, because that’s where I’ve spent most of my time here in India. I’m sure there’s going to be a lot of fans from BFC, and obviously from India as well,” said Williams. “For me, it’s a really special moment to be able to wear the blue of India now, playing at the (Kanteerava) stadium. I’m extremely excited.”

Asian Games: India face Bangladesh in semifinal as gold medal defence continues

Nisshin: India women will face Bangladesh in the second semifinal of the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games 2026 at Korogi Sports Park on Sunday as they look to defend the gold medal they won at the 2023 Hangzhou Games. Harmanpreet Kaur’s Women in Blue brushed aside hosts Japan in a one-sided quarterfinal to march into the semifinals of the tournament for the second straight time in as many appearances. NB_18.09.2026_6789he Women in Blue will look to defend the gold medal they won after beating Sri Lanka in the 2023 Asiad final, with the semifinals following a similar pattern to the previous edition Just like in the 2023 Asian Games, India will meet Bangladesh in one of the two semifinals, while Sri Lanka will lock horns with Pakistan in the other last-four encounter. The Women in Blue are fresh from winning their eighth Asia Cup title a few days ago, while Bangladesh lost to India in the semifinal of that tournament in Dubai. Indian players are in great form heading into the semifinal, with the likes of Shafali Verma and Smriti Mandhana leading the show with the bat. The bowling unit has matched the batters’ performance. Sree Charani is in the form of her life after picking up two consecutive four-wicket hauls, the second of which came in the quarterfinal against Japan.

Raksha Khadse meets V-Cs of 93 universities to boost youth initiatives



Hyderabad: Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs & Sports Raksha Khadse chaired a high-level meeting with Vice-Chancellors of 93 universities from across the country on Friday in Delhi to strengthen the engagement of higher educational institutions with major youth-focused initiatives of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. The meeting brought together Vice-Chancellors of 40 Central Universities, 38 State Universities and 13 Deemed and Private Universities, along with representatives of NSU, Manipur and LNIPE, Gwalior. The meeting provided a platform to brief university leadership on the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2027, Nasha Mukta Abhiyaan and Yuva Connect Programme and discuss their active engagement in these initiatives. Addressing the Vice-Chancellors, the Union Minister emphasised that building a Viksit Bharat is a collective responsibility and that schools, colleges and universities have an important role to play in this journey. Referring to the vision of Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for Viksit Bharat @2047, she highlighted the importance of empowering young people with opportunities to lead, participate and contribute to na-

tion-building. She said that schools and colleges are among the foundations of nation-building, providing young people with knowledge, values, skills and opportunities to participate meaningfully in society. She called upon university leadership to create an environment that encourages students to engage in national initiatives, community participation, leadership and constructive dialogue. Mrs. Raksha Khadse highlighted that its diverse themes and tracks represent important pillars of the Viksit Bharat vision, giving young people platforms to contribute ideas, creativity and solutions across different areas of national development. She encouraged universities to actively facilitate participation in VBYLD 2027, emphasising that participation can open an array of opportunities for young people, including exposure to leadership, innovation, entrepreneurship, creativity, dialogue and engagement with policymakers and experts. The Minister also emphasised the role of educational institutions in strengthening awareness and youth-led action under the Nasha Mukta Abhiyaan and in connecting students with opportunities through the Yuva Connect Programme. She

stressed that universities can help take youth initiatives beyond campuses and into communities through student participation and institutional partnerships. The Union Minister appealed to the Vice-Chancellors to ensure greater participation of their universities and students in VBYLD 2027 and to encourage young people to make full use of the opportunities available to them. She emphasised that active participation by educational institutions can help create a stronger ecosystem for youth leadership, social responsibility and nation-building. The Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2027 is a national platform to identify, nurture and empower young leaders and provide them an opportunity to contribute ideas towards Viksit Bharat @2047. The initiative follows a grassroots-to-national journey and includes tracks such as the Viksit Bharat Challenge, Cultural Track, Design for Bharat, Hack for Social Cause, Youth Entrepreneurs Challenge and Youth Parliament. The National Dialogue will bring selected young participants together with policymakers, domain experts and national leaders, providing an avenue for young Indians to contribute to nation-building.

