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From Food Crisis To Finance, Jaishankar's Sharp Message For 'Policymakers'



New Delhi: The ripple effects of the Ukraine conflict and the Iran-Gulf crisis are already resonating heavily far beyond the borders of the nations directly involved, S Jaishankar said. The food crisis, he indicated, is already brewing because of certain ongoing factors. Foreign minister S Jaishankar has warned that the world is facing a major food crisis that has been sparked by global unrest. It will be compounded by super El Nino, the natural climate pattern that warms ocean waters and causes

themselves to the situation of other countries as well and try to understand what the consequences of their decision will have on the rest of the world. Countries should not be so self-centered that you're in your own world and take your decision and say, "Well, it was not my intention to make your life difficult." The ripple effects of the Ukraine conflict and the Iran-Gulf crisis are already resonating heavily far beyond the borders of the nations directly involved, Jaishankar said. The food crisis, he indicated, is already brewing because of certain ongoing factors. "Some of the major grain exporters will be unable to send out their shipments, particularly out of the Black Sea. There are significant fertilizer shortages - both because the key producers have been in the Middle East and Russia," the minister said. And this comes on top of an energy crisis and considerable economic strain - "because every time there's a conflict, money moves towards safe havens and away from the Global South". So the net result, he said, "has been really very, very stressful". Nations - especially developing ones - are confronting challenges in multiple area including food, fuel, fertilisers, and finance and can now find themselves left with minimal fiscal buffer to absorb further volatility, he added.

Swiss President Guy Parmelin heading to India

What's big on the table for PM Modi?

New Delhi: Swiss President Guy Parmelin is likely to visit India next week for talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to reports. A meeting between the two leaders is expected to be one of the main events during the proposed visit. The visit would give India and Switzerland another opportunity to take forward cooperation in trade, investment, technology, innovation and skills. Parmelin is presently serving as president of the Swiss Confederation for 2026 and also heads Switzerland's Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research. His most recent visit to

India was in February 2026, when he travelled to New Delhi for the AI Impact Summit. He met PM Modi on February 19 on the sidelines of the summit. The two leaders reviewed India-Switzerland ties, including trade, investment, education, technology and the movement of skilled professionals. Trade is expected to feature prominently in the talks between Modi and Parmelin. India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), which includes Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, signed the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) in March 2024. The agreement came into force in October 2025. It creates scope for greater trade, investment and economic cooperation between India and the four EFTA countries. Switzerland is the largest economy among the EFTA members and has been involved in efforts to strengthen the economic relationship with India. During their February meeting, Modi and Parmelin



welcomed the momentum generated by the implementation of the TEPA. The two sides also discussed cooperation in research, skills, innovation and technology. Switzerland has a strong research and innovation base, while India has been seeking greater access to investment, technology and international markets.

JAWAN OPENS FIRE, KILLS 4 COLLEAGUES

Basohli (Srinagar): According to sources, the incident took place at the CISF camp in the hills of Basohli at the Sewa Power Project. A Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel opened fire and killed four of his colleagues, including an officer, following an argument in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, sources said. The incident

took place around 6.40 pm at the CISF unit deployed at the Sewa Power Project in Mashka village in Basohli, following an argument, according to sources. The Sewa Power Project is a hydroelectric power station located in the village on the Sewa River which is a tributary of the Ravi. The victims have been identified as Assistant Commandant



including an officer in J&K's Kathua

Double-Engine Government Moving at Jet Speed: CM Chandrababu Naidu



From Our Staff Reporter Nellore District: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan launched the Palle Panduga 3.0 programme. In Ramapuram village of Varikuntapadu mandal in Nellore district,

and people from Nellore, Prakasam, Kadapa and Nandyal districts gathered at Ramapuram, filling the meeting venue. Ministers Ponguru Narayana, Anam Ramanarayana Reddy, Nimmala Ramanaidu, Farooq, BC Janardhan Reddy, MP Vemireddy, along with several public representatives and prominent personalities, participated in the programme. After launching Palle Panduga 3.0, CM Chandrababu Naidu said, "We have launched Palle Panduga 3.0 with Rs.11,085 crore, ushering in remarkable change in rural areas. We promised in 2024 that we would rebuild Andhra Pradesh. The vote you cast has not gone to waste. The double-engine government is moving forward at jet

speed. The momentum is even stronger now than in 2024. Our women are signalling that they are ready for the panchayat elections. I congratulate Pawan Kalyan for developing the villages. He has left his mark on the Panchayat Raj Department. We are following up on Central schemes and undertaking works in the villages. Villages suffered under the YSRCP government. That government even prevented the release of funds under the 15th Finance Commission," he said. "We will give special attention to the poor. Our objective is to eliminate economic inequalities. No one should forget the situation before the elections. They left behind a legacy of ?10 lakh crore in debt. As someone who became Chief Minister for the

Rs.11,085-Crore Palle Panduga 3.0 Launched: Lokesh Hails Initiative

From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh said the coalition government is giving high priority to the comprehensive development of rural areas in the state. He expressed happiness over the launch of the 'Palle Panduga 3.0' programme, being undertaken at a cost of Rs.11,085 crore under the leadership of Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Pawan Kalyan. Lokesh shared his views on the programme through a post

on X. He said the coalition government led by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu is placing special focus on the development of rural areas. Lokesh said Palle Panduga 3.0 would take up various programmes aimed at the overall development of rural areas. He expressed confidence that villages would progress through the vision and implementation initiatives of the Deputy Chief Minister. The government said the Palle Panduga programme would play a key role in accelerating rural infrastructure and development



works required by the people. The programme, being implemented with a massive outlay of Rs.11,085 crore, is expected to provide further impetus to the development of rural areas across the state.

Mission Karmayogi Aims to Enhance Employee Skills: CM Chandrababu



From Our Staff Reporter Vijayawada, September 29: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu said the 'Mission Karmayogi' workshop was being conducted with the objective of enhancing the capabilities of government employees and improving their administrative skills. He said skilled youth were the strength of the country

and noted that several leading software companies were being led by Telugu people. He stressed the need for both online and offline training for government employees. The Chief Minister participated in the Mission Karmayogi programme in Vijayawada on Tuesday. A regional conference on Mission Karmayogi was organised at the

Ambedkar Kala Veda in Vijayawada, where Chandrababu inaugurated the regional workshop for southern states and addressed the gathering. Recalling the past, Chandrababu said his village did not have proper roads or adequate water facilities and that, in those days, one telephone was shared by 10 villages. He said he was born in a village without electricity but later brought about power sector reforms. He stated that the next 20 years would be very important for India and said he had witnessed several changes in the country so far. He said China had emerged as a superpower over 45 years and noted that the economies of India and China were almost equal around 1990. At present, China's economy was around five times larger than India's, he said. He remarked that the country had the right person as Prime Minister at the right time. Officials from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Puducherry participated in the Mission Karmayogi workshop. The conference discussed capacity building of government training institutions and enhancement of employee skills. A draft was prepared under the partnership between iGOT and the Mission Karmayogi Quality Framework for capacity building through the Unnati programme. Presentations on the approaches being followed by various states will be made at the conference. An action plan has been formulated to transform government training institutions from mere course-conducting centres into institutions that help improve the performance of respective departments. After the Mission Karmayogi programme, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu left for Udayagiri in Nellore district.

From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, September 29: Minister Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy said the government was committed to the welfare of Grama and Ward Secretariat employees. Speaking to the media on Tuesday, he alleged that the previous government had appointed 1.24 lakh employees without framing proper service rules and neglected them. He said the Secretariat system and employee services were being streamlined as per the directions of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. The minister said a promotion channel had been created for Secretariat employees and more than 15,000 promotions had been made available so far. Permission had also been granted for a six-year special grade increment, which would impose an additional financial burden of Rs.150 crore on the gov-



ernment, he said. Dola said the Automatic Advancement Scheme (AAS) and a faster process for sanctioning Casual Leave (CL) were being implemented for employees. Grievance meetings were being conducted on the second and fourth Wednesdays of every month at the directorate and district levels to address employee issues, he said. He stated that the primary objective of GO 11 was to improve services without causing inconvenience to the public. While the government was positively addressing employee demands, the minister questioned the forces behind protests and what he described as inhuman behaviour. He appealed to all village and ward secretariat employees to understand the government's decisions and the prevailing situation and cooperate in providing better services to the public. He said the government was always ready to resolve employee issues. The minister alleged that some people were provoking employees and attempting to malign the government. He said promotion channels, special grade increments and leave facilities had been introduced under the coalition government. He questioned why decisions on notional increments and cadre changes had not been taken earlier. He said discussions had already been held on the major demands of employees and several issues had been resolved.

EDITORIAL

Will One Be Punished for Not Singing Vande Mataram?

The Supreme Court’s decision that a person who expresses an objection to singing Vande Mataram on grounds of conscience should not be treated as guilty and punished is welcome. It has come as a relief to those who believe that India belongs to all Indians. The ruling is also a setback to what critics describe as the BJP’s attempt to impose its politics of division even on matters of national importance. In this context, the Supreme Court recalled its 1986 judgment in the Bijoe Emmanuel case from Kerala. Three students from Kerala—Bijoe Emmanuel, Binnumol and Bindhu Emmanuel—used to stand respectfully during the national anthem but did not sing it. They were expelled from their school for this. When the matter reached the Supreme Court, it ruled that even if they did not sing the national anthem, standing respectfully during its rendition was sufficient. Article 51A of the Constitution requires every citizen to respect the national flag and the national anthem, but it does not require anyone to be compelled to sing the national song or the national anthem. The Court clearly explained that, under the judgment, a citizen may refrain from singing the national anthem while continuing to show due respect and humility. The government cannot initiate criminal action against a person merely for not singing it. Responding to a request made by the Centre’s law officer, the Supreme Court did not immediately issue notice to the Central Government, but asked it to present its response on the matter. Carnatic musician and writer T. M. Krishna presented his arguments before the Court. He contended that making it compulsory to sing all six stanzas of Vande Mataram was contrary to India’s secular character. He argued that applying penal provisions relating to the national anthem and, in addition, directing people to sing all six stanzas raised serious constitutional questions concerning freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, equality, freedom of religion and secularism. These issues are particularly connected with Articles 19, 25 and 26 of the Constitution. The Court agreed to examine the central issue raised by him. The Court will examine whether the law protects the rights of a person who refuses to sing Vande Mataram for religious reasons. Vande Mataram played a prominent role in inspiring patriots during the national movement. Written in Bengali by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, the song was sung by freedom fighters across the country. It served as a means of uniting people in the struggle for a great cause. As the political circumstances of the country changed, the context and meaning associated with the song also changed. Consequently, the Congress Working Committee discussed the issue in 1937. The leaders of the national movement decided that the song should be restricted to its first two stanzas. There were no objections to the first two stanzas. The subsequent stanzas contained praise of Hindu deities such as Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. It was felt that including those stanzas could create divisions in the freedom movement, which was being conducted collectively beyond caste and religious identities. Therefore, those stanzas were left out. When Dr. Rajendra Prasad announced in the Constituent Assembly that Vande Mataram would be accorded the status of a national song and given equal respect alongside the national anthem Jana Gana Mana, the announcement was greeted with loud applause. After nearly three-quarters of a century, the lines that had largely faded from public memory were revived by what the article describes as the saffron forces and made part of the national song. Legislation was also enacted to provide Vande Mataram with protection similar to that accorded to the national anthem and the national flag. There was, however, no national emergency in the country.

