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Amit Shah's Rally Done, BJP Starts Ground Check For Punjab Polls



New Delhi: Amit Shah's Jalandhar rally may have brought the BJP's high-decibel anti-drug campaign to a close, but the party has immediately moved into election mode. A day after the rally, Punjab BJP's top organisational leadership assembled in Panchkula to take stock of the ground response, gather feedback

from the statewide campaign and begin shaping its strategy for the 2027 assembly polls. The meeting at Hotel Red Bishop in Panchkula's Sector 1 is being chaired by BJP national general secretary BL Santosh and attended by senior Punjab BJP leaders and organisational functionaries. The focus is on

the party's organisational preparedness, strengthening the cadre network and working out the next phase of its electoral strategy. The timing makes the meeting particularly significant. The BJP's Nasha Mukht Punjab Yatra travelled across all 117 assembly constituencies, putting the drug issue at the centre of its outreach and giving the party an opportunity to interact with workers and voters on the ground. Shah's Jalandhar rally then turned that campaign into a major political pitch against the AAP government. The Panchkula brainstorming is expected to examine constituency-level feedback,

local issues, organisational gaps and the response to the party's anti-drug narrative. The exercise also comes at a point when the BJP is looking to expand its footprint beyond the pockets where its traditional organisational presence has been stronger. In effect, the BJP is moving from yatra to feedback, and from feedback to poll strategy. The immediate focus is no longer just on taking the campaign to the people, but on deciding how the political momentum generated by the statewide mobilisation is to be carried into the larger 2027 electoral battle.

Ram Temple Staff To Undergo 100% Police Verification, Character Checks

Ayodhya: The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust has decided to conduct 100 per cent verification of all staff working at the Ram temple in Ayodhya, including police verification, character certificates and detailed family information, as part of its stepped-up security measures, sources said on Thursday. The Trust has sought comprehensive details of employees, including information about their family members and relatives. Police verification and character certificates issued by the police will also be mandatory. The move comes amid tighter security and administrative measures being implemented after a theft of

offerings at the temple came to light in June this year. Eight people were arrested in the case. All the accused are currently lodged in jail, and a 70,000-page chargesheet was filed in the case last week. The staff verification drive is being undertaken under the leadership of the temple's newly appointed chief executive officer, retired Air Marshal Jitendra Mishra, who assumed charge last month. The temple administration has also undergone a major restructuring, with former general secretary Champat Rai and Trust members Anil Mishra and Gopal Rao being relieved of their responsibilities. Trust member Dinendra Das on Thursday said the



decisions taken by the Trust would be acceptable to all those associated with the temple. "Whatever decision the Trust takes will be accepted by everyone. The worship rituals are proceeding smoothly, donations are being received properly

and a large number of devotees are visiting the temple for darshan and aarti," Das told PTI Videos. The Trust has also stepped up monitoring of staff and focused on improving facilities for devotees as part of the broader overhaul of temple administration.

Adhir Chowdhury's 'Congress Offer' To Mamata Banerjee With 'Baggage' Rider

Kolkata / New Delhi The Congress leader's offer comes amid a rebellion-induced existential crisis that Mamata Banerjee and what remains of her party have been negotiating. In 2024, the undivided Trinamool Congress blamed Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury for derailing seat-sharing talks with the

Congress for the Lok Sabha polls. The acrimony stemmed from the incessant verbal salvos he had unleashed on Mamata Banerjee. Over two years later, and after the Trinamool's three-way split, the politician has decided to bury the hatchet. "Forget the old days," he remarked on Thursday, inviting the former

chief minister not only to join his party but also to lead its Bengal unit. "I advise Mamata Banerjee...and I also ask our high command... Why doesn't Mamata Banerjee join the Congress? Why doesn't she join the Congress with all the remaining MPs and MLAs of her party?" he said at a press conference. The Congress

leader's offer comes amid a rebellion-induced existential crisis that Mamata Banerjee and what remains of her party have been negotiating. After the Trinamool Congress lost the Bengal assembly elections in May, a group of 60 MPs broke away and declared that it was the real Trinamool.

'Was Conscious, Communicating': flydubai Passenger Recalls Saving Indian Pilot

New Delh / Abu Dhabi: Zvika Manes, who is the CEO of Bank Leumi's underwriting company, said he and others managed to restrain the co-pilot using cables from the multimedia headphones handed out

during the flight. He was travelling in business class in the first row with his wife and their six-year-old daughter, placing them close to the cockpit. His wife had accompanied their daughter to the toilet when

she heard what sounded like a violent struggle inside the cockpit. "My wife heard shouting from the cockpit, fighting, noises", he said. A while later, the aircraft began making a dramatic descent, he recalled. He

said that the Indian pilot, Captain Smit Machchhar, eventually managed to open the cockpit door despite being seriously injured. That gave the passengers and crew a chance to intervene.

Serving the Poor by Changing Government Policies Is My Responsibility: CM

From Our Staff Reporter Bapatla District, October 1: Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu said that pensions were being distributed for the 28th time since the coalition government came to power. On Thursday, the Chief Minister participated in the "Serving the Poor" programme and distributed pensions to beneficiaries. Speaking at a public meeting organised later, he said, "I could also press the button, but I came because a Chief Minister should be among the people." He said that, in his view, a Chief Minister means a common man. He stated that it was his responsibility to change government policies and serve the poor. He said that he was reaching out to the people four times every month.



tion was now gradually improving. He stated that when Andhra Pradesh's financial situation was on a ventilator, the people voted and brought the coalition to power. He said that Rs.76,000 crore had so far

been provided to people through pensions. Chief Minister Chandrababu said that measures had been taken to ensure that the elderly, persons with disabilities and widows did not face difficulties.

