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Election Commission's Note Settles Row, Says BJP. Congress Lists 'Unanswered Questions'



New Delhi/Bhubaneswar: The Election Commission's latest clarification on reports of internal dissent sparked a new round of political battle on Saturday, with the BJP claiming the controversy is now defused, a key ally backing it, and the Congress issuing a list of "unanswered questions". "Gyanesh Kumar Gupta can try, as much as he wants, to hide behind these long press notes. He cannot simply wash his hands of this mess," Congress MP and spokesperson Pawan Khera said in a post on X, singling out Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar. The latest row began after The Indian Express reported on September 23 that the other two commissioners, Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, wrote at least 14 objection notes on decisions related to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR). Saturday's clarification, issued after a full-house meeting of the EC, was termed "too lame, too little, too late" by the Congress. Pawan Khera repeated what Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi had said to Gyanesh Kumar, telling him to resign or "turn approver" in the case of alleged voter manipulation "to favour the BJP". The ruling BJP's Sambit Patra, however, said the commission's statement "clarifies this matter unequivocally". The party's social media head Deepak Mhaskey posted the photo shared by the EC and wrote: "One photo. One official note. Days of propaganda wiped out in minutes."

Days of propaganda wiped out in minutes. A 99-election losing streak, and still the same old playbook. BJP ally Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which had earlier said the EC should address the issue, also cited the press note, with party boss and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu posting on X that the "unanimous clarification... reaffirms the integrity and credibility of our constitutional institutions and puts to rest all the... The unanimous clarification issued by the Election Commission, led by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, alongside Election Commissioners S. S. Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, reaffirms the integrity and credibility of our constitutional institutions and puts to rest all the... The exchange followed a press note issued after Gyanesh Kumar, Sukhbir

Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi met at Nirvachan Sadan on Saturday afternoon. The note said the orders for the SIR were issued with the "unanimous approval of the Commission". It also spoke of a "letter to Cabinet Secretary", reportedly written by Joshi and Sandhu, and said the letter "was not related to any policy matter of the Commission or IT division but related to [the] working of an officer on deputation to ECI". It asserted that the contentious work redistribution orders issued by the officer were not actually implemented. At a press conference in Bhubaneswar, BJP MP and spokesperson Sambit Patra said, "As a political party, it is our duty to place before the public and the nation the facts regarding how the Congress party is attacking constitutional institutions to serve its own vested interests." He added, "Regarding the press release issued today by the Election Commission of India on a public platform, the most significant point to note addresses the allegations levelled against the Commission and political parties, specifically the BJP.

Gyanesh Kumar, Election Commissioners Meet, Poll Body Issues Clarifications

New Delhi: The Election Commission (EC) on Saturday moved to blunt reports of dissent within, holding an all-member meeting and issuing a point-by-point clarification on allegations about its functioning. It reasserted that key decisions, including the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter rolls, were taken unanimously by the full commission. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar and Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi met at Nirvachan Sadan in New Delhi on Saturday afternoon, the press release said. Attached was a photo of the three at a table, saying they met at 3 pm on September 26, amid a row over a media report that Sandhu and Joshi had raised objections on several occasions to decisions and orders related to SIR. The EC release also announced some decisions on the SIR and the commission's internal functioning, and laid out its position on a letter written to the Cabinet Secretary, reportedly by Sandhu and Joshi as per The Indian Express of September 23. The controversy spans objections raised by Joshi and



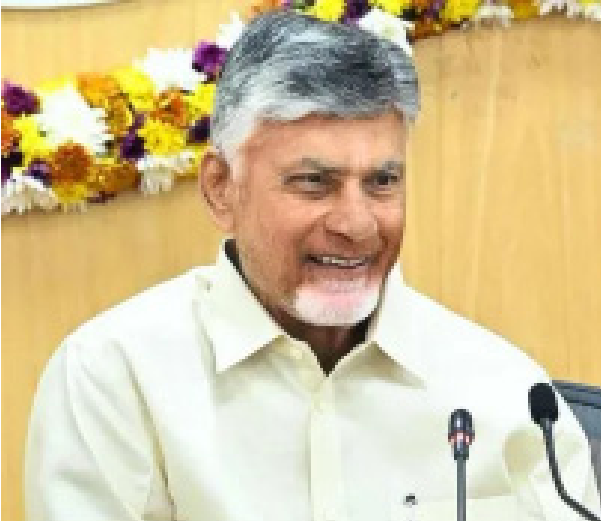
Sandhu on issues such as changes to Form 6 used for new voter enrolment, the functioning of the online system ECINET, the redistribution of work in the IT division, appeals in the West Bengal SIR, and the handling of cases involving voters in Goa, for instance. In an immediate response earlier, the EC had argued that internal disagreements were part of its democratic functioning. On the Form 6 issue, questions were raised over a declaration attached to the form during the SIR process, asking prospective voters to map to the previous SIR via their parents' names. The commission's note said the declaration was upheld by the Supreme Court. It added that outside the SIR period, forms prescribed under the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, would be used. On ECINET, concerns were raised over

access to the electoral-roll database and the functioning of the portal. The commission said field officers have role-based access according to their statutory powers. It also announced a review of the ECINET by a committee headed by a Senior Deputy Election Commissioner and including an independent expert from an IIT or IIIT. The commission said any further flexibility required by field officers would be made operational too. It also decided that all new initiatives involving IT modules and portals would be discussed by the committee of officers before being placed before the commission for approval. Another issue concerned a letter sent to the Cabinet Secretary over the redistribution of work "involving an officer on deputation to the EC". The commission said the letter was

not related to any policy matter of the EC or its IT division, but to the functioning of the officer. It said the work redistribution orders objected to were not implemented after directions from the two commissioners, and that oversight of the IT division by a Deputy Election Commissioner was never withdrawn. On the SIR, it said the June 24, 2025, order launching the exercise across states and Union Territories was issued with the unanimous approval of the commission – an assertion made by EC sources on Friday too. The press note said subsequent schedules were also issued with unanimous approval. It noted that the Supreme Court had upheld the original SIR order. The commission pointedly addressed the case of 97 voters in Goa who had been left out of the electoral rolls.

CM to Fulfil Decades-Old Dream, Distribute House Regularisation Titles on Sept. 30

From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, September 26: The coalition government is set to launch another major initiative as part of its programme to provide property rights to the poor. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will distribute house regularisation titles to beneficiaries in Vijayawada on September 30. Following the model adopted in Visakhapatnam, regularisation titles will be issued to 24,057 beneficiaries in Vijayawada on a large scale. The Chief Minister will issue the titles, granting full ownership rights over houses for which NTR titles had been issued decades ago in Vijayawada. The coalition government is seeking to provide a permanent solution to the house-



title issue, which has remained a major election issue in Vijayawada. Recently, the Chief Minister distributed regularisation titles in Visakhapatnam, granting full rights to 28,445 families over land

through the regularisation titles. The titles will provide full ownership rights to beneficiaries across eight Assembly constituencies covering 15 mandals in NTR district and Gannavaram constituency in Krishna district. Beneficiaries from Vijayawada East, Vijayawada West, Vijayawada Central, Gannavaram, Jaggayyapeta, Mylavaram, Nandigama and Tiruvuru constituencies will receive the titles. Titles will also be issued for houses constructed on hill areas within the three Vijayawada city constituencies, fulfilling a long-standing demand of residents. Residents of the hill areas have been demanding for decades that regularisation titles be is-

sued to ensure permanent security for their houses and provide assurance for their future. The issue of house-title regularisation was also specifically raised by NTR district public representatives at a recent district-level meeting. As part of the initiative, the government will grant full ownership rights over 617 acres comprising 29.86 lakh square yards. The estimated market value of the land being granted with full ownership rights to poor and middle-class families is around Rs.24,297 crore. The regularisation titles being distributed by the coalition government will benefit 12,093 BC families, 6,130 OC families, 4,546 SC families, 955 Muslim BC families and 333 ST families.

CCTV Cameras at Liquor Shops, Distribution Through Tracking System: Minister Kollu Ravindra

From Our Staff Reporter Visakhapatnam, September 26: State Excise Minister Kollu Ravindra said steps were being taken to prevent liquor syndicates in the state. He said a proposal had been made to install CCTV cameras at liquor shops. The Minister conducted a review meeting with Excise Department officials from North Andhra in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. Speaking after the meeting, Ravindra said permission was being given for permit rooms, while unauthorised liquor shops would not be allowed. He said all liquor shops would be distributed through a tracking system. Referring

to allegations made earlier by YSRCP chief and former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, he said the distribution could be tracked through the Suraksha app. He alleged that the previous liquor policy was riddled with corruption and said only top brands were being permitted. The Minister stated that public health was the government's priority. He said tenders had been invited for 3,562 liquor shops, while 2,929 shops had been renewed. A total of 804 shops were being notified, he said. Applications would be accepted from September 24 to October 2, followed by a draw on Octo-



ber 5. Ravindra recalled that the TDP government had introduced what he described as a good liquor policy during 2014-19 and said people had witnessed what happened between 2019 and 2024. He said a new liquor policy was being introduced after the tenure of the existing shops came to an end. **Shops to Be Cancelled Automatically If Fewer Than Four Applications: Excise Principal Secretary** Excise Department Principal Secretary Mukesh Kumar Meena said a liquor shop would be automatically cancelled if fewer than four applications were received for it. He recalled that the Cabinet had proposed the new excise policy. While some shops had been renewed, tenders had been invited for the remaining shops, he said. Meena said the application fee for a liquor shop had been fixed at Rs.3 lakh. He added that the draw would be conducted by the respective District Collector on October 5.

Home Minister Anitha Launches Digital Complaint Kiosk at Visakhapatnam Railway Station

From Our Staff Reporter Visakhapatnam, September 26: State Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha inaugurated the 'Mee Police.. Mee Friend' digital complaint kiosk at the city's railway station on Saturday. Visakhapatnam Police Commissioner Shankhabrata Bagchi, DRM Lalit Bohra and other police officials attended the programme. Officials said the e-complaint kiosk had been established to make police services more accessible,



the kiosk without having to visit a police station. Special arrangements have been made to register complaints through voice in Telugu,

English and Hindi. Officials said the facility would also benefit citizens who face difficulties in visiting police stations. Speaking on the occasion, Home Minister Anitha said a large number of passengers travel through Visakhapatnam railway station every day and that their safety was being given priority. She said passengers could file complaints through the kiosk without directly approaching a police

station. She said the kiosk had been integrated with the PGRS (Public Grievance Redressal System), enabling authorities to take appropriate action on complaints. Anitha said that with the nature of crimes changing, the Andhra Pradesh Police were using technology to detect and solve cases. She stressed that security was crucial in Visakhapatnam, which was rapidly developing as an industrial and tourism hub, and said the city was taking the lead in ensuring women's safety.