People had not rebelled against any of these national symbols. Nevertheless, the article argues that the BJP was aware that such a move could potentially divide people along religious lines and spread feelings of hatred. From its Preamble to its final Article, the Constitution envisions building a new society for all Indians based on the finest values of humanity, abandoning age-old superstitions, discrimination, religious and caste prejudices, and other regressive practices inherited from the past. Those ideals remain relevant even after the passage of time. Against this backdrop, the Supreme Court’s approach strengthens the belief that the Constitution can prevent attempts to weaken or reverse those values. Therefore, the Supreme Court’s position has been widely welcomed as hopeful and reassuring. It may be recalled that the Central Government issued an order on January 28, 2026, making it mandatory to sing all six stanzas of Vande Mataram at all official functions.

India Has A 'Lobbying' Problem In Washington, And It Has Come Back To Haunt It

The Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026 gives President Donald Trump the authority to impose tariffs of up to 100% on India as one of the top five importers of Russian energy. The passing of this act highlights major gaps in India's lobbying strategy in Washington, involving a shrinking lobbying presence, an absence of bill-level engagement, and an excessive focus on trade deal negotiations.

Draining Political Capital

Since 2025, India-US ties have been strained following Operation Sindoor, and the Trump administration's tariff announcement. This meant that while the EU, Japan, the UK and South Korea secured quick deals, India's diplomatic and lobbying efforts were getting drained in prolonged negotiations and lobbying focused on the executive. This took focus away from the Hill, which India seems to have judged had little to offer under unified Republican control. India's paid congressional operation in Washington has also shrunk from a multi-firm network to a single account. Until early 2025, India retained Cornerstone Government Affairs, whose records indicate consistent Senate and House engagement on issues of defence. BGR Government Affairs also tracked key bills, statements and discussions

about India in the Congress, while also engaging members and staff on bill specific lobbying. While Cornerstone's engagement ended in early 2025, BGR's ended in December, leaving Mercury Public Affairs (MPA) as the only firm working on the Hill. MPA's engagement strategy has been broad, without any issue or bill focus. The executive engagement has also declined since India terminated its contract with SHW Partners in June 2026. Thus, when India needed to position its Russian energy imports as an energy necessity forced by the Iran war rather than a policy choice, it had few allies left on the Hill. By the time the bill re-emerged after the sudden demise of Senator Lindsey Graham, India lacked the bill-level lobbying bandwidth, public image or political capital to secure an exemption.

How Did Others Fare?

The act targets the top five importers of Russian energy. Apart from India, these include China, Slovakia, Azerbaijan and Hungary for crude, and China, France, Japan, Hungary and Belgium for gas. For the US, imposing tariffs on China has proven to be a difficult strategy due to its reliance on Beijing's rare earths. Therefore, the imposition of these tariffs on China is unlikely. Hungary, France, Japan and Belgium are likely carved out of the gas tariffs, as the act ex-



empts countries that account for less than 15% of Russia's gas exports and are reducing them. Hungary had already secured a one-year exemption from the Trump administration in November 2025 for the Druzhba and TurkStream pipelines. Japan's Sakhalin-2 exemption was extended until December 18, 2026. This gives Tokyo adequate time to engage the executive, and a buffer to engage Congress when it reconvenes on November 9 after the mid-term recess. South Korea used a general 30-day US waiver issued in March, and its embassy then secured assurances that non-dollar payments for Russian naphtha would not trigger secondary sanctions. For each of these parties, consistent lobbying and continued engagement in both Congress and the

executive were vital in securing these exemptions in times of crisis. This also extended to Ukraine. After the Senate passed this bill in mid-August, the House was in recess. Given the short time frame, it was believed that the bill was unlikely to pass the House due to a gridlock over tariffs. But the strong Ukrainian lobbying effort pushed the bill through on the very last day of session in September. This further highlights the impact of lobbying in Washington.

Narrow Window

The act provides target countries with a 30-day buffer to reduce their imports. The House has already adjourned until after the elections on November 3. The Senate is scheduled to begin its own recess on October 2. Neither chamber will be

sitting when the first duty falls due in mid-October. This means that India has a very narrow window of less than two weeks to engage with the members, while parallelly negotiating with the executives who determine the waiver. Congressional support also matters most after the first 180-day reassessment, when the USTR is tasked to re-evaluate the status of target countries on a recurring basis. The Russia Sanctions Act is a testimony to the importance of congressional engagement for India. Therefore, there is a growing need for a change in India's strategy of engagement with US institutions that involved engagement with newer factions and members, and timely deployment of lobbying and diplomatic efforts.

The AI Boom Has Run Into A Big 'Debt' Trap Problem. Inside The 5% Danger Line

Big Tech's four largest hyperscalers - Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon, and Meta - are set to spend somewhere between USD 720 billion and USD 760 billion on capital expenditure in 2026, up roughly 77% from about USD 410 billion in 2025. This is, by any measure, the largest single-sector capital deployment in the history of American business - and it was originally supposed to be a story about corporate cash flow, not sovereign credit. That is no longer true. As of September 24, 2026, the 10-year Treasury yield is holding around 5.12%, near its highest level since July 2007. Two weeks earlier, on September 14-15, the 10-year yield briefly surpassed 5% for the first time since 2023 - a level analysts had flagged for months as the threshold at which the AI trade and the fiscal trade would collide. It has not meaningfully receded since.

It is important to note that if long-term interest rates decisively breach the 5% threshold, the impact could derail the AI boom. Global investors have been giving Washington a "free pass" on those numbers till now because of an implicit bet that AI-driven productivity growth will eventually outrun the debt. The 10-year yield crossing 5% is the market beginning to test that bet.

From Free Cash Flow to Debt Markets

For most of the AI buildout's first two years, hyperscalers funded it the easy way: out of operating cash flow. That era is over. Consensus estimates show AI capex hitting 94% of operating cash flow minus dividends and buybacks in 2025-2026, up from 76% in 2024 - and the shortfall is being plugged with debt. The cost of that debt is rising in lockstep with the Treasury curve it's priced off. Of 91 hyperscaler bonds issued in 2026 with comparable pricing data, 78 were trading at higher yields by late July than when they

were issued - a sign that the market is repricing hyperscaler credit risk in real time, not just riding the Treasury curve passively.

Oracle is the cautionary case. S&P downgraded Oracle to BBB in July 2026, one notch above junk, citing elevated debt levels, and its fiscal 2026 free cash flow came in at negative USD 23.7 billion - the gap between what its cloud business earns and what it is spending on data centres, chips, and leases. Oracle's credit default swaps hit a record high on August 4, 2026. There's also a shadow layer that doesn't show up in on-balance-sheet debt at all. The five largest hyperscalers held USD 969 billion in total undiscounted future data-centre lease commitments at year-end 2025, of which USD 662 billion sit entirely off-balance sheet, equal to 113% of the same companies' combined on-balance-sheet debt. Whatever the headline debt figures say, the real leverage embedded in the AI buildout is considerably larger.

The 5% Yield Threshold and Earnings Yield Compression

The equity risk premium is the whole ballgame for a high-multiple growth sector. As the risk-free rate (the 10-year yield) rises toward and past 5%, the ERP compresses unless earnings yields rise in step - which, for AI infrastructure names trading on hyperscaler-adjacent multiples, they generally have not.

A stock trading at 30x forward earnings has an earnings yield of roughly 3.3%; against a 5%+ risk-free rate, that arithmetic implies a negative ERP unless investors are pricing in extraordinary future growth to compensate. That is precisely the bet embedded in AI infrastructure valuations today.

The market has already demonstrated how sensitive it is to this threshold in practice. When yields retreated, so did the pres-



sure - on September 21, the Nasdaq hit a record close as yields fell back below 5%, with AMD's market cap crossing USD 1 trillion for the first time. But that relief was short-lived: by September 24 the 10-year was back above 5.1%, and as one strategist observed of the mid-September episode, the AI trade was "already broken before yields hit 5%" - the yield spike just widened the selling.

The Revenue Gap vs. the Capex Sinkhole

Sequoia partner David Cahn's "USD 600 billion question," first posed in 2023 at USD 200 billion and updated through 2024 and 2026, calculates the annual AI-industry revenue required to justify the capex being deployed - and that gap is widening, not closing, in 2026. On the revenue side, the growth is real but dwarfed by the spending it's meant to justify. AWS is running at roughly USD 150 billion annualised, up 28% year-over-year; Google Cloud is around USD 80-90 billion, up 48-63%; Azure AI is at a USD 37 billion run rate, up 123%. Impressive growth rates on a revenue base that is a fraction of the roughly USD 750 billion in annual capex it's supposed to underwrite.

Allianz Research put a

number on the mismatch: the divergence between AI capital expenditure and revenue growth is running at roughly 46% in 2026 - already exceeding the 32% divergence observed during the 2001 telecom capex bust, a cycle that ended in one of the more brutal multi-year tech corrections on record.

Not every hyperscaler is equally exposed. Amazon's free cash flow plummeted 71% to 11.2 billion on the back of its roughly USD 200 billion capex plan, while Google Cloud revenue rose 48% to \$17.7 billion backed by a USD 240 billion order backlog - a much stronger revenue-to-spend ratio. Microsoft sits in between. Azure's growth of 40% remains robust, but the company is capacity-constrained and unable to meet total demand through fiscal year-end, which cuts both ways - it suggests real, monetisable demand, but also that the capex isn't yet translating into realised revenue.

The evidence assembled here doesn't support a clean verdict either way, but it does sharpen the terms of the bet. The 5% line has already been crossed, repeatedly, and the market's reaction each time - sharp semiconductor selloffs,

followed by relief rallies when yields dip even briefly - shows that this threshold isn't a future risk but a present, live tripwire that traders are now watching daily.

The financing mix is shifting in the wrong direction at the wrong time. Hyperscalers are moving from cash-funded to debt-funded capex just as sovereign issuance is pushing term premia higher. The revenue side has not caught up, and by some measures, the gap is widening faster than capex itself.

None of this means the AI boom "pops" on a specific date. Sovereign debt dynamics move on a scale of years, not weeks, and productivity gains from AI adoption - even partial ones - could yet outrun the fiscal arithmetic, which is the scenario the bond market has arguably been pricing in as a "free pass" up to now. Yet, the mechanism we describe here is no longer hypothetical: it is visible in real time in hyperscale bond spreads, in Oracle's credit rating, and in semiconductor stocks trading in lockstep with the 10-year's daily moves. The question for investors is no longer whether the debt-AI collision could happen, but whether the market has yet fully priced a world where it already has.

Assam Rifles Jawan Killed, 4 Injured After Suspected Militants Open Fire On Patrol Team In Arunachal Pradesh

Itanagar: An Assam Rifles jawan was killed and four others injured after a patrol team came under suspected militant attack along the India-Myanmar border in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district, officials said. The incident took place around 6.30 am near Nampong Nallah under Nampong circle when personnel of the 21 Assam Rifles were patrolling an area where border fencing work is underway, they said. Preliminary reports suggested that suspected militants opened fire on the patrol team, killing Havildar Jankhokai Kuki (42) and injuring four others. The injured personnel were being evacuated for medical treatment, while details regarding their condition were awaited.

Security forces have intensified operations in the area following the incident, the official said. However, there was no official confirmation about the attackers' identity. The incident comes just two days before the Centre's latest extension of



the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA), is set to take effect in specified areas of Arunachal Pradesh. The Centre has extended the law for another six months from October 1, with Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts remaining under its purview. The extension comes amid continued security concerns in the region, particularly along the India-Myanmar border, where insurgent groups have maintained a presence and operated across the in-

ternational boundary. Changlang SP Kirli Padu said he had received information about the incident and directed the officer-in-charge of Changlang police station to gather details. "We have received information about the incident that took place along the India-Myanmar border and have asked the OC of Changlang police station to collect information related to it," the SP said. The incident comes just two days before the Centre's latest extension of the Armed Forces (Special

Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA), is set to take effect in specified areas of Arunachal Pradesh. The Centre has extended the law for another six months from October 1, with Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts remaining under its purview. The extension comes amid continued security concerns in the region, particularly along the India-Myanmar border, where insurgent groups have maintained a presence and operated across the international boundary.