India men’s soft tennis team exits Asian Games after quarterfinal defeat



Nagoya: The Indian men’s soft tennis team, comprising Jay Meena, Yogesh Choudhary, Aryan Thakur, Aniket Patel and Om Yadav, concluded its Asian Games 2026 campaign with a 0-2 defeat to Indonesia in the quarterfinals. Jay and Yogesh lost the first men’s doubles tie to Tio Hutaeruk and Fernando Sanger 2-5, before Aryan Thakur lost to Bagus Pradewa 3-4. With the defeat, India’s men’s team campaign came to an end at the Asian Games 2026. However, the competition continues for the Indian athletes, with Jay and Aryan set to compete in the men’s singles on September 22. Jay will also feature in the mixed doubles on September 21. The Indian men began their campaign with a commanding 3-0 victory over Laos before suffering a 0-3 defeat to group toppers Chinese Taipei. Needing a win in their final group encounter to secure a knockout berth, India responded strongly

and defeated Mongolia 3-0 to progress to the last eight with four points from three ties. India made a confident start against Laos as Jay and Yogesh clinched the opening doubles match 5-0. Aryan then registered a comfortable 4-0 victory in the singles contest before Aniket and Om completed the clean sweep with another dominant doubles win. Chinese Taipei, however, proved a tougher challenge. Meena and Choudhary lost the first doubles match 0-5, while Thakur went down 1-4 in the singles tie. Patel and Yadav also suffered defeat in the second doubles match as India lost the contest 0-3. With a quarterfinal place at stake, the Indian players bounced back in style against Mongolia, sealing a comprehensive 3-0 win to finish behind Chinese Taipei in the group standings. Aniket and Om won the opening doubles match against Mongolia 5-0, and

Meena then registered a comfortable 4-0 victory in singles before Thakur and Choudhary completed the clean sweep with another dominant doubles win. India’s campaign was led by Jay, one of the country’s most accomplished soft tennis players in recent years. The Madhya Pradesh athlete represented India at the 2018 Asian Games and won the men’s singles gold medal at the 2022 National Games in Gujarat. Meena also etched his name in history in 2024 when, alongside Aadhyia Tiwari, he secured India’s first-ever medal at the World Soft Tennis Championships by winning bronze in mixed doubles. He followed it up by becoming national champion in 2025 and later claimed bronze in men’s singles at the Asian Soft Tennis Championships, becoming the first Indian to win a medal at the continental event.

Ayesha Khan's Festive Saree Look Is Breathtaking



Ayesha Khan has dropped a stunning new set of pictures, and they're pure festive royalty. The actress is seen draped in a rich gold silk saree paired with a contrasting red velvet blouse, both intricately detailed with traditional embroidery. A statement red and gold tassel-work bag adds to the regal vibe, while her hair is styled in a neat bun with delicate gold jewellery completing the look. The backdrop, with its glowing crescent moon and rustic red setting adorned with banana leaves and scattered flowers, gives the pictures a beautifully ethnic, almost celebratory feel, perfect for the festive season. Ayesha's poised expression and graceful stance tie the entire frame together effortlessly.

Sreeleela Raises Oomph Factor In Sexy Corset



Sreeleela is currently having a mixed year at the box office, but she's certainly not letting that show, either on screen or off it. The actress just dropped a fresh set of pictures that have taken over fan pages, and honestly, she looks stunning in every single frame. In these latest clicks, Sreeleela is seen in a striking blue corset top paired with wide-leg navy trousers, her hair left open in soft waves. The look is chic, minimal, and effortlessly stylish, proof that the actress doesn't need over-the-top glam to make a statement. While 2026 has seen two of Sreeleela's releases underperform at the box office, the actress isn't slowing down. She has two exciting projects lined up that could well turn her fortunes around.