Ready for CBI Probe into DSC: Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy

From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, September 26: Sarvepalli MLA Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy strongly responded to the YSRCP's demand for a CBI probe into the DSC teacher recruitment process. He asserted that the DSC recruitment process was conducted in a highly transparent and rigorous manner and that there was no scope for irregularities in the recruitment of 16,372 teachers. Somireddy said that if the YSRCP had complete faith in the CBI, the government was also ready for an investigation, provided the conditions he had proposed were accepted first. He said neither the government nor Minister Nara Lokesh was afraid of a CBI probe into the DSC recruitment. He al-

leged that YSRCP leaders were making accusations because they were unable to accept the recruitment of



teachers on such a large scale after five years. Somireddy also questioned the YSRCP's stand on the CBI investigations into the disproportionate assets cases involving Jagan and the murder case of Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy. He demanded that the

YSRCP accept the findings that emerged in the disproportionate assets cases registered by the CBI in the past and surrender before the court those named as accused by the CBI in the Vivekananda Reddy murder case. He further demanded that the YSRCP accept the facts submitted by the CBI before the court and withdraw the counter-affidavits filed against the investigation. Somireddy said that if these two conditions were fulfilled, he would persuade Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu to agree to a CBI probe into the DSC recruitment process. He alleged that even if the investigation resulted in a clean chit, the YSRCP would once again raise doubts about the process.

EDITORIAL

Tension Over Xi Jinping—Trump Meeting

The three-day visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to the United States is being closely watched by countries around the world. Political assessments suggest that the visit could have an impact on global affairs and contribute to the emergence of a bipolar order dominated by the United States and China. It is significant that the visit is taking place just four months after US President Donald Trump visited Beijing. The underlying objective of the visit appears to be a desire to maintain stable relations between China and the United States, the two most powerful countries in the world. A few days ago, the US Congress granted President Trump the authority to impose tariffs of up to 100 per cent on any country that continues to trade with Russia and Iran. China is the largest trading partner of both Russia and Iran. At the same time, the trade agreement reached between the United States and China in Busan, South Korea, is set to expire within a few weeks. Therefore, Xi’s visit also assumes significance from the perspective of trade relations. The bilateral discussions between the two presidents are expected to focus mainly on concerns over the risks posed by artificial intelligence, trade, technology, the Taiwan issue, critical minerals, and efforts to reduce tensions between the two countries in international affairs. Xi’s remarks ahead of his US visit that China and the United States should be partners rather than rivals are noteworthy. There is intense competition between the two countries in the field of artificial intelligence. While the US seeks to maintain its technological dominance, China is attempting to expand its influence in the technology sector. As part of this strategy, Xi’s recent proposal at the BRICS summit to establish an open-source AI community for countries of the Global South is significant. The Taiwan issue remains the most complicated problem in US-China relations. On this matter, Trump appears interested in proceeding cautiously, taking into account the ground realities and avoiding a direct confrontation with China. However, the United States continues to follow its long-standing Taiwan policy and also maintains its legal obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act. Together, the US and China account for around 42 per cent of the global economy. There are concerns in some countries that if the two nations enter into agreements solely in pursuit of their mutual interests, while ignoring the interests of other countries, a kind of “dual dominance” could emerge, potentially causing serious disruption to the international order.

India, along with other Asian countries, is closely assessing the meeting between the two presidents and its subsequent developments. They are watching to see whether the two countries reach any temporary agreements, achieve significant progress towards greater stability and clarity in their relationship, or whether the meeting fails to produce the expected results and instead leads to further tensions. The Joe Biden administration regarded China as a major challenge in terms of capabilities and gave considerable importance to India. Even after Trump returned to the presidency for a second term, competition with China has continued. However, the Trump administration has largely toned down the approach of portraying China as America’s principal geopolitical and strategic threat. This is also reflected in the 2025 National Security Strategy. During the recent tensions involving China and Taiwan, Trump showed little interest in extending support to Japan. If the United States adopts a more conciliatory approach towards China, the need for countries such as India to balance China’s power in Asia could diminish to some extent from Washington’s perspective. India and several other countries have expressed concern over Trump’s occasional support for the idea of a “G2”. The concept of G2 envisages the world’s two major superpowers, the United States and China, jointly determining the most important global policies. If such an arrangement emerges, there are concerns that the United States could give less importance to the interests of countries such as India, which has a border dispute with China. With a US-China dominated “G2” system potentially emerging, there could be a greater need for middle powers such as India, Japan, Canada, Australia and the European Union to coordinate more closely with one another. This could help them protect their interests and sovereignty and prevent powerful countries from exerting pressure or dominance over others. Meanwhile, with the US midterm elections approaching, the meeting has become important for the Trump administration. Trump may seek to project the outcome of the discussions as an achievement and use it in his preparations for the elections. If the results of the elections are unfavorable for the Republicans, their dominance in both houses of Congress could be weakened.

An Outreach, Then 1-To-1 Call: Left-Mamata Banerjee Turbulence Sees Rare Calm

Amul once ran an advertising campaign saying that the best coalition or the best alliance globally is that of bread and butter. When the BJP made an alliance with the Shiv Sena long ago, politicians said it was a natural alliance, as both parties had some ideological similarities. But all parties cannot be natural allies. The question of the current times is whether there could be a new political understanding between the CPI(M) and Mamata Banerjee. Mamata Banerjee and CPI(M) general secretary MA Baby recently spoke, after years of rivalry, on the issue of the workings of the Election Commission, triggered once again by a news report that made serious claims. This is also when Mamata Banerjee finds herself repeatedly isolated, her power and influence diminished, her party having broken into three parts, and her identity challenged as she now does not have the old “ghas phool” symbol. Now, cut to 2026, when the gap seems to be closing between the CPI(M) and Mamata Banerjee at the national level. Coalition politics has been a part of Indian politics since the decline of the Congress party in the 1970s. The first non-Congress coalition government was led by Morarji Desai in 1977. However, in coalition politics, there are both natural allies and unusual or unlikely allies. When the BJP first emerged as a coalition partner, we used to describe it as a natural ally because of certain ideological similarities among its partners. However, an understanding between the communists and Mamata Banerjee’s Trinamool Congress (TMC) would be highly unusual. We have not witnessed such an alliance be-

fore. During UPA-I, the Left supported the Manmohan Singh government, while Mamata Banerjee was not part of the arrangement. However, when the Left withdrew its support during UPA-II, Mamata Banerjee entered the coalition with her party. Now, following the developments surrounding the Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar, the anti-Gyanesh Kumar protests, and the broader opposition politics, a new development has suddenly emerged. And it is unusual -- Mamata Banerjee and MA Baby aligned on a matter. While it may seem unlikely, it is not entirely impossible. Someone has to raise the question and examine the possibility.

On September 23, Baby sent a letter to all opposition leaders, including Mamata Banerjee. The letter appears to suggest that, in the face of the present political circumstances, opposition parties should consider developing a joint strategy. This does not necessarily mean that the INDIA alliance is being restructured. Rather, Baby seems to be reaching out to opposition parties more broadly, and he has understood several aspects of the political relationship between himself and Mamata Banerjee. There are also practical considerations. The CPI(M) has members in the Rajya Sabha, and there are questions concerning the party’s parliamentary strength, its political influence, and its future development. The possibility of coordination with the Trinamool has therefore become a subject of discussion. However, the issue is not entirely new. Earlier, when the INDIA alliance was being formed, there were discussions



about its leadership and the possibility of bringing different opposition leaders together. At that time, Sitaram Yechury was present, and Mamata Banerjee was also involved. Efforts were made to bring the two sides closer and establish a common understanding. However, the CPI(M) and Mamata Banerjee could not come together. Even the Congress entered into an alliance with the CPI(M), but not with Mamata Banerjee. So, after this letter and Mamata’s call to Baby, the question arises: Is it possible that Mamata Banerjee and the CPI(M) could form a new alliance?

A telephonic conversation is one thing. An electoral alliance or a political alliance is an entirely different matter. In West Bengal, the CPI(M)’s state leadership remains highly critical of the Trinamool and Mamata Banerjee. The party’s state secretary, Mohammad Salim, is also a national leader. Other prominent CPI(M) leaders, including Sujan Chakraborty, have also been strongly critical of the Trinamool and

Mamata Banerjee. The party’s spokespersons and younger leaders have consistently taken a critical position towards the Trinamool. Even within the Congress, the high command has to take the views of the state Congress leaders into account, and there are significant differences of opinion. The political dilemma is clear. If the BJP takes a particular position, the opposition must decide how to respond. Similarly, if the opposition wants to present a united front against the BJP, it must consider whether Mamata Banerjee can be part of that effort. Mamata Banerjee has considerable political strength because she has established a strong position for her party in West Bengal. However, when it comes to the future of national politics, it is not yet clear whether she can play a decisive role at the national level. If she chooses to focus on national politics, she will have to consider the political consequences for her party in West Bengal. There is also the question of whether the CPI(M) and

Mamata’s Trinamool Congress can work together against the BJP at the national level while maintaining their separate political positions in West Bengal. This creates a clear political dichotomy. On the one hand, the CPI(M) cannot easily set aside its opposition to Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal. The party cannot remain silent about what it considers to be 15 years of misrule under her government. On the other hand, if Mamata Banerjee wants to help build a national platform against Narendra Modi, she may see an opportunity to bring different opposition forces together. With Gyanesh Kumar becoming a focal point of political controversy and growing public anger, opposition parties and various civil society organisations are also joining the broader movement. Mamata Banerjee may want to take advantage of this political opportunity. But the question remains: Can this two-pronged strategy actually work? A great deal of political analysis suggests that there is a fundamental contradiction in this approach.