9 Per Cent Of Higher Education Students Report Suicidal Thoughts, Supreme Court-Appointed Panel's Survey Finds

New Delhi: About 15% of students in higher education institutions experienced a period of severe distress or felt overwhelmed in the previous six months, while 9% reported experiencing suicidal thoughts often or very often in the past year, according to a nationwide survey conducted by a Supreme Court-appointed panel examining student suicides. The findings are expected to form part of the final report of the National Task Force (NTF), which was set up to address students' mental health concerns and prevent suicides in higher educational institutions (HEIs). The final report is expected to be submitted by October 31, 2026. The findings underline the scale of mental health concerns on campuses and the need for stronger student support systems.



observations need to be taken as preliminary and tentative," the official said, The Hindu reports.

Even with that limitation, the emerging patterns point to areas requiring attention. The official said there was a need for standardised student support systems, faculty training, measures to reduce stigma, crisis standard operating procedures (SOPs), regular monitoring backed by quality data, and a responsive and transparent administration to address students' mental health concerns. The task force had submitted an interim report earlier this year highlighting a range of problems faced by students in higher education.

It noted that students' experience of higher education had been marked by "deep-rooted social discrimination, rampant sexual harassment in medical and engineering colleges; gender discrimination by faculty in medical, law and State universities, in terms of academic support, hostel curfews and moral policing; caste identification by NEET-UG and JEE ranks; caste-based humiliation and discrimination in terms of admission, grading, language gaps and faculty attention". The findings have gained significance amid renewed debate over stu-

dent suicides following the deaths of two students at IIT Delhi and IIT Bombay, which led to widespread outrage. Apart from conducting the nationwide survey, the NTF carried out institutional visits and consultations with stakeholders to understand the problems students face. "A total of 30 meetings at 19 institutional sites have been conducted so far across Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR), Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Assam and West Bengal, spanning different types of institutions and disciplines. Due to the very small number of sites visited, this is not a representative sample, and the views provided will be taken in that light," the official said. "Despite institutional limits and apprehension, students at most HEIs spoke extensively about their academic, social, mental health, faculty-related and administrative concerns." Students reported problems including strict attendance policies, demanding schedules and academic and clinical overload in medical and allied fields. Medical students also raised concerns about on-call hours stretching well beyond mandated as well as human limits.

Students in engineering colleges highlighted intense

competition arising from relative grading and stringent placement criteria. The task force also heard complaints about inconsistent and insufficient academic support because of faculty shortages in State universities. Students in dental, nursing and mental health educational institutions reported inadequate practical training that left them under-prepared for professional practice. PhD scholars, meanwhile, raised concerns about supervisors who were either neglectful or over-controlling and exploitative. The Supreme Court constituted the NTF in March 2025 to address the rising incidence of student suicides and examine mental health and well-being concerns among students in higher education institutions across the country. The task force is headed by Justice S Ravindra Bhat. Its members include psychiatrist Alok Sarin; Mary E John, former director of the Centre for Women's Development Studies; Arman Ali, Executive Director of the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People; Rajendar Kachroo, founder of the Aman Satya Kachroo Trust; and Seema Mehrotra, professor of clinical psychology at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), among others.

CBI Arrests Nirav Modi Aide Sandeep Mistry After Extradition From UAE In PNB Scam Case

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested Sandeep Mistry, an associate of fugitive businessman Nirav Modi, in Mumbai on Tuesday after his extradition from the UAE in connection with the Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam. Mistry was extradited on Monday and formally arrested by the CBI. The agency produced him before a special CBI

court but did not seek his remand. The court subsequently sent him to judicial custody till October 6. The arrest was carried out in compliance with a non-bailable warrant issued by a special court in November 2025. Mistry was a director of Fancy Creations Ltd, a Hong Kong-based company linked to Nirav Modi. The CBI alleged that Mistry played an active role in the criminal con-

spiracy with Modi and other accused persons, in furtherance of which the PNB was cheated of nearly Rs6,498.20 crore. The agency also alleged that Mistry, along with Modi's brother Nehal and another wanted accused, threatened employees who were dummy directors of companies associated with Modi in Dubai after the case was registered in India. According to the CBI, the employees were forced to

leave Dubai and move to Cairo under threats that they could also be arrested. The accused allegedly destroyed their mobile phones to erase evidence. Nirav Modi, his uncle Mehul Choksi and others have been under investigation by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) since 2018 on money laundering charges and are also being investigated by the CBI.

Balochistan Liberation Front Women Fighters Attack Pakistan Army Convoy, Claim 9 Personnel Killed

Balochistan : The Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) has released video footage purportedly showing the first armed operation carried out by its newly established women's wing, the Karima Armed Assault Division (KAAD). The footage depicts members of the unit attacking a Pakistani military convoy, which included an armoured vehicle. The separatist group has claimed that nine Pakistani military personnel were killed in the attacks. The footage reportedly captures a KAAD operation in Turbat on September 22. In the first-person visuals, armed women can be seen firing rifles at a three-vehicle Quick Response Force (QRF) convoy travelling along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) highway in Balochistan. A woman commander is seen outlining the operation before the fighters launch the assault. The video shows them carrying out the attack from a very close distance, reportedly around five steps from the convoy, which the group

presented as evidence of their training. BLF spokesperson Major Gwahram Baloch claimed that the assault caused extensive damage to several Pakistani military vehicles. According to him, the Qurban unit assisted the KAAD fighters during the operation and engaged Pakistani personnel who attempted to surround them, allowing the attackers to retreat safely.

Baloch also said Qurban unit fighter Chakar Murad, alias Dileep Jan, was killed during the encounter. Another portion of the footage allegedly shows KAAD members stopping and checking vehicles in the Mangchar area of Kalat. Separately, the Baloch Republican Army (BRA) claimed responsibility for an attack on a Mari Energies Limited facility in Beh Loti, located in Balochistan's Dera Bugti. According to BRA spokesperson Sarbaz Baloch, rockets and heavy weapons were used in the assault, killing three company employees and injuring several others. Sarbaz further claimed that Paki-



stani forces subsequently clashed with members of what the group described as a local state-backed armed formation following the attack on the energy company's facility. According to the BRA's account, nine Pakistani military personnel and three members of the armed group were killed. The Balochistan Post reported that the BRA also said six of its fighters died in the fighting. The Baloch Republican Guards (BRG), meanwhile, claimed that its fighters captured Haji Shehr and destroyed a local police station using explosives. The group also alleged that BRA fighters entered Eri Shehr, took control of gov-

ernment buildings and later withdrew from the area after completing their operation. The incidents come amid a reported increase in attacks by Baloch militant organisations against Pakistani security forces, with recent violence also causing casualties and damage to government and security infrastructure. The KAAD takes its name from Karima Baloch, a prominent pro-independence activist who became the first woman chairperson of the Baloch Students Organisation-Azad (BSO-Azad). She was found dead in Toronto, Canada, in 2020 in circumstances that remained the subject of investigation and speculation.

Asian Games Gold Medallist Sanju Devi To Get Rs.51 Lakh Reward From Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai has announced a Rs 51 lakh cash reward for Sanju Devi who is a member of India's gold medal-winning women's kabaddi team at the Asian Games 2026 in Japan. Sanju Devi who hails from Korba district in Chhattisgarh met Chief Minister Sai at his residence. The Chief Minister congratulated her on her achievement and announced the cash reward in recognition of her contribution to India's historic performance at the Asian Games. Sai praised Sanju Devi for her hard work, dedication and determination, saying her success has brought pride to Chhattisgarh and the country. He also said her achievement would inspire young athletes, especially girls from the state to take up sports and pursue their dreams. The Chief Minister also



spoke to Sanju Devi about her experience at the Asian Games and India's performance in the women's kabaddi competition. He said that an athlete's success is not only a personal achievement but can also inspire thousands of young people who dream of representing the country. At the Asian Games 2026 in Japan, the Indian women's kabaddi team

won the gold medal after defeating Iran in the final. Sanju Devi played an important role in the team's successful campaign and became one of the athletes from Chhattisgarh to shine on the international stage. Sai said the Chhattisgarh government was working to create better opportunities for athletes across the state. He added that players from remote areas

should have access to proper training, resources and support so they can compete at national and international events. Sanju Devi thanked the Chief Minister for the recognition and financial incentive. She said the support from the state government would motivate her to work harder and perform even better in future competitions.

NHRC Issues Notice To Meta, Centre Over Alleged Exploitation Of Children In Social Media Videos

New Delhi: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to Meta, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and the Etah district administration in Uttar Pradesh over allegations that minor children were repeatedly made to appear in objectionable and politically sensitive social media videos. The NHRC acted on a complaint by Sewa Nyaya Utthan Foundation, which alleged that children, including those from socially and economically vulnerable backgrounds, were tutored and made to appear in videos containing abusive, derogatory and politically charged expressions. The videos were allegedly uploaded and circulated publicly to gain digital reach and engagement. The complaint raised concerns about the children's dignity, privacy and psychological well-being, as well as informed parental consent. It also alleged possible exploitation by adults controlling or facilitating the content. The allegations raise broader concerns about the safeguards available to children appearing in social media content, particularly when adults are involved in cre-



ating and circulating material for online engagement. The NHRC's intervention puts the focus on whether adequate measures were in place to protect the children and their interests. The NHRC Bench, presided over by member Priyank Kanoongo, sought action-taken reports from the authorities concerned within two weeks. It directed the Senior Superintendent of Police in Etah to identify the children and ensure their protection and counselling. The Hindu reports.

The police have also been directed to investigate the roles of those allegedly involved in scripting, recording, uploading and circulating the videos. They have

been asked to register a First Information Report (FIR) if the inquiry discloses a cognisable offence and to preserve relevant digital evidence. The District Magistrate has been directed to ensure appropriate care, protection and rehabilitation measures for the children through the Child Welfare Committee and the District Child Protection Unit. The directions indicate that the matter extends beyond investigating who created and circulated the videos, with the children's immediate protection, counselling and rehabilitation also forming part of the NHRC's response.

Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram,

has been asked to explain how the content was repeatedly uploaded and circulated. The company has also been asked whether the material generated any monetisation or commercial benefit. The NHRC has sought details about the steps taken by Meta to preserve relevant digital evidence and address the material. These questions place scrutiny on how social media platforms respond when content involving children is repeatedly circulated and potentially used for commercial or engagement purposes. MeitY has been directed to examine the platform's due diligence, child safety and grievance redressal mechanisms.

DDWS organises Eleventh Edition of Sujal Gram Samvad



New Delhi: The Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Jal Shakti, organised the 11th edition of the multilingual ‘Sujal Gram Samvad’ today, providing a platform for direct interaction with Gram Panchayat representatives and local communities on operation and maintenance of rural drinking water systems. This reinforces the government’s commitment to community-led water governance under the Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0. The Samvad was chaired by Shri Ashok K.K. Meena, Secretary, DDWS, in the presence of Shri Kamal Kishore Soan, AS&MD, NJJM, along with Senior officers from the department.