Will Chiru Double The Hype For The Paradise?

Natural Star Nani's upcoming project, *The Paradise*, is currently the film of the moment. With the film's release scheduled for this Thursday, the team is geared up for the promotional events. The pre-release event will be taking place on the 21st of this month. Already, the team interacted with press in Tamilnadu, Kerala and Karnataka. With the film unit deciding to not launch the trailer, the focus is on the team's speeches at the pre-release event. When the makers announced that there will not be any trailer launch for the film, the fans are disappointed but hoped that Nani will promote the film aggressively. However, due to the ongoing post-production works and the kind of attention that Nani is expected to give to it, he could not aggressively promote the film but only attended a few interviews. The press meets that took place in other Southern states also did not create a huge noise about the film.

Hence, the attention is falling back on the Telugu pre-release event, which will happen on the 21st of this month. There have been reports about the



event happening at an outdoor venue, with Megastar Chiranjeevi gracing it as the chief guest. If Chiru attends the event, it will be a great boost for the film and could double up the hype surrounding the film. We can also hear some teasing deets on Chiranjeevi's

next with Srikanth Odela, under Nani's production.

Having said that, the team can utilize the pre-release event to let out their voice and convey the concept of the film to the audiences, which they could not do with the trailer. Kayadu Lohar, who

was missing in the action, might also grace the event. Fans are excited to know whether Anirudh will drop a banger mini concert or not. However, the Telugu event must strike gold for the team in creating the noise that it intends to do pre release.

Samavarthi Teaser: Satya Dev Roars As Mahadev



Satyadev Kancharana is back, and this time he arrives with pure wild energy. The teaser of *Samavarthi*, unveiled at a grand launch event today, introduces audiences to Mahadev, a fearless protector caught in a brutal forest conflict. Directed by Ajay Nag V., the ecological action thriller instantly stands apart with its intense tone and realistic setting. The teaser wastes no

time pulling viewers into its world. Beginning with the clever voiceover, "No animals were harmed in making this film except for the cast and crew," it immediately promises a physically demanding survival adventure. From there, the powerful dialogues in Telangana slang dominate the teaser and give every moment a grounded, mass appeal. The film revolves around

forests under threat, tribes struggling for survival, and predators waiting to take over nature. Instead of presenting a routine action hero, the teaser positions Mahadev as someone who rises to protect both the forest and its people. The surprise tiger entry at the end becomes the teaser's biggest whistle-worthy moment. Shot in real forests with premium visuals, *Samavarthi*

looks technically outstanding. Every frame feels authentic, every action sequence looks raw, and the production values elevate the scale. It looks like Satyadev is ready to roar with another powerful content-oriented entertainer loaded with action and thrills. At the end Satyadev promise "Eesari Miss Avvadhu," hints at a solid blockbuster coming this year.

Vishwak's CULT Seals A Perfect Arrival Date

Vishwak is entering a completely unfamiliar space with his next outing *#CULT*. He appears in an intensely dark avatar in the release-date glimpse, which confirms October 30 as the theatrical arrival date of the movie. This indeed is the perfect release time, given the heavy competition during the Dasara season.

What makes the announcement video stand out is the portrayal of Vishwak. His character is seen unleashing violence with chilling intensity, while his rage gives the glimpse a chilling edge.

Vishwak has taken complete creative



ownership by writing the story and screenplay and directing the movie himself. The film is produced by Sandeep Kakarala under the Tarak Cinemas banner and is billed as India's first slasher thriller.

The makers have been carefully building the film's atmosphere through their promotional material. The first glimpse, followed by first single received positive response. Ravi Basrur's music plays a crucial role in shaping the mood of the film. His intensifying score in the latest glimpse amplifies the sense of danger and keeps the announcement video charged throughout.

The team is planning to intensify the promotional activities in the coming days.