Trump—Xi In Washington: The Mega Summit Behind The UNGA Curtain

As the 81st UN General Assembly debates the future of multilateralism in New York, Donald Trump and Xi Jinping are confronting the harder reality of great-power rivalry in Washington—trade, tariffs, AI, Taiwan, Iran and the question of who sets the rules of the international system. The geography tells an important part of the story. While presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers gather in New York for the 81st United Nations General Assembly, Chinese President Xi Jinping travelled to Washington for a state visit with President Donald Trump. China, one of the UN Security Council’s five permanent members, is represented at the General Assembly by its foreign-policy establishment, including Foreign Minister Wang Yi, while Xi is dealing directly with the American president.

The two settings could hardly be more different. At the UN, 193 countries sit together in an institution built around collective decision-making. In Washington, the world’s two largest economic powers are trying to manage a relationship in which cooperation and confrontation have become inseparable. The theme of this year’s General Assembly—“Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation: A United Nations That Delivers for All”—could almost serve as a description of what Trump and Xi are attempting bilaterally. But the Washington summit is also a reminder of the limits of the UN system. Decisions on the most consequential questions of war, trade, technology and strategic competition increasingly depend on negotiations between major powers, particularly the United States and China. Trump’s reception of Xi began with an unusually personal gesture. He travelled to Joint Base Andrews on Wednesday to greet the Chinese president, before the two leaders met formally at the White House on Thursday. The White House describes Xi’s visit as a significant milestone in the relation-

ship. It is Xi’s first White House visit in more than a decade and only the eighth major state visit by a Chinese leader to Washington in nearly half a century. The ceremony is deliberately grand: military honours, a review involving US troops and aircraft, restricted and expanded bilateral meetings and a White House state dinner attended by senior officials and business leaders.

Yet behind the ceremonial warmth lies a relationship that remains deeply competitive. An assessment quoted by Al Jazeera described Beijing’s approach as “cautious”. China wants to stabilise a relationship it cannot afford to sever, while also avoiding a direct confrontation with Washington. That may be the central calculation behind the summit. Neither Trump nor Xi needs a new crisis. Neither is prepared to abandon the strategic competition.

Trade remains the most tangible item on the table. The tariff war that erupted during Trump’s second term rapidly escalated, with both sides imposing punitive measures and Beijing using its control over critical rare-earth supplies as leverage. The two governments eventually reached a truce after Trump and Xi met in South Korea in October 2025. That arrangement was due to expire in November but has now effectively been extended into January, giving negotiators additional time.

That extension may itself be the most important immediate outcome. It buys both governments time. For Trump, tariffs remain a negotiating instrument. For Xi, avoiding another uncontrolled escalation protects Chinese exporters and the wider economy while preserving Beijing’s ability to retaliate.

The broader question is whether the two countries can move from repeated tariff truces towards a durable commercial framework. There are signs of bargaining already. Earlier discussions included Chinese purchases of Boeing aircraft and American agricultural products

and plans for a Board of Trade and Investment. But the underlying disagreements have not disappeared. Washington remains concerned about China’s industrial capacity, technology policies, market access and supply-chain dominance. Beijing objects to what it regards as American attempts to contain China’s economic and technological rise. Thus, trade is not merely about tariffs. It is increasingly about economic security. One of the least visible but most consequential elements of the relationship is China’s dominance of important rare-earth supply chains. For Washington, reducing dependence on Chinese supplies has become a strategic objective. An analyst cited in the Al Jazeera live coverage said the administration’s less aggressive posture towards China could partly be designed to “buy time” to reduce Chinese dominance of rare-earth supply chains.

That makes the summit more complicated than a conventional trade negotiation. The United States can impose tariffs on Chinese goods. China can respond through export controls on strategically important materials. Both sides therefore possess economic weapons that can damage the other. The likely objective is not to eliminate those weapons but to establish rules for using them without allowing the relationship to spiral. Artificial intelligence may be the most consequential subject after trade. The United States and China are competing for leadership in frontier AI, while their technology industries increasingly overlap with national-security concerns. Washington is worried about the transfer of advanced technology to China, Chinese development of AI capabilities and what US officials see as risks to national security. Beijing, meanwhile, wants access to technology and markets while resisting restrictions that could slow its technological rise. Yet there is a paradox. Both governments recognise

the dangers of uncontrolled AI development, but neither appears willing to surrender its competitive advantage. Trump has said he wants to leave the existing AI situation “exactly where it is”, while the two countries have discussed a notification mechanism for serious AI incidents that could threaten national security.

That suggests the summit may produce dialogue rather than an AI arms-control treaty. The underlying competition remains. The two countries control much of the world’s frontier AI ecosystem, making cooperation important—but competition makes comprehensive cooperation difficult. One analyst cited in the source material argued that safety arrangements covering only one country’s AI models would leave half the problem unresolved.

Then there is Iran. The US-Israel war on Iran is an issue that Washington cannot separate from its relationship with Beijing. China has maintained close economic and diplomatic ties with Tehran and remains Iran’s largest trading partner, according to the reporting surrounding the summit. Washington may want Beijing to use its influence with Tehran, particularly as attempts at diplomacy have stalled. But Trump has so far resisted making a direct appeal to Xi for help. This is one of the issues that could be discussed privately but remain absent from any celebratory summit statement.

The Iranian question also exposes a larger strategic divide. The United States sees China as a competitor whose economic and diplomatic power can affect American security interests far beyond East Asia. China sees itself as a major global power with relationships that Washington cannot simply dictate. Even reports about Chinese satellite imagery allegedly being used by Iran have added another layer of sensitivity to the relationship. Trump has played down the significance, noting that the US

and China conduct intelligence activities against each other.

If trade is the negotiable issue, Taiwan is closer to the non-negotiable category. China regards Taiwan as part of its territory. The United States maintains extensive unofficial relations with Taipei and supplies Taiwan with military equipment. The Trump administration approved an \$11 billion arms package for Taiwan in December, according to the supplied reporting, while another package worth about \$14 billion has reportedly been held up.

Trump has described arms sales to Taiwan as a negotiating “chip”. For Beijing, however, Taiwan is not simply another bargaining item. Wang Yi has urged Washington to handle Taiwan with “extra prudence” and has framed the broader objective as building what China calls a “constructive bilateral relationship of strategic stability”. This may explain why Taiwan could be discussed extensively behind closed doors but receive relatively little public attention. Both governments have an interest in preventing the issue from becoming the headline outcome of the summit.

Several difficult questions are therefore likely to remain outside the spotlight. Human rights are one.

US lawmakers have already criticised the lavish welcome for Xi and called for discussion of China’s human-rights record, military expansion and relationship with Iran. Democratic lawmakers have separately urged Trump not to weaken American support for Taiwan. American citizens detained in China are another issue. Trump is expected to raise individual cases, following the release of Pastor Ezra Jin after Trump had raised his case with Xi.

The South China Sea, China’s military expansion, cyber activity and the future of US alliances in Asia also form part of the strategic background. None fits comfortably into the optics of a state dinner.

"CEC should immediately resign": BJD's Naveen Patnaik demands review of SIR process



Bhubaneswar : Former Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik called for the resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner, citing what he described as "strong differences" between various Election Commissioners and the CEC, and demanded a thorough review of the ongoing SR process. Speaking to the reporters, Patnaik said

the differences within the Election Commission warranted the CEC's immediate resignation and a fresh review of the process. "Because of the big differences, the sharp differences between various Election Commissioners and the Chief Election Commissioner, the Chief Election Commissioner should immediately resign, and the

whole SIR process should be thoroughly revisited. The BJD has been against this SIR process from the very beginning," Patnaik said.

His statement came amid the investigative report by the Indian Express, which stated that two Election Commissioners, Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, had raised strong objections regarding discrepancies in the SIR process. On the MMDR Act, Patnaik questioned the need to blame others, saying that 20 BJP Lok Sabha MPs from Odisha had supported the legislation in Parliament. "As far as the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act is concerned, why blame others when 20 MPs from Odisha, 20 Lok Sabha MPs of the BJD... of the, forgive me... of the

Bharatiya Janata Party supported this bill in Parliament?" he said. Patnaik said the BJD would take up the issue with the state government and seek a pause and thorough review of the process, alleging that it would result in significant revenue loss for Odisha. "We in the BJD will take this up strongly with the state government to pause, to see that it is revised thoroughly. In this process, it is too much of a loss of revenue for the state," he said. Former CM on Sunday wrote to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, urging him to call a special session of the state Assembly and pass a unanimous resolution seeking repeal of the recently passed Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Amendment.

Sikkim CM Prem Singh Tamang assures support after severe landslide in Rimbi, directs authorities to remain on high alert



Gangtok : Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Friday expressed concern over the

severe landslides in Rimbi in Gyalshing district and assured that the government stood firmly with the

people during the difficult situation. In a Facebook post, CM Tamang said the safety and well-being of the people remained the government's foremost priority and assured that the administration was closely monitoring the situation. He wrote, "Deeply saddened and concerned by the situation in Rimbi, Gyalshing district, following the severe landslides last night. The situation remains serious, and the safety and well-being of the people continue to be our foremost priority. The Government stands firmly with the people of Rimbi during this difficult time."

He further said that necessary directions had been issued to the concerned authorities to remain on high alert, closely monitor the situation and take every possible measure to ensure the safety and security of the public. "I understand the deep distress and uncertainty being faced by the residents, especially as the difficulties have persisted from the very beginning. My thoughts and prayers are with every family affected," the Chief Minister said. He urged people to remain vigilant and follow the advisories issued by the authorities amid torrential rain. "Let us remain vigilant and stay safe during this torrential rain, follow the advisories of the authorities, and extend every possible support to one another. The

Government is closely monitoring the situation and will continue to take all necessary steps to protect our people. We stand with Rimbi," he said.

Meanwhile, the major landslide in the Rimbi area has left more than 30 houses affected and forced several families to flee their homes as the situation continues to raise concern among local residents. The incident was triggered by heavy mudslides and debris coming down from the upper slopes, sending large quantities of mud, rocks and other debris towards the lower areas. The sudden movement of the earth has damaged houses and disrupted normal life in the affected locality. Residents living close to the affected slopes have been forced to move to safer locations, fearing further landslides and additional damage. The situation has also created difficulties for movement and access in the area, with debris affecting local roads and connectivity. People in Rimbi are now seeking urgent attention from the concerned authorities, particularly for immediate relief, assessment of damaged homes and measures to protect families living in vulnerable areas. With the threat of additional mudslides remaining a concern, locals say Rimbi needs immediate attention and coordinated relief efforts to ensure the safety of affected families.