Emphasising the constitutional mandate of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the drinking water sector, Shri Meena stressed the need for greater ownership of operation and maintenance (O&M) by GPs. He called for strengthening user-charge collection mechanisms, improving financial sustainability of water supply schemes and undertaking source sustainability measures such as groundwater recharge and rainwater harvesting. He urged to effectively leverage State O&M policies and available resources to ensure sustain-

able service delivery and community ownership of drinking water infrastructure. The 11th edition of Samvad featured grassroots interactions across 4 Gram Panchayat (GP) headquartered villages. The virtual Samvad witnessed a diverse range of participants including Gram Panchayat (GP) representatives, members of VWSCs, community participants, Jal Sahiyas, Anganwadi workers, students, teachers, and front-line functionaries from the GPs, along with JJM State Mission Directors, District Collectors/District Magistrates/Deputy Commissioners, DWSM officials, and senior officers from the States. The multilingual Samvad focused on key aspects of sustainable rural water service delivery, including uninterrupted operation of water supply schemes, skilling of local operators, water quality and disinfection, community participation in O&M, financial sustainability

through user charges and convergence, protection of drinking water sources, Jal Arpan and the wider impact of reliable drinking water services on health, education, women’s empowerment and local livelihoods. **Voices from the Gram Panchayats** During the interaction, representatives of GP Sakaria shared in Hindi that prior to Mission, villagers largely depended on wells and tube wells for drinking water. Today, every household in the village has access to piped drinking water and the village has achieved Har Ghar Jal status. The community informed that Jal Arpan was organised on 16 March 2026 and that drinking water services are being supported through regular collection of ₹150 per month as user charges, with payments and billing undertaken through digital platforms. Water quality is being monitored regularly, by weekly water quality testing, and trained local operators are supporting smooth

operation of the scheme. District and State officials emphasised the importance of sustaining service delivery in Har Ghar Jal villages through strong operation and maintenance systems, source sustainability measures and effective utilisation of available resources. Referring to the State O&M framework, AS&MD, NJJM asked to encourage Gram Panchayats to leverage the e-Gram Swaraj portal for planning and monitoring expenditure and to make effective use of 16th Finance Commission tied grants for strengthening drinking water infrastructure, source protection and long-term sustainability of water supply systems. During the interaction the GP representatives and community interacted in Nepali and said that shared that prior to Jal Jeevan Mission, the village faced significant challenges in accessing safe drinking water and depended largely on standposts and nearby wells. The Village Pradhan informed that today tap water reaches every household, school and Anganwadi centre, resulting in significant improvements in convenience, health and overall quality of life. Aangan Wadi Wotkr highlighted that the availability of safe drinking water has contributed to a reduction in water-borne illnesses and reduced the burden of fetching water. They also shared that safe drinking water is supporting nutrition, meal preparation and awareness activities among adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers. The

Village Pradhan highlighted the role of the Pani Samiti in water quality monitoring, community mobilisation and awareness generation, with active participation of women. District and State officials appreciated the strong community ownership demonstrated by the Gram Panchayat and noted that preparations are underway for Jal Arpan, which will further strengthen local ownership and long-term sustainability of rural drinking water assets. During the interaction with village representatives in Hindi, they highlighted the transformational impact of Jal Jeevan Mission on drinking water access and quality of life. They shared that household tap connections have significantly reduced hardship for rural families and improved access to safe drinking water. Particular emphasis was placed on the success of the Jal Sahiya model, through which women are playing a leading role in community mobilisation, user-charge collection, grievance redressal and awareness generation. The Panchayat informed that regular user charges are being collected and utilised locally for operation and maintenance of drinking water systems. Community representatives also highlighted water quality testing through FTKs, active Gram Sabha discussions and efforts to strengthen source sustainability. District officials informed that around 15 successful community-led models, including the Jal Sahiya model, are cur-

rently operational across the district. They also highlighted innovative outreach initiatives such as Jal Samvad, under which officials directly visit Gram Panchayats and interact with local communities, and “Hamare Gaon Hamare Log”, organised every Saturday to engage with villagers on water supply services, community participation and planning for utilisation of 16th Finance Commission tied grants. During the interaction, AS&MD, NJJM suggested that States prepare simplified O&M Manuals in local languages to enable Gram Panchayat representatives and VWSC members to better understand their responsibilities in managing rural water supply systems. During the interaction, village representatives shared in Hindi, that before Jal Jeevan Mission, accessing drinking water during harsh winter months was extremely difficult and often required villagers to travel to distant sources or use melted snow. Following the provision of household tap connections, drinking water is now available at homes throughout the year. Community members highlighted that water supply continues even during winter when temperatures fall to nearly minus 30 degrees Celsius, owing to appropriate engineering measures adopted in the water supply infrastructure. Students, teachers and villagers also confirmed the availability of safe drinking water facilities in schools and public institutions and highlighted growing awareness regarding water

conservation and water quality monitoring. State officials informed that efforts are underway to further strengthen drinking water infrastructure through improvement of headworks, source sustainability measures and implementation of the recently notified O&M Policy. They also highlighted ongoing planning for additional household tap connections, preparation of DPRs related to source sustainability and infrastructure strengthening, and continued focus on ensuring reliable water services in the challenging terrain and climatic conditions of Ladakh. AS & MD, NJJM, Shri Kamal Kishore Soan, emphasised that the long-term success of JJM 2.0 will depend on robust operation and maintenance systems, regular user-charge collection, source sustainability measures and active involvement of Panchayats and communities in managing drinking water assets. Soan highlighted the importance of utilising the 2 October Gram Sabha as a platform for promoting water conservation, drinking water security, sanitation and community awareness. He encouraged Gram Panchayats that have completed the Har Ghar Jal certification process to organise Jal Arpan programmes and suggested that States develop and disseminate O&M Manuals in local languages so that Panchayat representatives and VWSC members can more effectively manage and sustain rural water supply systems.

Swachchata Behaviour Change Digital Kosh launched



New Delhi: In pursuance to directions of the Hon’ble Prime Minister during the 51st PRAGATI meeting, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has identified 50 model cities under the PRAGATI-50 initiative for demonstrating a higher benchmark of ‘Swachhata’ through targeted, KPI-based action and by leveraging intensive and technology-enabled monitoring within the framework of Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban 2.0. Speaking at the launch, Union Minister Shri Manohar Lal emphasized: “These 50 cities across 24 states will emerge as clean role-model cities for the rest of the country, by going beyond their routine sanitation work to demonstrate sustained, high-performance parameters of visible cleanliness. We have ensured inclusion of major cities, cities of cultural importance, high tourism destinations and economic centres. The initiative aims to drive visible improvements in urban cleanliness, solid waste management, used water management, sanitation, and citizen participation through a structured framework of

monitoring and review within a defined timeframe. Progress will be continuously reviewed through outcome-based assessments and tech-enabled monitoring. I will personally chair review meetings every other month to track the advancement of these cities.” In his remarks, Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs, Shri Tokhan Sahu, said that over the past decade, Swachhata has evolved from a people’s movement into a way of life. Referring to the launch of the new model cities initiative, Shri Sahu said that it would help cities achieve the goal of Garbage Free Cities within a stipulated timeframe and enable them to emerge as role models for other urban centres. He called upon States and Urban Local Bodies to prepare micro-level action plans and ensure their swift and effective implementation. Highlighting the growing convergence of youth power and technology, the Minister noted that India has emerged as the world’s third-largest startup ecosystem. He added that the launch of the third cohort

in collaboration with IIT Kanpur also marks the achievement of the national target of onboarding and incubating 75 startups under the Mission. The Secretary, Department of Urban Development (DoUD), MoHUA, Sh. Satendra Singh said that the efforts will be made towards ensuring better citizen experience and holistic service delivery. He highlighted that the initiative adopts “City as a Whole” approach, ensuring all stakeholders, partners; Urban Local Bodies are included in the planning and implementation. To ensure efficient monitoring, a Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI)-like digital review mechanism has been established on the Swachhatam Portal. Officers from the Ministry will be assigned specific cities for regular supervision and handholding. Recognizing that sustainable urban transformation hinges on building capacities and continuous learning, SBM-U has empowered stakeholders with technical guidelines, model designs, and targeted advisories. During the programme, to

further support the on-ground implementation of projects, Standard Operating Procedure for Establishment of Secondary Collection Centre for Construction & Demolition Waste (C&D) and Guidelines for Source Segregation of Municipal Solid Waste mandated under the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026 were released. **Swachh Bharat Test Bed & Innovation Centre :** The Mission has consistently positioned research and innovation as the driving force of Swachhata. In collaboration with CSIR-CMERI, MoHUA launched the Swachh Bharat Test Bed & Innovation Centre at Durgapur, a national facility for research, product development, testing, validation, certification, and capacity building in sanitation technologies. The third cohort of startups : Over the past decade, SBM–Urban has shifted from conventional waste management to cutting-edge, tech-driven solutions. The Mission has engaged 75 startups across the waste value chain to accelerate inno-

vation. Riding the wave of entrepreneurial momentum, MoHUA in collaboration with the Startup Incubation and Innovation Centre (SIIC) at IIT Kanpur, has launched the third cohort of startups focused on pioneering solutions in sanitation and waste management. With 13 startups joining Cohort 3, the initiative is fast-tracking cleaner, tech-driven urban solutions. Dedicated WhatsApp channel : Taking the Swachhata App—an important interface for citizens to register complaints and seek grievance redressal—a step further, a dedicated WhatsApp channel has been launched to make it easier for citizens to lodge their complaints and actively contribute to keeping their cities clean. The Swachhata Behaviour Change Digital Kosh- a digital repository bringing together Ideas, Creatives, Campaigns and Resources to strengthen behaviour change for a cleaner and more sustainable India was launched by Union Minister, Shri Manohar Lal.

TDB Backs Indigenous Multi-Gas Sensing Platform

New Delhi: From industrial safety and hydrogen infrastructure to energy systems and process monitoring, the ability to detect and accurately measure gases is becoming increasingly important across a wide range of emerging technologies. Giving a boost to indigenous capabilities in this domain, the Technology Development Board (TDB), Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India, has signed an agreement with M/s Multi Nano Sense Technologies Private Limited, Nagpur, Maharashtra for ₹37.51 crore financial support under the Research Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund. The project, with a total approved cost of ₹75.02 crore, focuses on the development of a Platform MEMS + AFE SoC Multi-Gas Sensor, with the objective of taking the technology from TRL-4 to TRL-9. The support will be provided through Optionally Convertible Debt (OCD). Multi Nano Sense is developing an indigenous MEMS TCDIR gas sensor and CMOS AFE SoC platform aimed at enabling reliable and scalable multi-gas sensing in a compact form factor. The technology combines a MEMS-based sensing element with an application-specific front-end system-on-chip for signal acquisition and processing. The platform is designed for applications spanning leak detection, process control and health and safety

monitoring, with potential use across industries including refineries, petrochemicals, power, PNG infrastructure, industrial safety, batteries and the hydrogen economy. The proposed sensor platform is designed around a combination of high sensitivity, low power consumption, miniaturised and intelligent signal processing combination of MEMS Gas Sensor and a custom AFE SoC. The technology is intended to operate across a wide temperature range and in demanding industrial environments, while incorporating features such as auto-calibration, compensation for environmental parameters and software-based gas-library processing. With a targeted response time of less than 200 milliseconds, the platform is being developed for applications requiring rapid detection and monitoring. Its compact architecture, with a sensor package designed to be less than 25 mm × 25 mm × 15 mm, also opens possibilities for battery-operated and embedded applications. The RDI-supported programme will enable Multi Nano Sense to undertake further development, integration, testing, validation and scale-up of the sensor and AFE SoC platform, with the ultimate objective of taking the technology to TRL-9. The project comes under the Deep Technology sector; with Quantum Technology identified as

the sub-sector. While the immediate application is advanced multi-gas sensing, the underlying platform brings together MEMS, semiconductor electronics and intelligent sensing, areas that are increasingly important for building indigenous technology capabilities. Rajesh Kumar Pathak, Secretary, TDB, said, “Sensors are the foundation of many modern technology systems, and indigenous capabilities in sensing and semiconductor technologies are important for both industrial competitiveness and strategic self-reliance. The RDI Fund enables us to support technologies that require sustained development before they can reach widespread commercial deployment. The agreement with Multi Nano Sense demonstrates how such support can help Indian deep-tech companies take advanced sensor technologies from development to scalable, market-ready solutions.” Representative of Multi Nano Sense Technologies Private Limited said, “The RDI support from TDB will enable us to take our MEMS gas-sensing technology to the next stage of integration, validation and scale-up. Our objective is to develop a compact, low-power and scalable multi-gas sensing platform that can address demanding applications across industries. This support will be instrumental in advancing the technology towards TRL-9 and strengthening indigenous capabilities in MEMS and sensor electronics.”