Major landslide damages houses in Sikkim's Rimbi village after heavy rainfall; no casualties reported

Gangtok : A major landslide triggered by continuous rainfall damaged several houses in Rimbi village under the Yuksom-Tashiding constituency of West Sikkim, officials said. The landslide occurred on Thursday night (September 24), with debris moving towards inhabited areas and causing damage to multiple structures, including government quarters of the Power Department. Several houses were reportedly damaged or destroyed due to the landslide. However, no casualties have been reported so far. This has raised concerns among residents amid continued rainfall, with nearby houses, properties, and connectivity in the area facing risk. Authorities are assessing the extent of the damage and monitoring the situation in the affected area. The incident comes amid continuous heavy rainfall in Sikkim, which has triggered multiple landslides, mudflows and road blockages across several areas. The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Gangtok, has initiated an extensive damage assessment following rain-related incidents reported across the district.

A multi-agency team led by Kabi Tingda MLA Tshering T Bhutia, along with the OSD to the MLA, councillors, DDMA officials, Roads & Bridges Department engineers, the Ranka Block Development Officer and revenue surveyors, inspected several affected locations on Wednesday and Thursday. The teams assessed areas affected by landslides, road blockages, mud and debris flows, and damage to residential structures. Several locations, including stretches of the Luings-Ranka Highway near Bojoghari, Lower Bojoghari, Lingding, High Court Road, TNA Gate, VIP Colony, Upper Z-Bojoghari, Pangthang-Lingdok Road, Pamro Gaon, Ling Perbing, Upper and Middle Luings, Phenjong, Ranka, Rakdong Tintek, Daragaon Upper Burtuk, Sichey and Arithang, were inspected. Authorities said several road stretches remain obstructed, affecting vehicular movement. Public infrastructure, including the Sewage Treatment Plant at Sichey, has also sustained damage, while debris accumulation near the Enchee School 33/11 kV Switching



Station has been identified as a potential hazard. As a precautionary measure, tarpaulins have been placed at vulnerable slide zones to prevent further rainwater seepage. The District Collector and DDMA Chairman have directed concerned departments to clear roads and debris, restore connectivity, verify damages, and provide

assistance to affected residents. Authorities have advised people to avoid unnecessary travel through landslide-prone areas and remain alert, especially during night hours. Residents living near unstable slopes have been asked to monitor cracks, slope movement, or falling debris and immediately report any warning signs.

"When will Banka accused be caught?": Tejashwi Yadav attacks Bihar govt after Mandar Hill video surfaces

Patna: Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader and Leader of Opposition in Bihar Tejashwi Yadav attacked the Bihar government over a purported video showing a minor girl being harassed and assaulted at the historic Mandar Hill in Banka, questioning the law-and-order situation in the state. Yadav said the incident came amid recent cases reported in Jamui and Samastipur and alleged that the state government was failing to ensure the safety of women and girls. "After incidents in Jamui and Samastipur, a video showing the abuse, indecent behavior, and assault of a minor girl at the historic tourist site of Mandar Hill in Banka has now gone viral! Law and order in Bihar is virtually dead!" Yadav said in a Facebook post. He also

questioned the progress of the investigations into the Jamui and Samastipur cases and asked when the accused in the Banka incident would be arrested. "What happened to the remaining five accused in the Jamui incident? Did the four accused in the Samastipur incident receive partial punishment, full punishment, or were they let off based on political calculations?" he asked.

Yadav further alleged that justice in Bihar was being influenced by the social and political background of accused persons and demanded answers from Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary. "When will these monsters from Banka be caught? Will the Chief Minister react to this only after looking at their social media reels and caste?" he asked. The remarks came after Banka po-



lice registered an FIR against six unidentified youths following the circulation of a purported video showing them allegedly behaving indecently with and assaulting a minor girl at Mandar Hill. According to police, the video came to their attention through the social media cell on September 22. A police team subsequently visited Mandar

Hill and verified that the location shown in the footage was the tourist site. Police have taken the video on record and are attempting to identify those seen in it. The FIR was registered under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Information Technology Act. Police said further action would follow after identification of the accused.

UP CM Yogi gives directions amid heavy rainfall, orders compensation within 24 hours

Lucknow : Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath issued directions to senior officials to ensure prompt relief and rescue operations amid heavy rainfall across the state. The Chief Minister took cognizance of the loss of life, cattle and economic damage caused by the heavy rainfall and directed all senior officials to move into the field and personally monitor relief and rescue operations in the affected areas. He also directed authorities to provide every possible assistance to affected families and ensure that compensation for losses caused by heavy rainfall and lightning strikes is assessed and disbursed within 24 hours. Advising caution to the public, he advised that people should avoid stepping out of their homes unnecessarily during lightning and heavy rainfall. He further advised people to avoid bathing in rivers and water bodies during heavy rainfall and to



exercise special caution during such conditions. (news agency) Meanwhile, in Ayodhya, the district administration has declared a holiday in all schools, from nursery to intermediate level, across all boards on September 25, in view of the forecast of heavy rainfall for the district. According to an order issued on the directions of the District Magistrate, all concerned authorities have been asked to strictly ensure compliance with the order. Meanwhile, in Varanasi,

the water level of the River Ganga has receded below the warning mark, resulting in a significant accumulation of silt along the ghats in Varanasi. The Varanasi Municipal Corporation has intensified cleaning and desilting operations ahead of the air show scheduled to take place at Namoh Ghat on October 22, 23 and 25.

Speaking on the ongoing cleaning efforts, Public Relations Officer (PRO) for the Varanasi Municipal Corporation, Sandeep Srivastava, has

ensured that the ghats will be completely clean before the celebration, ensuring no difficulties are faced by the tourists. The cleaning and desilting operations along the ghats are being carried out on a priority basis, with the Municipal Corporation aiming to complete the work well ahead of the scheduled air show and the festive season, ensuring smooth movement and a hassle-free experience for devotees, pilgrims and tourists visiting the ghats.

Tamil Nadu bypolls: Vijay to campaign in Madurantakam today, TVK limits entry to 5,000



Chennai : Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) chief and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay will campaign in Madurantakam on Friday ahead of the October 6 Assembly bypoll. According to a statement issued by TVK general secretary for headquarters and Rural Development and Water Resources Minister N. Anand, Vijay's campaign will be held near the Athur toll plaza in Chengalpattu at

around 3 pm. The party said entry to the campaign has been restricted to 5,000 people, with QR-code passes issued in accordance with police guidelines. Only those who have obtained prior permission will be allowed to attend the event. As a safety measure, the party has not issued passes to pregnant women, children, school students, senior citizens, persons with disabilities and those

who are unwell. Drinking water and medical facilities have also been arranged for attendees.

The Madurantakam and Dharapuram Assembly constituencies are going to bypolls following the resignation of sitting AIADMK MLAs Maragatham Kumaravel and P. Sathyabama, who had won the seats in the April 2026 Assembly elections on the AIADMK's Two Leaves symbol and subsequently joined the ruling TVK. TVK has fielded Maragatham Kumaravel and P. Sathyabama from Madurantakam and Dharapuram respectively on the party's Whistle symbol. The defections have emerged as a key issue in the campaign. TVK is contesting the bypolls as part of its Secular Social Justice Victory Alliance, with allies including the Congress, VCK and MDMK. The

party has named 40 star campaigners, including Vijay, Congress leader Manickam Tagore, VCK president Thol Thirumavalavan and MDMK general secretary Vaiko.

In Madurantakam, 28 of the 48 nominations received were accepted after scrutiny, while 22 of 51 nominations were found valid in Dharapuram. Among the prominent contestants in Madurantakam are TVK's Maragatham Kumaravel, DMK's I. Paranthamen, AIADMK's S. Kanitha Sampath, a CPI(M) candidate and Naam Tamilar Katchi nominee K. Janakiraman. AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami is campaigning in both constituencies, while DMK president M. K. Stalin and NTK coordinator Seeman are also scheduled to campaign for their respective candidates.

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah inaugurates fourth edition of the Uttar Pradesh International Trade Show in Greater Noida



- Modi Ji has made political stability his hallmark, by winning people's trust as Prime Minister for three consecutive terms, he has implemented policies on the ground

- By making changes in policies based on experience, formulating new policies, and demonstrating clarity in all of them, Modi Ji has made India an attractive manufacturing hub for the entire world

- Amidst so much upheaval and unrest around the world, and despite numerous obstacles, India's growth rate is rising today

- Those who see India as a 'dead economy' have, in fact, a dead mindset themselves — that is why they cannot see India's vibrancy and growth

- Due to the double-engine government, UP is today becoming fear-free, a centre of investment, and the engine of the country's development

- For a favourable investment climate — good law and order, a conducive industrial policy, a proactive government, and the enthusiasm to facilitate — all four of these are present in UP

- This trade fair will make it easier for producers across UP to expand their trade and production, and will help take UP's identity to the world

- The same UP, whose law-and-order situation forced the investment summit to be held in Delhi in 2013, is today setting a target of a \$1 trillion economy — this is the magic of the double-engine government

- Where earlier a cottage industry of vehicle theft and chain-snatching used to thrive, today defence corridors, vehicle manufacturing, and medical device parks are coming up

- BrahMos missiles manufactured in UP keep Pakistan on edge, while the AK-203 assault rifles manufactured in Amethi have already struck fear into the hearts of Naxalites and terrorists

- 'One District, One Product' initiative has brought about significant progress for the youth, small entrepreneurs, and small-scale industries, and has emerged as a key driver of State's economic development

- Paying tribute to Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya Ji on his 110th birth anniversary, Union Home Minister said that



a year of impact, in which more than 5 lakh people visited the trade fair, more than 2,400 MoUs were signed, investment worth thousands of crores of rupees came in, and trade agreements were also concluded. Shri Shah expressed confidence that the fourth edition of the trade fair being organised in 2026 will succeed in breaking all the records of 2025.

Amit Shah said that with a population of nearly 24 crore, Uttar Pradesh is the largest state in the country. It has abundant water resources, land, hardworking artisans, and now a favourable environment for industry as well. There was a time when the mafia ruled Uttar Pradesh, but in 2017 our party formed the government here and Shri Yogi Adityanath became the Chief Minister of the state. The Yogi government has eliminated the mafia across Uttar Pradesh, and it is because of this that an investment-friendly climate has been created in the state today. He said that the first conditions for an investment climate are good law & order, a favourable industrial policy, a proactive government, and the enthusiasm to facilitate industry. All four of these are present in Uttar Pradesh today, which is why an atmosphere for investment has been created here. Prime Minister Modi has made political stability his hallmark. By winning the people's trust for three consecutive terms as Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has not only formulated policies but has also implemented them continuously on the ground. Along with putting policies into practice, Prime Minister Modi has refined them on the basis of experience and framed new policies, thereby making India an attractive manufacturing hub

for the entire world. Union Home Minister said that some people even try to dispute India's GDP figures. Moody's has raised India's growth forecast from 6% to 7%. Japan's leading rating agency Japan Credit Rating



Agency (JCR) has upgraded India's sovereign rating from BBB+ to A-. In the last quarter, India maintained its record by achieving a growth rate of 7.8%. Today, among the world's major economies, India's is the fastest-growing. He said that amid so much upheaval and unrest around the world, and despite numerous obstacles, India has not only sustained its growth rate but has also accelerated it further. Shri Shah said that we will fulfil the resolve given by Prime Minister Modi to the people of the country to build a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

Amit Shah said that our electronic exports have increased 11 times compared to 2015. In July, GST collection stood at Rs.2.11 lakh crore, which is the highest collection for the month of July so far. There are 12 semiconductor projects in 6 states with an investment of more than Rs.1.64 lakh crore, and our capital expenditure has broken records by crossing Rs.12.2 lakh crore. All these achievements are a testament to the foundation of India's development. He said that some people find the Indian economy a "dead economy," but those whose thinking itself is

dead cannot see its vibrancy. Shri Shah said that some people cannot see India's development. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, we have signed Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with Mauritius, UAE, Austria, the organisation of four European countries, UK, Oman, New Zealand, and European Union. These FTAs have multiplied the export potential of our industries many times over. Shri Shah said that despite various adversities, the Indian economy has sus-

tained its growth rate. Union Home Minister said that today investment is flowing into defence manufacturing at the six nodes of the Defence Corridor in Jhansi, Chitrakoot, Lucknow, Agra, Aligarh and Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh. As a result, not only Uttar Pradesh but defence products across the country have developed, and our defence production stands at ₹1,78,000 crore. Compared to 2013-14, we have increased the export of defence products by 56 times, and today Indian defence products are being exported to 80 countries. He said that Uttar Pradesh has made a very significant contribution to this. The Yogi government has not only established the Defence Corridor but has also done extensive work to facilitate it, link it with infrastructure and create favourable policies. The BrahMos missiles manufactured in UP keep Pakistan

on edge, while the AK-203 assault rifles manufactured in Amethi have already struck fear into the hearts of Naxalites and terrorists. Amit Shah said that during the tenure of previous governments, a crime industry was thriving in Uttar Pradesh, and the state had become a hub for the manufacture of country-made pistols and illegal firearms. Vehicle theft operated like a cottage industry in the cities of the state, and chain-snatching even provided an opportunity for the youth to show off their skills. Today, after 10 years, the country-made pistols industry has been replaced by a Defence Corridor, vehicle theft by vehicle manufacturing, and the chain-snatching industry by Medical Device Parks. He said that today Uttar Pradesh has become a major destination for attracting investment, and this transformation has taken place due to the double-engine government. He said that the very Uttar Pradesh - whose law & order situation had necessitated holding the 2013 investment summit in Delhi - is today setting a target of becoming a \$1 trillion economy; this is the magic of the 'double-engine' government.

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation said that after the formation of the Yogi government, the complete goondaism of the previous governments' tenure has been wiped out, and this has created a favourable environment for setting up industries here. Uttar Pradesh has achieved good results through its lucrative industrial policy, prompt resolution of industries' problems, and by rolling out the red carpet to attract industries from across the country to the state. Through this, the government of Yogi Adityanath has created employment opportunities for crores of youth in the state. Amit

Shah said that the Noida Airport, expressways and various infrastructure projects have created a conducive environment for investment in the state. As a result, today Uttar Pradesh is progressing at a rapid pace. The metro is currently operational in seven cities of Uttar Pradesh, which is the highest in any state in the country. We have launched the 'One District, One Product' (ODOP) scheme here. Due to the nurturing of traditional crafts and industries along with the ODOP initiative, there has been a significant rise among the youth, small entrepreneurs and small-scale industries of the state, which has become the pivot of Uttar Pradesh's economic development.

Union Home Minister said that there was a time when people from Uttar Pradesh used to migrate to other states of the country in search of employment, and today the youth of the same Uttar Pradesh are getting employment in their own state due to the 'One District, One Product' scheme. Whether it is the carpets of Bhadohi, the brassware of Moradabad, the glass of Firozabad, the woodcraft of Saharanpur, the perfume of Kannauj or the silk sarees of Banaras — all these have carved a distinct identity across the country. Just now, the website of 'One District, One Cuisine' (ODOC) was also launched here, through which Varanasi's Malaiyo and Tiranga Barfi, Agra's Petha, Mathura's Peda and Meerut's Gajak will be made available to the people of the entire country — from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Dwarka to Kamakhya. Shri Shah said that this trade fair will greatly facilitate the trade and production of producers across Uttar Pradesh and help in establishing UP's identity worldwide.

Noida / New Delhi: Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah today inaugurated the fourth edition of the Uttar Pradesh International Trade Show (UPITS) in Greater Noida. On this occasion, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Shri Yogi Adityanath and many other dignitaries were present. In his address, Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah said that today is a very important day. He said that 12 years ago, on 25 September itself, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had announced the 'Make in India' mission. Today's programme is one that paves the way for 'Make in India'. Over the past 12 years, the Central Government and the State Governments together have walked the path of 'Make in India' and worked to make India a global hub of production, design and innovation. Shri Shah said that 12 years ago the Indian economy was counted among the Fragile 5, and today the Indian economy is among the Top 5, which is the result of Prime Minister Modi's 'Make in India' policy. Amit Shah said that 25th September is the 110th birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya ji. He said that for the first time after independence Deendayal Upadhyaya ji placed before the country a

free trade and free agriculture-based economic policy. The same economic policy later became the foundation of India's development, first under Atal ji and thereafter under the leadership of Shri Narendra Modi. Deendayal ji also laid the foundation of organisation-based politics. Union Home Minister said that a fear-free Uttar Pradesh is emerging as an investment hub and the engine of India's development today. This transformation has taken place because of the double-engine government. Due to this change, we can set the target of making Uttar Pradesh's economy a 1-trillion-dollar economy. He said that buyers from across the world are present at trade fair today, and this will certainly lead to a massive increase in investment, production and sales in Uttar Pradesh. This is the fourth edition of the Uttar Pradesh International Trade Fair. In the first edition, the world was introduced to the transformation that had taken place in Uttar Pradesh. In the second edition, an intent to invest in Uttar Pradesh was expressed. In the third edition, investors came to Uttar Pradesh, and today, in the fourth edition of the trade fair, they will work as partners in the state's development towards building a 1-trillion-dollar economy. He said that the year 2025 was



Nepal PM Balendra Shah's India-China Balancing Act In UN Climate Pitch

Kathmandu:Nepal Prime Minister Balendra (Balen) Shah used his maiden address to the 81st session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) to call for a Himalayan Climate Resilience Mechanism in partnership with India and China in the wake of the recent devastating flash floods in the Himalayan nation.

Pitching a data and expertise-sharing framework between the three nations, Shah told world leaders that a warming climate is destabilising the fragile Himalayan ecology.

The Balancing Act

His call was in unison with the efforts of successive Nepali governments post-2015 to achieve a geopolitical balance between India and China. As a landlocked country wedged between two mega-economies, Kathmandu has long sought to preserve its strategic autonomy by balancing the influence of its two neighbours. Speaking at UNGA, Shah said, "The Hindu Kush Himalaya is home to nearly two billion people. These mountains

provide water, ecosystems, agriculture, and livelihoods to populations far beyond Nepal. The Himalayas are not peripheral to the planet. They are part of the planet's life-support system. "That is why, as an urgent first step, we propose that we establish a Himalayan Climate Resilience Mechanism, led by India, Nepal, and China."

Call for Info Exchange

According to the 36-year-old rapper-turned-politician, the mechanism should be used to share satellite data and expertise to monitor dangerous glacial lakes. "Let us strengthen joint early-warning systems. And when disaster strikes, let us coordinate assistance across borders. Let the Himalayas become a laboratory of international cooperation, rather than a frontier of fragmented information," he said. "Melting permafrost is fracturing mountain slopes beneath the glaciers and accelerating the risks of ice-rock avalanches, floods, landslides, and other cascading hazards. The resulting dev-

astation unleashed havoc on both sides of the Nepal-China border. The flood continued downstream towards India," he said. Shah said the devastating Nepal floods gave the world a fundamental message that "Climate change does not recognise borders. Glaciers and floods do not travel with a visa stamped on passports."

The Gratitude

Shah expressed Nepal's deep gratitude to the countries that came to its aid in the aftermath of the deluge. "Our immediate neighbours, India and China, offered prompt and generous assistance. Other friendly countries, the United Nations system, humanitarian agencies, philanthropies, and people around the world stood with Nepal," he said.

Nepal Prime Minister Shah told the UN that Nepal now faces a massive task of recovery and reconstruction. "It destroys roads, bridges, schools, homes, farms, and livelihoods. It destroys clean energy infrastructure that we need to fuel our future. And it forces

a poor country to borrow money to repair damage it did not cause," he said.

The Next Step

Nepal was struck by massive flash floods, triggered by an ice-rock avalanche near the Nepal-Tibet border on August 26. The floods devastated towns and villages in northern and central Nepal. The number of deaths from the devastating flood has reached 1,452, with over 4,700 to 6,000 people still reported missing. According to the Rapid Disaster Needs Assessment (RDNA) report prepared by a joint technical team of the National Planning Commission and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority, the recent floods are estimated to have caused losses of US\$2.69 billion. The RDNA report estimates that US\$4.77 billion will be required for the reconstruction and recovery of affected infrastructure and assets, equivalent to around 10 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

Trade, Taiwan And AI: Five Takeaways From Donald Trump, Xi Jinping Summit

Washington:US President Donald Trump hosted his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, for a lavish state dinner at the White House, followed by a day of pomp and ceremony that masked deep tensions between the rival nuclear superpowers. The tech-heavy event was attended by a cavalcade of billionaires, Washington power brokers, and business leaders, including Tesla's Elon Musk, Apple's Tim Cook, Nvidia's Jensen Huang, and Sam Altman of OpenAI, underscoring that trade and artificial intelligence were high on the agenda for Xi's visit.