'Israel Received Hamas Warning Weeks Before October 7 Attack,' Reveals Former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant



Hamas: Former Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant has disclosed that Israeli intelligence received a warning from Hamas in the weeks preceding the group's October 7, 2023, attack on Israel, nearly three years after the assault. Gallant said Israel received the message through a channel involving Shin Bet, the country's internal security agency. According to him, the communication included a warning from then-Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar that he would "shake the prisons." Speaking to Army Radio, an

Israeli media outlet, on Sunday, Gallant said, "Through the channel involving the Shin Bet, we received a message came from Hamas saying that Sinwar would shake the prisons - and the assessment of the Shin Bet and Military Intelligence Directorate was that it was connected to the kidnapping of Elizabeth Tsurkov." Gallant also claimed that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu kept him out of discussions with senior US officials on several sensitive matters during the war, despite Gallant serving

as defence minister at the time. "During the war, I learned many times about important conversations Netanyahu held with the Americans on the most sensitive issues, such as hostages and ammunition, only after the Americans called me and tried to verify what had been said in those conversations," Gallant said. He further alleged that US officials had limited confidence in Netanyahu during that period. "Their trust in the prime minister was low." Gallant served as Israel's defence

minister from 2022 until November 2024, holding the position when the October 7 attack took place and during the early phase of the Gaza war that followed. Netan yahu removed Gallant from his post in November 2024, citing a "crisis of trust" between the two. Their disagreements included differences over the conduct of the Gaza war. Gallant had advocated a more pragmatic approach centred on securing a hostage agreement, while Netanyahu maintained that continued military pressure on Hamas was necessary. Gallant subsequently resigned from the Knesset, Israel's parliament, in January 2025. Gallant's comments came alongside separate claims by Sufian Abu Zaida, a former senior Fatah official, who said he had served as an intermediary in a secret Israel-Hamas channel intended to facilitate a prisoner exchange agreement. Gallant was also questioned about reports that Netanyahu had received warnings from foreign leaders before the October 7 attack.

Netanyahu Makes Secret Abu Dhabi Trip, Meets UAE President Amid October 7 Warning Controversy

Jerusalem / Abu Dhabi: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made a secret day trip to Abu Dhabi on Sunday, September 27, 2026, where he met UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, according to Israeli media reports and a senior Israeli official cited by Reuters. Netanyahu reportedly flew privately from Ben-Gurion Airport around midday and landed in Abu Dhabi in the early afternoon. He spent several hours in the UAE capital before returning to Israel the same evening. Israeli reports said the visit lasted roughly four hours, with much of the time spent in a one-on-one meeting with MBZ. Neither Netanyahu's office nor the UAE Foreign Ministry immediately issued a public statement about the visit or its agenda. The discreet meeting comes as Netanyahu faces renewed political and



media scrutiny over allegations that MBZ warned him about a possible Hamas attack around 10 days before the October 7, 2023, massacre. A Haaretz investigation, based partly on a book by journalists Shlomi Eldar and Ruth Yuval, reported that MBZ allegedly spoke to Netanyahu by phone in late September 2023 in a conversation lasting around 45 minutes. According to the report, the call followed Emirati intelligence and a message attributed to then-Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, conveyed through a media-

tor, warning of an impending "earthquake" or major operation against Israel. The report claimed Netanyahu responded calmly and suggested that any possible Hamas action was more likely to take place in the West Bank. It further alleged that the information was not passed on to senior Israeli security officials, including the Israel Defense Forces, Shin Bet, Mossad or the then-defence minister. Netanyahu's office has strongly rejected the allegations, saying checks of call logs and offi-

cial records found no evidence of such a conversation between Netanyahu and MBZ during the period in question. The Israeli prime minister has described the claims as a "malicious fabrication" and has threatened legal action against Haaretz and the journalists involved. A UAE official source, speaking to the state-owned The National, also rejected the suggestion that MBZ personally delivered a warning to Netanyahu. The source said security matters are handled through professional and relevant institutions rather than directly between national leaders. The UAE has previously acknowledged maintaining intelligence-sharing channels with Israel following the Abraham Accords, but has not publicly confirmed the specific alleged Netanyahu-MBZ conversation.

Himlung Himal Avalanche: At Least 10 Missing After Snow Slide In Nepal's Manang District

Kathmandu [Nepal]: At least 10 people have gone missing after an avalanche struck the base camp of Himlung Himal in western Nepal, bordering Tibet, expedition organisers confirmed. Expedition organiser Mingma Gyalje Sherpa confirmed that two of his kitchen staff were among those missing after the avalanche. "The avalanche hit on Sunday morning," he said. The snow was already chest deep at places yesterday afternoon. The situation might be worse now. Most teams abandoned their expeditions, while a few try to hold out. Samagaon below (3500m) received over. According to Sherpa, expedition teams and rope-fixing teams had evacuated the mountain slopes following a weather warning issued last week, while some people reluctantly stayed back. The mountain region had witnessed heavy snowfall for several days, forcing climbers to retreat from the autumn ascent of the mountain. Those missing in Sunday's avalanche are from different expedition companies. Himlung Himal, standing at 7,126 metres in



Manang district, requires an additional permit for helicopter flights, adding to the difficulties involved in reaching the mountain. The 7,126-metre peak is a popular objective for climbers seeking experience at high altitude. The incident comes as a weather system over the Bay of Bengal brings heavy snowfall to the mountains and persistent rainfall to Nepal's hills and plains. Rain and snowfall have affected several parts of the country. Nepal has been witnessing adverse weather conditions since Friday, disrupting roads and prompting local

authorities to close several sections to traffic. Tourism authorities have urged trekkers and climbers to suspend activities as weather conditions deteriorate. The Department of Tourism has also issued an alert advising that tourism activities be put on hold. The weather disruption follows last month's devastating floods in Rasuwa, which killed more than 1,400 people and left more than 5,000 missing. The disaster washed away settlements along the Trishuli River and dealt another blow to Nepal's tourism industry. Persistent rainfall and snowfall have since

disrupted several trekking routes and forced the cancellation or suspension of major expeditions on Manaslu and Dhaulagiri. Earlier, in August, after a massive avalanche swept them off Pakistan's Broad Peak, the remains of three of Nepal's most decorated high-altitude guides and climbers returned home to grieving families. The climbers identified as Kili Pemba Sherpa, also widely known as Kili, along with Gyalu Sherpa and Nima Sherpa, had arrived at Tribhuvan International Airport aboard a Qatar Airways flight from Doha.

Xi Jinping And Peng Liyuan: The Story Behind China's Most High-Profile Political Couple



Beijing: Chinese President Xi Jinping, who visited the United States on September 23 for a three-day visit, was spotted with his wife, Peng Liyuan. Among the highlights of Xi and Trump's meeting, his carpet welcome by the US, or Ivanka Trump wearing a Chinese dress, there was another thing that made the headline, and that's none other than China's First Lady – Peng Liyuan. Chinese President Xi Jinping and Peng Liyuan are among the country's most recognisable public figures. While Xi is known globally for his political career and leadership of China, Peng has built a prominent identity of her own as a celebrated singer and public figure. Chinese President Xi

Jinping arrived in the United States on Wednesday, September 24, 2026, with his wife Peng Liyuan, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the ministry's protocol chief Hong Lei, and other Chinese delegation members for a high-profile, three-day state visit focused on bilateral talks regarding trade, artificial intelligence, and international relations. The cameras that were capturing President Xi's arrival at Joint Base Andrews, his red carpet welcome, meeting with President Trump and the First Lady of America, gala dinner, and Ivanka Trump welcoming Xi by wearing a Chinese designer dress. However, there was one more thing that became one of the major highlights: Chinese

President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan. Let's take a look at their chemistry and the story behind China's most high-profile political couple. According to reports, Xi and Peng were introduced by common friends around 1986. A rather typical blind-date arrangement that resulted in one of the more unconventional marriages in contemporary political history. They married in 1987, when Xi was still building his political career and Peng was already a well-known performer in China. Born in 1952 in Shaanxi, Xi joined the Communist Party as a young man and gradually rose through various administrative and political positions. He became General Secretary of the Com-

munist Party of China in 2012 and President of China in 2013. Peng was born in 1962 in Shandong province into a family with artistic heritage. Her mother was a performer in Chinese opera, and Peng built a career as a folk and soprano vocalist. She became particularly famous for her performances of Chinese folk and patriotic songs and later held the rank of major general in the People's Liberation Army's performing arts system. Their relationship has attracted attention partly because of the contrast between their professional backgrounds. While Xi's career has centred on politics and governance, Peng has remained closely associated with culture, music, and China's public diplomacy. The couple have one daughter, Xi Mingze, who has largely stayed away from public life. As China's First Lady, Peng has accompanied Xi on numerous overseas state visits and diplomatic occasions. She has also participated in public-health, education, and women's initiatives. In 2014, she was appointed a World Health Organization Goodwill Ambassador for Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, highlighting her involvement in international health advocacy.

China Cuts Tariffs On US Farm Goods, But Soybeans Remain Excluded From Relief

Washington: China is set to reduce tariffs on a wide range of US agricultural products, including corn, wheat, meat and dairy, but soybeans, its biggest US farm import, have been excluded from the tariff-relief list jointly issued by China's Commerce Ministry and the White House. Markets had been awaiting details of tariff reductions on US agricultural products following last week's Washington summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump. The agricultural measures are part of a \$60 billion package of reciprocal tariff cuts negotiated by the Board of Trade and unveiled on Monday. The list includes corn, wheat, sorghum, meat, dairy products, vegetable oils and meals, including soy oil and soymeal. More than 90% of the products covered by the agreement will be exempt from additional tariffs imposed by the two countries and will instead be subject to most-favoured-nation tariff rates, China's Commerce Ministry said. However, the proposal does not specify when the tariff reductions will take effect. Trade in the agricultural and related products included on Monday's list was worth about \$17 billion in 2024, broadly matching China's



reported purchase commitment when soybeans are excluded, according to Reuters calculations. US soybeans remain subject to an additional 10% tariff. Traders have warned that the levy is too high for private Chinese crushers to absorb, even as state buyers increase purchases. "Despite the soybean being a non-sensitive item in trade, the political significance of China's soybean purchase is enormous and carries major political implications," said Feng Chucheng, founder and partner at Hutong Research. Feng said keeping soybeans separate gives Beijing leverage in negotiations with Washington, particularly ahead of the US midterm elections. Chinese state-run agricultural com-

panies Sinograin and COFCO have purchased more than 12 million metric tons of US soybeans. That is nearly half of the 25 million metric tons the White House has said Beijing committed to buying annually through 2028. The White House said in May that Beijing had agreed to purchase 25 million metric tons of US soybeans annually through 2028. China, however, has not confirmed a target for such purchases. A trader based in Asia with an international company selling soybeans to China said state-run companies would continue purchasing US soybeans, while tariff reductions on other agricultural goods would help China meet the \$17 billion

commitment. The trader spoke on condition of anonymity. Without tariffs, the landed cost of US and Brazilian soybeans is about \$595 per ton, according to traders. Brazilian soybeans are generally preferred because of their higher oil and protein content. At those prices, private Chinese crushers are operating at negative margins. The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade was down 1.38% at \$13-3/4 per bushel as of 0709 GMT. The tariff reductions on other US agricultural products could expand trade between the two countries, but the continued 10% additional tariff on soybeans leaves a significant part of their agricultural trade outside the relief package.