"President Xi and I both understand we represent different systems, but the ties between our people endure, and we've never gotten along better," Trump said during his toast, adding that "together, we can continue to build a relationship that promotes prosperity and security for future generations."

The US leader has done his best to impress Xi, praising their close personal relationship. During business hours, the two leaders discussed tensions over Taiwan, trade, and artificial intelligence. In his own toast, Xi noted that "President Trump has pledged to make America great again" and that "China is committed to achieving great national rejuvenation." He said, "These two goals are both ambitious and can surely be mutually reinforcing." FOLLOW LIVE UPDATES

Trade

The United States and China announced the exten-

sion of their trade truce as Trump landed in the US, but only a short one. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the two sides agreed to extend by two months a trade agreement that ended last year's trade war and was due to expire in November. The extension would give Washington and Beijing "more time to see what we can do on the economic front," he said.

The extension appears to push the central questions surrounding the trade, including tariffs, Chinese purchases, rare-earth supplies, and technology restrictions, into the next round of negotiations. Bessent said that Beijing was meeting its requirement in the earlier agreement to buy 25 million tons of soybeans but was lagging on its pledge to buy \$17 billion in other agricultural goods. US officials have said rare-earth deliveries were also falling short, another sign that significant gaps remain.

Taiwan

The Chinese leader also pressed Trump on the Taiwan issue, saying Beijing hoped Washington would "handle the Taiwan question with prudence," China's official news agency reported. The agency's English-language service also wrote that Xi hoped the US would oppose Taiwan independence. There are no signs that the Trump administration plans to change Washington's long-standing formulation that it does not "support" independence. So far, the White House has not issued any readout of the exchange, but US officials

have long avoided explicitly stating opposition to Taiwanese independence.

AI

The two leaders expressed diverging views about artificial intelligence. Trump, who has declared that AI should be called super intelligence, or SI, said in a social media post that he wants to "leave it exactly where it is" and rely on the US Department of Justice rather than impose any new guardrails. He insisted that China held the same position. But Xi said that, as leading nations on AI, China and the US must manage their growth. "We have both the capability and responsibility to develop and manage AI for good, and ensure that the development of AI is always under human control and serves the well-being of the people," he said.

Strategic Risk

Xi once again reiterated his warning that the US and China must avoid the "Thucydides trap," referring to the idea that when a rising power threatens to displace an established one, the result is often war. The Chinese leader had offered a similar warning when Trump visited Beijing in May. "It should be a race of catching up with one another, not a wrestle in which one either wins or loses," Xi added, arguing that both nations stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation. The Chinese leader insisted the risk "can be overcome," but his reference underscored how concerns about a potential US-China military conflict continue to shadow rela-

tions between the world's two largest powers. Xi also called for regular military dialogue and stronger crisis-prevention mechanisms. Trump, for his part, drew on the two nations' shared history to emphasize the potential for cooperation. They could accomplish much by pursuing common interests, he said, invoking their wartime alliance against Japan.

Image Makeover

Trump treated Xi's visit as an opportunity to show off a Washington being remade in his image. After Xi treated Trump in Beijing to a tour around a Ming dynasty temple and a walled-off garden retreat rarely opened to foreigners, the US president returned the favor with a different kind of spectacle that included troops wearing wigs and tri-corner hats marching in formation and playing music in a Rose Garden redesigned to look like a Trump golf club. Fighter jets and bombers also roared overhead during ceremonies, one so loud it caused Trump to flinch.

The media covering the event wasn't allowed to hear what the two leaders talked about the weighty affairs of state. Instead, it was to watch them tour the Marine One helicopter and the recently redesigned South Lawn of the White House, replete with a large helipad emblazoned with the presidential seal. Speaking to reporters, Trump brushed away questions about their policy discussions. "He loves good granite...Great meeting," Trump said of Xi.

When Will You Prosecute Hafiz Saeed?" Pak's Shehbaz Sharif Confronted At UN

"Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday refused to answer questions regarding Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief Hafiz Saeed during his visit to the United Nations headquarters for the 81st United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). As Sharif entered the UN headquarters, reporters asked, "Prime Minister, when will you stop harbouring terrorists?" However, the Pakistani Prime Minister did not respond.

Later, while leaving the UN headquarters, Sharif was again asked, "When will you prosecute Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief Hafiz Saeed?" The Pakistani Prime Minister again refused to answer.

Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, a resident of Sargodha in Pakistan's Punjab province, is a designated terrorist under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, and the founder of the proscribed terrorist organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Saeed is wanted as an accused in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack case. More recently, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has also alleged that the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, 2025 was orchestrated by Paki-



stan-based operatives of the banned terrorist organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

Its supplementary chargesheet names LeT founder and designated terrorist Hafiz Muhammad Saeed as Accused No. 8, alleging his involvement in the larger conspiracy behind the attack. A day earlier, India delivered a scathing rebuke to Pakistan at the United Nations, telling Islamabad to direct its energy towards a debt-ridden economy surviving on bailouts rather than harbouring territorial ambitions or sponsoring cross-border terrorism. Exercising its right of reply at the UN Human Rights Council, Indian diplomat Kshitij Tyagi dis-

mantled Pakistan's diversionary tactics, asserting that its hostile posturing would do nothing to rescue its failing financial system.

Stating that Pakistan's priorities remain fundamentally misplaced, Kshitij Tyagi remarked, "Pakistan would better serve its people by focusing on development, rather than by coveting territory of others or exporting terror, because neither these nor its theatrics in the Council would help repay the loans its economy survives on."

Kshitij Tyagi further exposed Islamabad's severe domestic hypocrisy, highlighting its suppression of civilians and acute humanitarian crises in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, where

widespread protests met with lethal state violence and blockades on essential supplies such as food, fuel, and medicine.

Calling out the glaring omissions in Islamabad's governance, Kshitij Tyagi noted, "This Council was told last Friday of scores of civilians killed since June in the territory Pakistan occupies, of students arrested in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, and of food and medicine held back. When those accounts were given, Pakistan's answer was a point of order. If any delegation in this room meets every objective criterion for this Council's scrutiny, it is Pakistan."

Hormuz To Truce Talks: Inside Iran's New '7-Day' Plan To End War



Washington:Iran has offered a new "7-day" proposal to the United States to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and restart broader talks towards a final resolution to the nearly seven-month-long war. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told reporters in Washington that Tehran's new plan is similar to commitments laid out in a so-called memorandum of understanding between the US and Iran, which was struck in June but quickly unraveled.

Iran's mediators have submitted their proposal to the White House that could see the strategic links between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman -- a major

route that carries roughly a fifth of global energy in peacetime -- open within a week.

"We have introduced a plan to the United States through the intermediators that if certain conditions are met, the Strait of Hormuz would be open on the end of the seventh day and talks would restart," Araghchi said during a press conference on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York.

Araghchi stressed that Tehran was "not in a hurry" to secure a truce deal based on its new proposal. However, he said that "it would be much better" if the deal were finalised before the midterm election. "But it

depends on the US administration to decide. We don't care about the timing."

"But the plan is very clear...The moment they accept this plan, from the next day, this timetable can start, and after seven days, the strait will be open," he added.

Araghchi did not disclose whether the new proposal also addresses the nuclear questions during the proposed seven-day process. The dispute over Iran's nuclear activities remains one of the central obstacles to an agreement. Washington has demanded safeguards to ensure Tehran cannot develop a weapon, while Iranian offi-

cials have insisted that the country must be allowed to maintain a civilian nuclear program.

What the US Said

An American official familiar with the talks told The Financial Times that the Donald Trump administration was having positive and constructive discussions through mediators, but that the United States was not going to rush into a deal."The United States is in a very strong position with control of the Strait of Hormuz, so we are not in a rush. Nearly 22 million barrels of oil left the Strait last night," the official said in a statement to FT.

What Happened to the June Deal

The June truce fell as Tehran interpreted it as recognising Iranian control over the strait. The United States and its regional partners have rejected that position.

Iran had mined the waterway and warned ships against attempting to pass without coordinating with Tehran after Israel and the United States attacked Iran in late February. Shipping traffic subsequently slowed to a trickle, contributing to higher energy prices worldwide.

Italy Bans Burqa, Caps Number Of Foreign Students In Schools

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's cabinet adopted a decree law Thursday banning burqas and niqabs in schools and capping the number of students with a poor command of Italian per class.It introduces "A 30 percent cap on the number of students in a class who do not have an adequate command of Italian, more tools for learning our language, and a ban on the burqa and niqab in schools," Meloni wrote on social media.

If a child seriously struggles to integrate at school, social services will be called and the parents will be obliged to attend free Italian lessons. Failure to comply will be punished with a fine of up to 1,000 euros (\$1,140).

Italy is a frontline country for migration and integration is a hot campaign issue ahead of next year's general election.

Save the Children warned forcing children to change schools or enrol in a different institution from their peers simply because of their nationality or limited proficiency in Italian would "create 'first-class' and 'second-class' students".

But Education Minister Giuseppe Valditara said "inadequate language proficiency... hinders educational progress".

"Parental participation in their child's educational path is fundamental for academic success", he told journalists.

Valditara said there were 34,000 school classes in

Italy in which over 30 percent of the students are foreign.

But most of those would be not be affected by the new law, which targets new arrivals rather than those born in Italy or who attended kindergarten.

The 30 percent limit on the number of foreign students per class was established in a ministerial memorandum in 2010.

But the limit was flexible, and could be raised in cases involving foreign students with adequate language skills, such as foreign students born in Italy, or lowered when foreign students have a poor command of Italian.

Opposition leader Elly Schlein accused the government of "a new witch

hunt at the expense of children".

The burqa ban was "a matter of security", Meloni said in a television interview after the cabinet meeting.

"When a woman -- or worse, a young girl -- is forced to cover her face, she is being denied fundamental rights and the very integration that is so often loudly championed," she said.

A crackdown on the use of burqas in schools was called for in July by the National Future (FN) party.