Lahore: Azerbaijani Woman Allegedly Sexually Assaulted By 3 Men, 3 Detained; Vehicle Recovered

Lahore: A 20-year-old woman from Azerbaijan was allegedly gang-raped by three men in Pakistan's Lahore after being taken to a flat in the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) area, police said. The woman had reportedly arrived in Pakistan from Baku more than two weeks ago for business purposes and was staying in Lahore's Raiwind area. According to The Express Tribune, police said a case has been registered against three male suspects, with investigators identifying

the main accused and launching efforts to arrest all three. According to police officer Anjum Bashir, the woman was taken to a cafe in Lahore's DHA area by two women at around 11 pm on September 25. Three men allegedly joined them at the cafe. The men later offered to drop the women in their vehicle. Police allege that instead of taking the victim back, they took her to a flat, where she was allegedly given an intoxicating substance before being sexually assaulted. The

woman was later allegedly abandoned near Lahore's Ghazi Interchange. Police said her iPhone was also allegedly taken by the suspects. In the latest development, investigators recovered the vehicle allegedly used in the incident from the house of a relative of the main suspect. Three people have also been detained for questioning as police continue investigating the case. Police are examining the role of the two women who allegedly took the Azerbaijani national to the cafe before the three men

joined them. The three male suspects have also been placed on a stop list to prevent them from leaving Pakistan as investigators work to locate and arrest them. The victim has undergone a medical examination, police said, while a case has been registered under relevant provisions of the Pakistan Penal Code. The investigation is ongoing, with police questioning those detained and conducting further raids to trace the suspects allegedly involved in the assault.

El Nino May Hit India's Rabi Crop Output, Rainfed Areas Face Challenges: Govt



New Delhi: The upcoming rabi season is expected to remain difficult for rain-dependent agricultural areas due to the possible impact of the El Nino weather pattern, Agriculture Secretary Atish Chandra said. He cautioned that foodgrain output could be affected if weather conditions remain unfavourable. Speaking at a two-day national conference on rabi season preparedness, Chandra said the kharif crop cycle had also been challenging, especially in rainfed regions. Several states faced difficulties first in achieving targeted crop coverage and later in protecting standing crops.

Rabi crops, including wheat and mustard, are generally sown from October onwards. "We are see-

ing that in the coming season, production is likely to be affected to a large extent. And the rabi season will also be challenging for the rainfed areas," Chandra said. Chandra said agricultural strategies would need to be adjusted according to regional weather conditions. While some states may experience excessive soil moisture, areas receiving insufficient rainfall could face prolonged dry spells. He highlighted climate change as an ongoing challenge, noting that even irrigated regions have witnessed unseasonal and heavy rainfall events that have damaged crops. "We used to think that we will face the challenges of climate change later. But now we see the changes happen-

ing, and they are happening at a fast pace," he said. Chandra said India has achieved self-reliance in cereals but continues to depend on imports for commodities such as pulses, oilseeds and certain horticulture products. The rabi season generally covers around 638 lakh hectare of cultivated area. Wheat accounts for more than 300 lakh hectare, while pulses cover about 140 lakh hectare. Oilseeds are cultivated across nearly 87 lakh hectare and coarse cereals across around 55 lakh hectare. The agriculture ministry is holding consultations with states to prepare for the winter crop season and address region-specific challenges arising from changing weather patterns.

SEBI Likely To Form Panel On Stock Exchange Self-Listing Rules After NSE Listing Debate

New Delhi: Market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is likely to set up a committee to examine the possibility of allowing stock exchanges to list and trade their own shares on their platforms, according to a CNBC-TV18 report citing sources. If introduced, the proposed self-listing framework would also apply to exchanges that are already publicly listed. However, SEBI is expected to first address concerns related to conflict of interest, governance standards and regulatory oversight before moving ahead.

The issue has gained attention following the listing of National Stock Exchange (NSE) shares on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). NSE Chairman

Srinivas Injeti had earlier said regulators should reconsider allowing exchanges to list on their own platforms. "Earlier, prior to 2012, even listing was not allowed. A stock exchange or an MII could not list. In 2012, it was allowed," an NSE official had said, adding that global practices could be considered if regulators find merit in allowing self-listing. SEBI had examined the possibility of self-listing in 2015 but rejected the proposal due to concerns over potential conflicts of interest. Under the existing framework, stock exchange shares are required to trade on rival exchanges.

Self-listing is permitted in several international markets. In the US, Intercontinental Exchange, the



parent company of the New York Stock Exchange, is listed and traded on the NYSE. NSE currently dominates India's capital markets, accounting for around 93% of cash-market trading and nearly 75% of options trading. Re-

ports have suggested that NSE could eventually seek permission to trade its shares on its own platform through the "permitted to trade" category after its BSE listing. Under current regulations, a stock exchange classified as a mar-

ket infrastructure institution requires SEBI approval before its shares can be traded on its own platform. Meanwhile, NSE shares fell below their IPO price on Monday amid selling pressure after their market debut.

India's 4G Smartphone Shipments Expected To Rise As Price Gap With 5G Widens

New Delhi: India's 4G smartphone shipments are expected to grow 3 per cent year-on-year after a 48 per cent year-on-year decline in 2025, and its share in the overall market is rising to 13 per cent in 2026 from 11 per cent in 2025, a report said. The report from market research firm Counterpoint Research said rising component costs have widened the price gap between 4G and 5G devices,

pushing 5G models more expensive for price-sensitive consumers. This prompted value-seeking consumers in the entry (sub-Rs 10,000) and budget (Rs 10,000-Rs 20,000) segments to favour 4G handsets. The report noted that the number of original equipment manufacturers offering 4G models in the Rs 10,000-Rs. 20,000 segments have jumped from two in 2025 to 12 in 2026 year-to-date. "This

growing portfolio is positioning 4G as a broader value proposition, giving consumers a balance of price, specifications and performance as rising costs push 5G smartphones into higher price bands," said Senior Analyst Prachir Singh. "4G is becoming a broader market trend rather than a short-term response to higher smartphone prices, as component prices are unlikely to

normalize soon," the report noted. Research Director Tarun Pathak forecasted that



4G models are set to grow its share in India's smartphone market from 13 per cent in

2026 to 15 per cent in 2027. "We expect this broader price-value positioning to support continued 4G demand, while encouraging OEMs to expand their portfolios with more capable 4G devices," he added. Another report earlier this month said that the global sub-\$200 smartphone shipments are forecast to fall by approximately 40 per cent between 2025 and 2030.

No Coal Shortage In India, Govt Boosts Supply To Power Plants Amid Rising Electricity Demand: G Kishan Reddy

New Delhi: Union Coal and Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy said India does not face any coal shortage and that the government is increasing supplies to coal-based power plants by deploying additional railway rakes. "There is no shortage of coal. We are supplying coal, but power demand has gone up by 12-15 per cent. Production from hydel projects has also gone down. So, there is a significant demand for thermal power generation. Also, due to rainfall, there was some problem with coal production," Reddy told reporters in Kolkata. The minister was speaking



on the sidelines of a roadshow aimed at attracting investments in the Angul Aluminium Park in Odisha.

Reddy said coal production has returned to normal

levels after weather-related disruptions and assured that supplies are being strengthened. "Now, the production situation is normal. We are increasing the supply of coal through

more railway rakes. The situation is normal, and there is no tension now," he added. The clarification comes after concerns emerged over coal availability at thermal power plants amid a sharp rise in electricity demand. Last week, around 40% of India's coal-fired power plants were operating with critically low fuel stocks due to increased demand during hotter-than-usual weather conditions linked to El Niño. Data from the Central Electricity Authority showed that the number of power plants with critically low coal inventories rose to 74 as of September 19, compared with around 60 a week

earlier. Plants with such stock levels either had less than 25% of their required inventory or enough coal for fewer than three days of generation. India's peak power demand has remained between 230 gigawatts and 250 gigawatts over the past week, increasing pressure on coal supplies. The government has been focusing on improving coal movement to power stations through enhanced railway transportation. Officials said increased supply through additional rakes would help maintain adequate fuel availability as demand for thermal power generation remains strong.

Kwick Forensic Solutions Aligns With Rs.150 Crore NFSU Varanasi Campus Project



Mumbai: Kwick Forensic Solutions Ltd., a Chennai-based provider of integrated forensic science and investigation solutions, announced on 28 September 2026 its alignment with the development of the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU) campus in Varanasi. The company views this Rs.150 crore project as an emerging opportunity for its services. The NFSU Varanasi campus, spread across 50 acres, is being developed at a cost of Rs.150 crore. It is planned as an advanced centre for forensic science, offering capabilities in digital forensics, cybersecurity,

DNA profiling, ballistics, behavioural analysis and other specialised areas. Union Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to lay the foundation stone for the NFSU Varanasi campus on 7 October 2026. This development reflects the government's focus on strengthening India's forensic capabilities.

Kwick Forensic Solutions, listed on the BSE SME platform with script code 544895, offers a portfolio that includes forensic science, cyber and digital forensics, DNA forensics, mobile CSI vehicles and forensic equipment. The company believes its integrated

solutions position it to address requirements arising from such specialised forensic infrastructure development. The company stated that the expansion of forensic infrastructure across universities, laboratories, and police departments in India creates opportunities. Kwick's diversified portfolio could enable its participation in emerging areas such as forensic equipment, cyber and digital forensics, DNA, mobile CSI and related services. The company also noted that its existing R&D capabilities align with the broader shift towards technology-driven forensic investigation.

Iran Completes Chabahar-Zahedan Railway, Boosting India's Connectivity To Afghanistan And Central Asia



New Delhi: Iran has completed construction of the 730-km Chabahar-Zahedan railway line, a development expected to strengthen India's access to Afghanistan, Central Asia and parts of Russia through Iranian territory. The railway project, which has been under develop-

ment for several years, is expected to begin full operations within three to four months after Iranian authorities complete final safety inspections, according to reports. The rail corridor connects Chabahar, located on Iran's south-eastern coast, with Zahedan near the Af-

ghanistan border. The route includes 33 stations, 39 tunnels and 201 bridges, creating an additional transport link for landlocked Afghanistan and Central Asian nations to access maritime routes through the Indian Ocean. The completion of the railway comes as India and

Iran continue discussions over New Delhi's participation in the Chabahar Port project. The issue was reportedly discussed during Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit. In May 2024, India Ports Global Limited and Iran's Ports and Maritime Organisation signed a 10-year agreement for the development and operation of the Shahid Beheshti terminal at Chabahar Port. India later completed its \$120-million financial commitment under the agreement. The Chabahar project has faced challenges due to changes in US sanctions policies. Washington withdrew a sanctions exemption for the project in September 2025 before providing India

with a conditional waiver that expired on April 26, 2026. New Delhi has said it continues discussions with relevant stakeholders regarding the issue. India is also exploring possible arrangements for the future management of Chabahar Port. Under discussions, an Iranian local ports authority could oversee operations, while legal provisions may allow operational rights to return to India if US sanctions restrictions are removed. The Chabahar-Zahedan railway is expected to support regional trade routes by connecting Iran's port infrastructure with neighbouring countries. For India, the project is viewed as an important link for improving access to Central Asian markets and strengthening alternative transport corridors.