The FN, which is not part of the governing coalition, is further to the right than Meloni's and has emerged as a major challenger, rising sharply in the polls since launching in February.

"We Do not Wish To Continue": Iran President Says "It's Up To US To End War"

Washington:Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said it was up to the United States to choose when the Iran war will end, when asked if the conflict could end by the end of the year. "But we do not wish to continue. It's America that must choose whether it wants to end this or not," Pezeshkian said, responding to the question in an interview aired on Thursday on Fox News' "Special Report with Bret Baier" show. Iran's president told the UN General

Assembly on Wednesday Tehran would never surrender to US pressure as the two sides have remained far apart on how to end the war. US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday he could "annihilate" Iran if there is no deal to end the war, but also suggested an agreement could come soon. Trump has offered shifting goals and timelines for the war that began on February 28 when the US and Israel attacked Iran and Tehran responded with its own strikes on Israel and Gulf states that host



US bases. US-Israeli strikes on Iran and Israeli attacks on Lebanon have killed thousands and displaced millions. Trump has cited weakening Iran's nuclear capabilities as one of his war objectives. Iran, which does not

have nuclear weapons, denies seeking them. The US is nuclear-armed. Tehran says it has the right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes as a party to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Anahat, Abhay join Joshna in assuring India three squash medals at Asian Games



Nagoya: Indian squash players assured themselves of three medals as Joshna Chinappa and Velavan Senthilkumar entered the mixed doubles semifinals, while Anahat Singh and Abhay Singh advanced to the last four in singles at the Asian Games. Joshna, competing in a record seventh Asian Games, and Senthilkumar began the winning spree with an 11-3, 11-5 victory over the Philippines' David Pelino and Jemyca Aribado in the mixed doubles quarterfinals. India's first-ever junior world champion and medal favourite Anahat breezed past compatriot Tanvi Khanna 11-2, 11-5, 11-3 in the women's singles quarterfinals to stay on course for a coveted Olympic berth. Anahat will next face world No. 6 Satomi Watanabe, a bronze medallist from Hangzhou. Abhay, meanwhile, dispatched local favourite Ryonosuke Tsukue 11-4, 11-3, 11-6 to set up a semifinal clash with Pakistan's Irfan Muhammad, who got the better of Veer Chotrani. Chotrani squandered a one-game lead to go down 11-6, 8-11, 3-11, 3-11 to the Pakistani in 41 minutes. The men's and women's

singles gold medallists will directly qualify for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, where squash is set to make its debut.

Joshna's sixth Asian Games medal

Joshna and Senthilkumar took less than half an hour to register a dominant win in the quarterfinal. They will take on Hong Kong's Yo Ka Lee and Ming Hong Tang in the semifinals on Saturday. It is the sixth Asian Games medal for 40-year-old Joshna. She already has a haul of two silver and three bronze medals at the continental event. She won a singles bronze in the 2018 edition, a team silver each in 2014 and 2018, and team bronze medals in 2010 and 2022. Joshna, who has been competing at the Asian Games since Busan 2002, surpassed the earlier record of another Indian squash great, Saurav Ghosal, who retired last year after making six appearances at the continental multi-sport event. Joshna and Senthilkumar completely dominated the quarterfinal at the Nagoya Kinjo Futo Arena Court No. 6 with their power and clinical display. Joshna and

her 28-year-old teammate Senthilkumar, both from Tamil Nadu, complemented each other to take the first game in nine minutes, with the Philippines pair falling short in all departments. The Indians were 3-0 up quite early and made it 9-2 in no time. The Filipinos took a point after that, but Joshna and Senthilkumar were in a hurry as they took the next two points to win the first game 11-3. The second game was a little tougher for the Indians as Pelino and Aribado attempted a comeback after the Indians took a 3-0 lead. It was 4-2 midway through the second game, but that was the smallest gap the Philippines pair could muster. Thereafter, Joshna and Senthilkumar stepped up another gear, moving to 7-2 and then 8-4 before winning the second game 11-5 in 10 minutes to seal the match. "Winning a medal for your country is always very special. And that's been my motivation all my career," Joshna told PTI after the match. On her preparations for the Asian Games, she said, "Well, I train abroad quite a bit... I was in the USA before the Asian Games. So I try to do

it as much as I can. "Otherwise, I train at the Indian Squash Academy in Chennai. I work with all the coaches there. And before the Asian Games, I was working with (Australian great) David Palmer in the USA." Senthilkumar, who made his Asian Games debut, said he and Joshna executed their pre-match plans to the 'T'. "It was a very good match. We played aggressively from the start till the very end. We executed our plans perfectly and both of us played really well," he said. "We had not played our opponents earlier, so we watched videos of the matches they had played earlier and made our strategy." Anahat said facing fellow Indian Tanvi added pressure but was happy to secure a comfortable win after their previous encounters had been closely fought. "I'd definitely say it adds a little bit more pressure than playing any other country because we spend so much time off-court as well. We travel here together, we eat almost every meal together and see each other all the time. "I've played Tanvi so many times before and we play each other in a lot of local events. I've never really beaten her in straight games. It's always been either 3-1 or 3-2 and very close. So, yeah, I'm just really happy I was able to play well today and win comfortably as well."

Planning against Satomi

On Saturday's semifinal against Satomi, she said, "I'm just trying to take it one step at a time. As for my ranking, I'm not expected to win the event. As for Satomi (Watanabe), she won 3-2 last time, but there's definitely a lot that I learned. "I've watched that match a hundred times on repeat and coming into this event as well. So, I know what changes I need to make and hopefully I'm able to replicate that and do well tomorrow as well."

Wrestlers move sessions court against Brij Bhushan's acquittal

New Delhi: Four women wrestlers on Friday moved a sessions court, challenging a magistrate's order acquitting former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh in a sexual harassment case. The plea also challenges the acquittal of former WFI assistant secretary Vinod Tomar on the charge of criminal intimidation. On August 3, the magisterial court acquitted Singh, a former BJP MP and former WFI chief, in the case filed by six women wrestlers, including World Championships medallist Vinesh Phogat, citing lack of evidence. The court also acquitted Tomar. According to the plea filed on Friday, the acquittal order was "erroneous and unsustainable in law". The matter is likely to be heard by Special Judge Dig Vinay Singh on Saturday. The magisterial court's order had noted that two of the five complainant wrestlers stated that they were "forced/pressured" to level allegations of sexual harassment against Singh. It said their testimonies appeared to indicate that the allegations were politically motivated, "false and fabricated, made collectively" in a deep conspiracy. The court also questioned how the complainants had mentioned the "wrong country and year" of the alleged first incident, saying "the contradiction is fatal to the prosecution case". It observed that "it is not difficult but rather abnormal



conduct to not remember the place where the incident of sexual harassment had occurred". The complainant wrestlers had said they feared their careers could be affected and therefore did not make allegations against the accused in a timely manner. However, the 239-page judgment said "it is not understandable" how they maintained "cordial relations" with Singh for years and that "he was invited to family functions and wedding ceremonies by the victims". The magisterial court had acquitted Singh of "all charges" under IPC Sections 354 (assault or criminal force to a

woman to outrage her modesty), 354A (sexual harassment) and 506(I) (criminal intimidation), and Tomar under Section 506 (Part I) of the IPC. The verdict said the prosecution had failed to prove its case, including that the two alleged victims did not support the prosecution because of any overt act attributable to the accused. It also said the two wrestlers who had been projected as victims from the inception appeared before the court and were counselled, following which they categorically stated that no acts of sexual harassment had been committed against them.

Gulveer Singh bags silver, becomes first Indian to win two 10,000m medals



Nagoya: Gulveer Singh scripted a slice of Indian athletics history by becoming the first Indian to win two Asian Games medals in the men's 10,000m after clinching silver at the Mizuho Park Athletic Stadium. Gulveer clocked 28:29.38 to finish second in the gruelling 25-lap race, adding silver to the bronze he won in the same event at the 2023 Asian Games in Hangzhou. He became the first Indian to stand on the Asian Games podium twice in the men's 10,000m.

Bahrain's Birhanu Balew won the gold in 28:27.51, finishing 1.87 seconds ahead of Gulveer, while his compatriot Albert Kiptoo took bronze in 28:34.38. China's Wang Wenjie finished fourth in 28:38.14. Gulveer stayed close to the leaders through the middle stages of the race and remained firmly in medal contention with 2,000m remaining. He held his position through the gruelling closing laps before producing enough pace to split Bahrain's two runners and secure the silver. His

latest medal also marks a significant improvement from Hangzhou, where he won bronze behind compatriot Kartik Kumar, who took silver. Their double podium in 2023 ended a long wait for India in the men's 10,000m at the Asian Games. The Nagoya silver adds to a breakthrough 2026 season for Gulveer. At the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, he won silver in the 10,000m and bronze in the 5,000m, becoming the first Indian man to win a Commonwealth Games medal in the 10,000m. Gulveer, a Naib Subedar in the Indian Army, has established himself as one of India's leading long-distance runners. He won bronze in the 5,000m at the 2023 Asian Athletics Championships before completing a golden double in the 5,000m and 10,000m at the 2025 Asian Athletics Championships in Gumi, South Korea. The 28-year-old is also a prolific record-breaker. He holds Indian national records in the 5,000m and 10,000m, having clocked 12:59.77 in the 5,000m short track and 27:00.22 in the 10,000m. His 12:59.77 made him the first Asian athlete to break the 13-minute barrier indoors. In 2026, he also became the first Indian to run a half marathon under 60 minutes, recording 59:42. He trains at high altitude in Colorado Springs under coach Scott Simmons.