EPF Withdrawal Rules: What Happens To Your PF After Final Settlement?

New Delhi: Job loss can strain household finances, often prompting employees to tap their Employees Provident Fund (EPF) savings. Withdrawal provisions allow unemployed members to access part of their accumulated corpus, while the balance can be claimed after satisfying the prescribed unemployment conditions.

When Can You Withdraw The Full PF Amount?

An EPF member who becomes unemployed can withdraw up to 75 per cent of the available balance, comprising eligible employee and employer contributions along with accumulated interest. The remaining 25 per cent can be withdrawn after the member completes the prescribed period of continuous unemployment. Once the eligibility requirements are fulfilled, the member can apply for final settlement of the eligible EPF balance.

What If You Get A New



Job Later?

If an employee withdraws the entire eligible EPF corpus through final settlement and subsequently secures another job, the withdrawn amount cannot simply be restored to the earlier PF account. However, final settlement does not mean the employee requires a fresh Universal Account Number (UAN). The UAN is designed to remain associated with the employee across different employers during their working life. When the employee joins another EPF-covered establishment, the new employer can link the fresh PF

membership to the existing UAN. Contributions can then resume and begin building a new retirement corpus.

Keep Tax Implications In Mind

Tax treatment is another important consideration before opting for EPF withdrawal. If the accumulated balance is withdrawn before completing five years of continuous eligible service, the proceeds may become taxable under applicable conditions. Members should therefore verify their service tenure and prevailing tax provisions before seeking final settlement.

Rupee falls 28 paise to 96.03 against US dollar amid risk-off sentiment

Mumbai: The rupee depreciated 28 paise to close at 96.03 (provisional) against the US dollar amid risk-off sentiment in global markets after the US rejected a deal proposal by Iran, diminishing hopes of the reopening of the Strait

of Hormuz. Forex traders said global risk sentiment deteriorated as the stalemate between the US and Iran continued. Falling risk assets and a surge in crude oil prices may continue to put pressure on the rupee, they said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened on a negative note at 95.89 against the American currency. During the day, the local unit slipped further to close at 96.03 (provisional), down 28 paise from its previous close. The

rupee appreciated 24 paise to close at 95.75 against the US dollar. "The Indian rupee declined by nearly 20 paise on risk-off sentiment in global markets after the US rejected a deal proposal by Iran, diminishing hopes of the reopening of the

Strait of Hormuz. Brent crude oil breached the USD 108 per barrel mark while global equities tanked. The US dollar and US Treasury yields also strengthened," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

India-France Space Cooperation Enters New Phase with Focus on Human Spaceflight, Start-ups and New Space Ecosystem: Dr. Jitendra Singh

French Minister for Higher Education, Research and Space Philippe Baptiste-Led Delegation Meets Dr. Jitendra Singh in New Delhi
India-France Space Partnership Spans Over Six Decades, From Sounding Rocket Experiments to Gaganyaan and Joint Satellite Missions: Dr. Jitendra Singh
2026 India-France Year of Innovation Opens New Avenues for Deeper Scientific and Technological Cooperation, says Dr. Jitendra Singh
TRISHNA, Gaganyaan and India's 400+ Space Start-ups Create New Opportunities for India-France Partnership: Dr. Jitendra Singh
Dr. Jitendra Singh Pitches for Wider Government-Industry and Start-up Collaboration in Space Sector



New Delhi, Sept., 29 (PIB): India-France space cooperation has evolved from the early sounding rocket experiments of the 1960s into a broad and expanding partnership encompassing joint satellite missions, launch vehicle technologies, human spaceflight and emerging space applications, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences and MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh, said. He said the long-standing relationship between the two countries now provides an opportunity to build a larger ecosystem by bringing together governments, research institutions, industries and start-ups, including through deeper engagement in the rapidly expanding space sector. A high-level French delegation led by Prof. Philippe Baptiste, French Minister for Higher Education, Research and Space, met Dr. Jitendra Singh in New Delhi today. The meeting covered the Space Summit, India-France Year of Innovation 2026 and priorities in scientific and technological cooperation, including Space, CEFIPRA and Blue Economy. Dr. Jitendra Singh said the breadth of the delegation

itself reflected the wide-ranging nature of India-France cooperation across different science domains. Dr. Jitendra Singh was accompanied by Secretary, Department of Science & Technology, Prof. Umesh V. Waghmare; Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Dr. T. Srinivasa Kumar; Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Dr. Rajesh S. Gokhale; Director General, CSIR, Dr. (Mrs.) N. Kalaiselvi; Head, International Cooperation, DST, Dr. P r a v e e n k u m a r Somasundaram; a representative from the Department of Space; Ministry of External Affairs representative; Director, CEFIPRA; and

Nodal Officer of France, Scientist-E, ICD, DST.

The French delegation comprised Prof. Philippe Baptiste; Chief of Staff Lou Le Nabasque; Diplomatic Adviser Alexia Lacaze; Personal Security Officer Jérémy Roller; India Desk Officer Benoit Talleu; Director General of ESSEC Vincenzo Vinzi; Ambassador of France to India Thierry Mathou; Counselor for Cooperation and Cultural Action Grégor Trumel; Deputy Counselor Nicolas Gascoin; Attaché for Scientific Cooperation Sylviane Pied; Strategic Affairs Adviser Raphaëlle Sananès; and Space Affairs Counsellor Tamara Tezzele.

Dr. Jitendra Singh said India-France space cooperation is as old as the two countries' respective space agencies, with the partnership progressing from sounding rocket experiments in the 1960s to present-day human spaceflight. He referred to Megha-Tropiques and SARAL, jointly built by ISRO and CNES, as well as cooperation in launch vehicle engine development, as milestones of this enduring partnership. He said the realisation of the third joint

satellite, TRISHNA, is progressing well, and also appreciated CNES support to India's Gaganyaan programme, including supply of consumables and training of flight surgeons. Indian and French teams have also initiated discussions on microgravity research and parabolic flights in connection with human spaceflight.

The Minister said the ongoing transformation of India's space sector has created new possibilities for the two countries to expand cooperation beyond government institutions and established agencies. Referring to India's space-sector reforms and the growth of the private ecosystem, he said more than 400 Indian space start-ups are now engaged in areas including rocket building, satellite building and space applications. He said the next phase of India-France cooperation can bring together government institutions, industries and start-ups on both sides to create a larger ecosystem and wider resource pool.

Dr. Jitendra Singh said the India-France Year of Innovation 2026, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra

Modi and the President of France in February this year, provides an important platform to take the partnership in innovation and emerging technologies forward. He referred to the upcoming Water Cycle and TRISHNA Mission event in Bengaluru on October 11, where ISRO will contribute outreach material and senior officials will speak on the TRISHNA satellite and its applications. The Minister also placed the space partnership in the wider context of India-France scientific cooperation, spanning biotechnology, digital sciences and technologies and ocean sciences. He referred to the continuing engagement through institutions and mechanisms such as CEFIPRA and Indo-French joint centres, saying that the cooperation has developed as a consistently progressing partnership across multiple science domains. Referring to the Blue Economy, Dr. Jitendra Singh spoke about the scope for cooperation in ocean sciences and India's Deep Ocean Mission, which seeks to explore the vast scientific and resource potential of the deep oceans.

The Path to Self-Reliance with NSFDC

Maharashtra Man Ankush Karande's Journey Towards Self-Reliance

New Delhi, Sept., 29 (PIB): For Mr. Ankush Karande of Kalwa, Thane, Maharashtra, the journey towards self-reliance began with an entrepreneurial dream and the determination to turn it into reality. With financial support under the NSFDC Term Loan Scheme, he was able to establish his own footwear business and build a stable source of livelihood. Mr. Karande came to know about the NSFDC scheme through a newspaper. Recognising the opportunity to start his own enterprise, he applied for financial assistance through the LIDCOM.

On 30 August 2024, he received a loan of Rs.3.75 lakh, which enabled him to set up a footwear shop at Court Naka, Thane. With hard work, dedication and sustained efforts, his business has grown steadily and is now running successfully. Today, Mr. Karande earns a gross monthly income of Rs.30,000-Rs.40,000 through his business. The financial assistance provided under the NSFDC Term Loan Scheme has helped him establish an independent livelihood and move towards greater economic self-reliance. Expressing satisfaction with the support received through the scheme, Mr. Karande credits the financial assistance with helping him realise his entrepreneurial aspirations and establish a stable source of income. The National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) continues to support aspiring entrepreneurs through financial assistance, enabling beneficiaries to pursue sustainable livelihoods and take steps towards self-reliance.

NITI Aayog launches Special Campaign 6.0 to institutionalise Swachhata and minimising pendency

New Delhi, Sept., 29 (PIB): With the vision of paying a heartfelt tribute to "A Clean India" to Mahatma Gandhi, the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) initiated a special campaign for disposal of pending matters in 2021. Building upon the success of the campaign, DARPG decided to continue the campaign in 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025 and further in 2026. Accordingly, Special Campaign 5.0 was undertaken from November 2025 to August 2026 with the aim of ensuring timely and effective disposal of public grievances, references from Members of Parliament, State Governments, Inter-Ministerial Consultations and Parliamentary Assurances by Ministries/Departments. Special Campaign 5.0 for disposal of pending matters and Swachhta was undertaken by NITI Aayog and its attached offices Development Monitoring & Evaluation Office (DMEO), Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) located in NITI Bhawan and its autonomous institution viz. National Institute of Labour Economics Research and Development (NILERD) situated in Narela, New Delhi. During the campaign, disposal of Public Grievances, Parliamentary Assurances and PMO References have gained momentum. NITI Aayog had successfully disposed of 4,105 Public Grievances, 127 PMO references, 34 Public Grievance Appeals and 05 Parliamentary Assurances. In addition to the above, approximately 90 sqft. of space was freed by way of disposal of files and optimisation of office space. A total revenue of Rs. 1,96,905/- was realised by way of scrap disposal. In line with the success of previous years, NITI Aayog is gearing up for Special Campaign 6.0 with the objective of institutionalising Swachhata and minimising pendency in the Secretariat as well as attached/subordinate offices. In this edition of the campaign, focus shall be on liquidating pendency in the MP's References, References from the State Governments, Inter-Ministerial References, Parliamentary Assurances, PMO references, Public Grievances and PG Appeals and weeding out of redundant files & documents. In addition, special attention shall be given to improving the overall cleanliness of the offices with a focus on space management and enhancing workplace experience of field offices.