Asian Games 2026: Satwik-Chirag suffer shock first-round exit



Nishio: Aichi: Defending champions Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty suffered a shock first-round exit in the men's doubles badminton event at the Asian Games 2026 on Friday, losing to Thailand's Peeratchai Sukphun and Pakkapon Teeraratsakul. The World No. 5 Indian pair went down 21-12, 19-21, and 14-21 to the World

No. 36 Thai duo at the Ichinomiya City Municipal Gymnasium, ending their title defence in disappointing fashion. Satwik and Chirag had entered the Asian Games with considerable momentum after claiming the China Masters title last month. They fought back from a game down to defeat China's He Jiting and Ren Xiangyu 11-21, 21-13, and 21-

17 in a 70-minute final. However, that momentum could not translate into another strong run in Nagoya. Satwik and Chirag looked in complete control at the start against the Thai pair, racing through the opening game 21-12. But Sukphun and Teeraratsakul gradually found their rhythm and made the Indians work harder in the second game. The Thai duo

built a four-point advantage at 17-13 before Satwik and Chirag fought back to close the gap to 18-19. The comeback, however, fell short as the Thai pair forced a decider. Sukphun and Teeraratsakul carried their momentum into the third game and quickly established control. Satwik and Chirag struggled to find a response as the Thai pair completed a memorable 21-14 win in the decider. The defeat comes just days after Satwik and Chirag played a key role in India's bronze-medal-winning campaign in the men's team event. In the semifinal against China, the Indian duo produced a strong performance against reigning world champions Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang, defeating the Chinese pair 21-11, 22-20. India eventually settled for bronze after their semifinal defeat. With the individual men's doubles campaign now over, Satwik and Chirag will leave the Asian Games without the opportunity to defend the gold medal they won in the previous edition.

Preeti exits Asian Games women's 54kg event after loss to Pang Chol-mi

Nishio: Commonwealth Games 2026 champion Preeti on Friday lost to two-time world champion Pang Chol-mi of North Korea in the women's 54kg round of 16 at the Nishio Gymnasium here. The Indian pugilist was outdone by a superb performance from Chol-mi, who won the bout by a unanimous 5-0 decision against the Indian, a bronze medallist at the Hangzhou Asian Games. Preeti came into the bout after receiving a bye in the first round, while the North Korean fighter had defeated Indonesia's Nabila Maharani in her round-of-32 clash. Chol-mi dominated the contest against

the Indian pugilist right from the first round and did not let her get into her own terms. The North Korean won the first round unanimously and maintained her dominance in the second, with another 5-0 ruling in her favour. The Indian pugilist tried to stage a comeback in the final round, but the North Korean was too superior to handle as she took her time to land punches and kept troubling Preeti. In the end, Chol-mi won the third round 5-0 as well to claim a unanimous victory. Earlier, India's Sachin made it to the quarterfinals after beating former Asian champion and World Champion-

ships bronze medallist Mohammad Abu Jajeh of Jordan in the round of 16 with a split 4-1 decision. Sachin, who had won the Commonwealth Games 2026 gold medal, received two 30-27 cards and two 29-28 cards, while one judge scored the bout 28-29 in favour of his opponent. He won the first round by a close 3-2 margin after the bout began slowly. The Indian pugilist landed his punches more precisely in the second round and won it 4-1 before the Jordanian boxer looked desperate in the third round but could not land his punches effectively. Sachin took the third round 4-1 and



won the bout by the same margin. Sachin will now be up against World Championships bronze medallist Shunsuke Kitamoto in the quarterfinals as he looks for his maiden Asiad medal.

Asian Games table tennis: Chitale and Shah storm into mixed doubles semis

Nagoya: India's Manush Shah and Diya Chitale stunned world No. 4 pair Doo Hoi Kem and Wong Chun Ting of Hong Kong in the mixed doubles quarterfinals to assure India of a medal in table tennis at the Asian Games. Chitale and Shah won 3-1 (11-6, 13-15, 11-9, 11-5) to reach the semifinals, securing India's first table tennis medal of the ongoing Games. It is India's second mixed doubles medal at the Asian Games after Sharath Kamal and Manika Batra won bronze in Jakarta eight years ago. The Indian duo will face China's Sun Yingsha and Wang Chuqin in the semifinals later in the day. Shah also advanced in men's singles with a 4-0 win over Iran's Benyamin Faraji,

while Yashaswini Ghorpade beat Syria's Hend Zaza 4-1 (11-5, 11-5, 11-8, 8-11, 11-4) to book her spot in the women's singles round of 16. However, it was otherwise a disappointing day for the Indian paddlers. Manav Thakkar bowed out in the round of 32 after a 2-4 (11-4, 2-11, 7-11, 7-11, 11-4, 3-11) defeat to North Korea's U Tae Ryong, while Sreeja Akula also exited at the same stage, going down 1-4 (7-11, 8-11, 13-11, 7-11, 7-11) to Pyon Song Gyong. Both Indian men's doubles pairs also exited in the round of 16 and round of 32, respectively. Harmeet Desai and G Sathyan, who had battled past Indonesia's Muhammad Negara and Affan Pratama 3-2 (11-4, 11-7, 7-11, 8-11, 11-

6) in the round of 32, were beaten 0-3 (5-11, 9-11, 9-11) by Japan's Sora Matsushima and Shunsuke Togami. Shah and Thakkar went down 1-3 (7-11, 9-11, 11-7, 6-11) to Japan's Tomokazu Harimoto and Hiroto Shinnosuka in the round of 32. Sreeja and Syndrela Da exited in the women's doubles pre-quarterfinals after a 0-3 (6-11, 7-11, 7-11) loss to China's world No. 2 pair Kuai Man and Wang Manyu. and Chitale also bowed out at the same stage, losing 0-3 (7-11, 5-11, 8-11) to China's Fan Shuhan and Chen Yi. Yashaswini's mixed doubles campaign also ended in the pre-quarterfinals, with her and Harmeet going down 0-3 (5-11, 10-12, 9-11) to China's Lin Shidong and Kuai Man.

Vikram Prabhu's City Of Gold Glimpse: Looks Promising

Vikram Prabhu plays the lead in the forthcoming venture *City Of Gold*. Directed by debutant Siddharth, Raahul is also producing the project under the Romeo Pictures banner. Shivathmika Rajashekar stars opposite Vikram Prabhu in the movie. Meanwhile, the film has now offered a glimpse into this unusual world with the unveiling of its first look and glimpse.

What happens beyond the glitter of gold? *City of Gold* attempts to explore the people, stories, and incidents that exist behind the highly valuable trade. The First Look makes a strong impression with its striking composition. Vikram Prabhu is seen sitting with a serious expression while casually playing with gold bars, creating an image that instantly raises questions about his character and the world he belongs to. The mystery deepens with the Glimpse. It focuses on the gold market and the people who work within it. It presents a fascinating ecosystem hidden from ordinary public view, with several visuals hinting at stories and incidents that appear to unfold beneath the surface. Vikram Prabhu carries a ferocious role impeccably, adding further weight to the intriguing premise. Karthik Sharaj handles the cinematography, capturing the film's distinctive setting, while Yuvan Shankar Raja provides the music. The first look and glimpse look promising and generate enough curiosity about the movie.



Chiru's Kaaka Progressing At Jet Speed

While several young heroes are taking considerable time to complete their films, Megastar Chiranjeevi is setting a remarkable pace. The actor has been wrapping up his films at impressive speed in recent times. Chiranjeevi, who graced the pre-release event of Sundeeep Kishan's Sigma, shared an interesting update about his much-awaited film *Kaaka*, directed by Bobby Kolli.

According to Chiranjeevi, the shoot of *Kaaka* is progressing at jet speed. The team has already completed the entire first half and has also finished nearly 30% of the second half. More importantly, music director S Thaman has already begun work on the background score for the first half and is said to be in full josh. Chiranjeevi once again confirmed that *Kaaka* will hit the screens as planned during Sankranti 2027. A major share of the credit also goes to director Bobby Kolli for maintaining such a brisk pace while handling a big-star project mounted on a large canvas.



Jailer 2 Songs: Where Is The Hukum Mode?

Jailer 2 is easily one of the most anticipated films of the year, and with its October 15, 2026 release date fast approaching, fans expected the promotional campaign to begin with a massive bang. Surprisingly, director Nelson Dilipkumar and Anirudh Ravichander have chosen a different route. Instead of launching the film with a high-energy mass anthem like the iconic *Hukum*, the makers have released softer tracks such as *Ala Bolelo* and the recently unveiled *One Sun One Moon*. Both songs have a melodic feel, which has left a section of fans wondering about the strategy behind the promotions. Many expected a powerful mass number celebrating Rajinikanth's larger-than-life screen presence. Instead, the team seems to be slowly building momentum rather than going all out from the beginning. This approach has sparked discussions, with many believing Nelson and Anirudh are deliberately saving the bigger surprises for closer to the film's release. Given the success of the first part, expectations for a chartbuster remain extremely high. With three weeks still left before release, there is enough time for the makers to unleash a full-fledged mass track or an explosive trailer. For now, the soft-tone songs have not generated much curiosity. Let's see what happens in the days to come.



Malavika Mohanan's Desi Look Leaves Speechless



Malavika Mohanan had a rough patch at the box office with back-to-back disappointments in *The Raja Saab* and *Sardaar 2*, both failing to click with audiences despite the buzz around them. The setbacks have put a temporary dent in her recent theatrical run. But there's good news on the horizon. Malavika has been roped in for *Pocket Novel*, the upcoming project helmed by acclaimed director Thiagarajan Kumararaja, known for cult favourites *Aaranya Kaandam* and *Super Deluxe*. The film marks his third directorial outing and has already got cinephiles curious. Meanwhile, Malavika continues to keep her fashion game strong. Dressed in a soft pink embroidered saree with statement *jhumkas*, she strikes an elegant pose in a sunlit corridor, proving that even amid box office lows, her style quotient remains a consistent high.

Why Can't Directors Follow Rajamouli's Block & Shoot Method?

SS Rajamouli is known for his detailed approach to filmmaking. Not many know that one practice often associated with his working style is Block and Shoot, where the scene is thoroughly planned and blocked before the actual shoot begins. This helps the team understand the camera positions, performances, and technical requirements in advance. During one of our Gulte interviews with producer Shobu Yarlagadda and Karthikeya, we asked them, if Rajamouli follows this method, what is stopping other filmmakers from doing the same?

Shobu Yarlagadda gave a very straightforward answer. He simply replied, "Script. First, we need to have a script to do all those. If you pen the script on location and make changes, all this will not be possible". If you observe, his answer highlights that the detailed blocking process becomes easier when the director and team



have a clear understanding of the entire scene which comes only when the bound script is ready. Rajamouli's films are known for extensive preparation, and his making often involves spending considerable time on planning before cameras roll. The same has been followed for months in films like *RRR* and now *Varanasi*. Shobu's response also suggests that the difference is not simply about choosing a particular shooting style. It starts much earlier, with the writing, preparation, and clarity of the script, which many new-age directors in today's time ignore.