Trai asses mobile network quality across South Delhi and nearby areas route under Delhi LSA during July, 2026

New Delhi, Sept., 29 (PIB): TRAI Assesses Mobile Network Quality Across Dwarka, Uttam Nagar, Janakpuri, Mahipalpur, Malviya Nagar, Saket, Lajpat Nagar, Naraina, Patel Nagar, Karol Bagh, Vande Mataram Marg, Mayur Vihar and Noida Sector 62 etc. under South Delhi and nearby areas. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has released findings of Independent Drive Test (IDT) conducted across South Delhi and nearby areas Route under Delhi LSA, during the month of Jul 2026, for information of general telecom consumers. The purpose of this drive test is to assess and verify real time quality of mobile network services (both voice & data) provided by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs). During the IDT, TRAI captures performance of TSPs for key Quality of Service (QoS) parameters like Coverage, Call Drop Rate (CDR), Call Setup Success Rate (CSSR), data Download (DL) and Upload (UL) throughput etc., which are then published to inform Consumers and encourage TSPs to improve their services. These IDTs have been designed to capture on ground mobile network performance of all TSPs across diverse usages environment like cities, hotspots, public transport hubs, etc. In this type of drive testing, live data and voice sessions are established using SIM cards from all TSPs over 2G, 3G, 4G and 5G networks. Multiple advanced test handsets are used, and the sessions are monitored and analyzed in real-time using advanced Software Systems. TRAI, through its appointed agency, conducted drive tests across City drive - 310.4 Km, Hotspot locations - 06, Walk Test - 5.5 Km and Inter Operator Calling at 01 location during 06th Jul 2026 to 10th Jul 2026 in Delhi LSA. These tests were conducted under the supervision of the TRAI Regional Office Delhi. The observations presented in drive test reports represent the performance of the TSPs on the area / route under test on the day / time of conducting the drive test. Drive test routes: The map provides overview of drive test routes indicating city drive, Inter-operator call test, hotspots and walk test as per the legends shown on the map.

YADAV REVIEWS DELHI AIR POLLUTION PLAN



New Delhi, Sept., 29 (PIB): Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change (EFCC) Shri Bhupender Yadav today chaired a high-level meeting with Chief Minister (NCT Delhi) Smt. Rekha Gupta to review the Delhi Government's Air Pollution Mitigation Action Plan and assess the progress of measures undertaken to prevent and control air pollution in the national capital. The meeting reviewed the measures already undertaken, progress achieved on the ground and additional interventions required before and during the winter season. Dignitaries present at the meeting included Delhi Minister for Environment, Forest and Wildlife Sardar Manjinder Singh Sirsa and Delhi Minister for Public Works Department Shri Pravesh Sahib Singh, besides senior officials from the MoEFCC and the Government of NCT, Delhi. Addressing the meeting, Union Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav called for organising Jan Bhagidari events at the 37 identified hotspots in Delhi by October 10, involving relevant stakeholders. Shri Yadav directed that actionable points be identified for each hotspot and their implementation closely monitored. Public representatives would be visiting these hotspots and reviewing the implementation of air pollution mitigation measures on the ground. These area-specific interventions, he said,

would contribute to a cumulative outcome in countering different sources of pollution. The Minister also stressed the need for coordinated action to address pollution from agricultural activities, including through a meeting with the Union Agriculture Minister and the Agriculture Ministers of the NCR States. Shri Yadav called for converting the discussions held with Delhi and other NCR authorities into concrete action points, with the action plans for NCR areas to be finalised before October 10. He emphasised the need for coordinated enforcement and action across different sectors and sources of air pollution. Shri Yadav called for greater awareness generation and ensuring citizen engagement to ensure that people understand the measures being taken and become active participants in improving air quality. The Union Minister stressed that the focus should remain on continuous improvement and giving people a tangible sense of relief and positive change. Chief Minister of Delhi Smt. Rekha Gupta said the Delhi Government has undertaken several measures to improve air quality and stressed the need to ensure that decisions taken and action points identified translate into effective implementation on the ground. The CM called for stronger coordination among agencies, particularly in enforcement and traffic

last mile connectivity

To promote public transport, a city-wide campaign for adoption of the Delhi Metro Sarthi App to be undertaken during October 1-10, including download camps with RWAs and public representatives. It was informed that last-mile connectivity is available at all 228 Metro stations, while Delhi's bus fleet has reached 6,840, including 5,088 e-buses.

Hotspot Action Plan

For air-quality and traffic hotspots, public representatives would undertake regular field visits with officials, RWAs, traders and traffic police. As on date, 42 hotspots have been rectified, with eight more targeted by October. In consultation with Delhi Traffic Police, one-way traffic and decongestion trials would be undertaken at hotspots. Further, citizens would be encouraged to flag encroachments, illegal parking and dumping points. It was informed by Delhi Government that 8 identified road stretches have been made signal-free and the remaining 7 are targeted for completion by October 2026.

Road Redevelopment and Dust Mitigation

Further directions were given to accelerate road redevelopment with 1,193 km already completed as on date and the balance targeted for completion by November 15. It was also stressed to ensure end-to-end paving of footpaths with focus on walkability and dust mitigation.

Complaints are to be closed within 72 hours as per the SOP.

Prevent Open Waste Burning

The meeting decided to intensify deep cleaning, effective waste management and zero-burning measures, including ward-level monitoring, stronger market waste collection and enforcement of Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026. Delhi Government informed that MRSMs have increased to 98 from 76 last year. A city-wide 'Zero Burning' pledge campaign would be carried out and dedicated ward- and district/subdivision-level monitoring teams would be deployed by October 15 to prevent waste burning. Further, heating booths would be established on a pilot basis as part of the winter action plan. Special focus would be given to unauthorized regularized colonies and JJ clusters.

Focus on Greening

The meeting laid stress on survival and greening of brown areas. The Delhi Government informed that it has already achieved 71 lakh plantations and greened 433 of 434 acres of identified brown areas.

Waste to Wealth

The meeting laid stress on making registrations on the Malba App as a mandatory condition for building plan sanction. The Delhi Government informed that for construction and demolition dust control, a ban would be in force on dust generating demolition activity and outdoor civil construction activity from

November 1 to January 31, with a complete ban on construction and demolition activities from December 10 to January 20.

Winter Protocol

Advance winter measures were decided during the meeting that include restrictions on polluting vehicles, doubled parking charges, staggered office timings and 50 per cent work-from-home arrangements. It was also decided to restrict entry of all vehicles registered outside Delhi and below BS-VI emission standards, except CNG and EV vehicles, with effect from 01.11.2026.

Parivartan Yojana and EV Outreach

The meeting decided to promote EV Policy 2026, increasing incentives for scrapping old vehicles and a mission-mode registration drive for Parivartan Scheme. It was further directed to run Jan Bhagidari Camps in October-November to expedite the drive.

Mitigating Industrial Pollution

Decision was taken to strengthen industrial enforcement, operationalise an AI-enabled Command and Control Centre, increase monitoring stations from 47 to 60, and deploy 334 enforcement teams to enforce strict action against non-conforming polluting industries. Citizen participation, grievance redressal, daily AQI bulletins and coordinated NCR-level airshed action will be further strengthened. The meeting was attended by the Secretary (MoEFCC) Shri Tanmay Kumar; Chairman, Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), Shri Rajesh Verma, senior officers from MoEFCC and Government of NCT Delhi. Also present in the meeting were senior officers from CPCB, Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), MCD, NDMC, DDA, Delhi Transport Department, Delhi Metro, Delhi Police and PWD.

Public Transport First-

Chandoo Mondeti To Direct Rana & Akshay With Bhansali's Story!

Director Chandoo Mondeti gave Naga Chaitanya his career's biggest hit with Thandel and earned the praise of many. He has now landed one of the biggest opportunities of his career as he is all set to make his Hindi debut as a director. Chandoo will direct a new mythological drama reportedly titled Mahakaal, with Rana Daggubati and Akshay Kumar playing the lead roles. Interestingly, the film will have story and production by the legendary Sanjay Leela Bhansali. Going into details, Bhansali was highly impressed with Chandoo Mondeti's work in Karthikeya 2 and personally approached him for the project. With Bhansali already occupied with Love & War, he entrusted the directorial responsibilities to Chandoo. We have come to know that most of the film's shoot will take place in Varanasi. While the project will reportedly have a strong mythological backdrop, sources say it is not centered on any specific deity and will be made on a massive scale. Yet another



interesting aspect is that the original script has undergone several changes after Chandoo came on board. The director is said to have suggested a few

ideas to suit the scale and vision of the film. Though an official announcement is still awaited, the combination of Chandoo Mondeti, Sanjay

Bhansali, Rana Daggubati, and Akshay Kumar has already generated significant curiosity among movie lovers. Stay tuned for more.

Naga Chaitanya Picks Musical Love Story For His 25th Film?

Post the success of Thandel, Naga Chaitanya is giving finishing touches to his latest film, Vrushakarma, being directed by Karthik Varma Dandu. On the other hand, he has now signed his landmark 25th film, and the project has already generated curiosity among fans.

The yet-to-be-titled movie will be jointly produced by Geetha Arts, Annapurna Studios, and producer Bunny Vas. The combination itself has created positive buzz, as all three banners are known for backing quality entertainers.

Clax, who made his directorial debut with the successful Bedurulanka 2012, will helm this

project. Sathvika Veeravalli has been finalized as the female lead in this film, which is a musical love story that will focus on emotions, romance, and memorable music. According to sources, the team is also preparing a special glimpse that will be released soon to officially announce the project and create excitement around the film. The regular shoot is scheduled to commence in December 2026. With a promising director, a fresh lead pair, and strong production support, the project is shaping up to be one of the most-awaited Telugu films in recent times. Stay tuned for more updates.



Dada: Nandamuri Balakrishna to lose weight before shoot resumption

Nandamuri Balakrishna is gearing up to resume shooting for his ongoing project, "Dada". The actor recently underwent knee surgery after sustaining an injury during the film's shoot. Following the surgery, Balakrishna had to take bed rest as part of his recovery. During this period, he has reportedly gained some weight. His doctors and physiotherapist have so far been focused on his recovery and helping him return to his normal routine. He is now expected to work on getting back in shape before resuming the shoot. Recent pictures of Balakrishna have led to concern among some fans. However, industry sources say the actor has already started following a special diet as part of his fitness routine. Getting back to his earlier shape will take some time. There is also a possibility that the shooting schedule could be affected if Balakrishna needs more time before he can resume work. "Dada" is directed by Gopichand Malineni and marks his second collaboration with Balakrishna after the successful "Veera Simha Reddy". Kajal Aggarwal plays the female lead. The makers have announced December 24, 2026 as the release date. Whether the team can complete the shooting as planned and meet the release date remains to be seen.



Bhagyashri Borse Steals The Show With Killer Look



Bhagyashri Borse is winning hearts with her latest photoshoot, and this one is pure charm with a hot twist. The actress picked a crisp white halter-neck mini dress with a deep plunging neckline and covered buttons running down the front. The tailored, waistcoat-style fit hugs her silhouette, while a thigh-high slit adds a sultry edge to the minimal look. Accessories stay understated, a delicate bracelet, small stud earrings and pointed white slingback heels. Her hair is in a messy ponytail with loose strands, paired with dewy skin, peachy blush and glossy pink lips. Against vintage sage-green shutter doors, the white pops, and her playful crossed-leg pose adds candid, breezy charm. After Lenin's success, Bhagyashri has the Tamil film Seyon and the Malayalam project Operation Ganga lined up next.

No title fixed yet, says Trivikram about his next with NTR

NTR and Trivikram are set to team up once again. Their new film was recently announced with a poster featuring a trishul against the backdrop of a burning, destroyed world, along with the line, "One spear, one purpose, one divine reckoning." The film is being reported as a mythological drama based on Lord Kartikeya, also known as Lord Murugan, and will see NTR in a completely new genre. While promoting "Aadarsha Kutumbam" in a special interview with anchor Suma Kanakala, Trivikram revealed that the complete script for his next film with NTR is ready. However, he clarified that the team has not yet finalised a title for the project.

"God of War" has been widely speculated as the title for the film for quite



some time. However, Trivikram's latest comments indicate that no title has been officially locked yet. The director also hinted that the film's pre-production work will begin soon. The project will be produced by Haarika & Hassine Creations in association with NTR Arts.