From Our Staff Reporter Vijayawada, October 1: Vijayawada East MLA Gadde Rammohan participated in the distribution of pensions to eligible beneficiaries in the East constituency. Addressing the people, he said that whenever the government undertakes the distribution of house-site pattas to the poor, Vijayawada constituency receives the highest number of allocations. He said that the NTR government had sanctioned 10,000 house-site pattas for Vijayawada at the time, and later Chandrababu had taken steps to ensure that poor people could own land by selling plots at nominal rates of Rs.1 to Rs.1.50 per square yard. He said that

the Nara Chandrababu-Pawan Kalyan coalition government had now sanctioned 26,000 pattas for Vijayawada. "Today, the area known as Relli Colony was earlier called Nalla Cheruvu. We had planned to issue pattas for these lands during 2014-19, but the election code came into force in the meantime. The subsequent government did not pay any attention to the matter. With the coalition government coming back to power, these lands have finally received a resolution. Today, these lands are worth Rs.1.5 crore, Rs.1.5 lakh, Rs.1.75 lakh and Rs.2 lakh. By granting pattas for these lands, the government has made poor people lakhpatis,"



MLA Rammohan said. People Should Stand by the Government: MLA Anand Babu Bapatla MLA Nakka Anand Babu distributed new pensions to elderly people, persons with disabilities and widows at Jampani in Vemuru mandal of the district. Speaking later, he recalled that the TDP government was the one that increased pensions from Rs.3,000 to Rs.4,000. He

said that the government was taking forward both welfare and development and appealed to people to support the government in the local body elections. **Previous Government Neglected Villages: MLA Praveen** In Pedakurapadu of Palnadu district, MLA Bhashyam Praveen distributed pensions to eligible beneficiaries. He also laid

the foundation stone for road construction works worth ?10 crore under the VB JeeRAM Ji scheme in the Pedakurapadu constituency. Speaking later, he said that villages had been neglected under the previous government. MLA Praveen said that the coalition government was working for the development of villages and the provision of basic infrastructure.

Boy Ramayya Traced and Safely Reunited with Parents: Minister Lokesh

From Our Staff Reporter Nellore District: The whereabouts of Ramayya, the boy whose video had gone viral on social media, have finally been traced. With the coordinated efforts of the Andhra Pradesh government machinery, the boy was safely located and reunited with his parents. AP Minister for IT and Education Nara Lokesh announced this on X. Minister Nara Lokesh said he was happy to inform that Ramayya had been found. He stated that everyone's prayers had been answered and that the child had been safely brought back home. He recalled that people had been posting anxiously on social media



since yesterday about Ramayya, a young shepherd boy. He said that he was also deeply disturbed after watching the child's video. Following this, all government departments worked in coordination under the leadership of the Nellore District Collector and safely reunited Ramayya with his parents,

the Minister said. The Minister said that the child would be admitted to a residential school and that better medical treatment would be provided to his father. He also announced that self-employment opportunities would be provided to the boy's mother. He assured that a house would also be sanctioned

for the family. Minister Lokesh thanked everyone who brought Ramayya's situation to his attention. He also expressed his gratitude to Nellore Collector Himanshu Shukla and the officials and staff of various departments for responding swiftly, tracing the boy and safely bringing him back to his parents.

'Other Leaders Should Learn from Him'



New Delhi / Amaravati, October 1: Senior journalist Rajdeep Sardesai showered praise on Andhra Pradesh Minister and TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh. Recently, Sardesai conducted an interview with Lokesh, during which they discussed the development of Andhra Pradesh, national issues and politics. On the occasion, Sardesai praised the manner in which Lokesh

responded to his questions. The senior journalist said that it is always easier to interview leaders who do not ask for questions in advance. He remarked that all leaders used to be like this in the past, but that it has now become an exception. He made an interesting comment that other leaders should learn from Lokesh. Senior journalist Rajdeep Sardesai praised

: Rajdeep Sardesai Praises Nara Lokesh

the AP Minister for answering his tough questions directly without any script or prior preparation. Meanwhile, Minister Nara Lokesh said that he had answered Rajdeep Sardesai's questions without any advance script. During the interaction, the two discussed several issues related to the development of Andhra Pradesh, national affairs and politics.

EDITORIAL

EC's Damage-Control Measures

It has come to light that Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi raised 14 objections to decisions taken by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, creating a major controversy. With the Congress, the Janata Party and opposition parties launching protests and a negative public perception developing about the Election Commission, the poll panel has initiated measures to prevent further damage to its reputation. In this regard, the Election Commission issued a press release on Saturday. The statement partly acknowledged the complaints raised by the commissioners. It said that the agenda would henceforth be circulated before meetings and that minutes detailing the decisions would be provided after meetings. It also indirectly acknowledged shortcomings in the SIR process. The Election Commission directed Electoral Registration Officers to undertake a special exercise to restore the names of those whose names had been deleted from the electoral rolls. However, it is noteworthy that there is still no answer to Election Commissioner Sukhbir Singh Sandhu's question: "Who authorised the 16.1 lakh appeals seeking deletion of voters added by judicial officers in West Bengal?" The Election Commission headed by Gyanesh Kumar has deleted more than 13 crore names from draft electoral rolls through the SIR process. Criticism has emerged that the responsibility of the government to enrol eligible voters is being shifted onto the voters themselves. In other words, names were first deleted and voters were subsequently required to establish their eligibility. There have also been allegations that voters are being subjected to stringent and burdensome conditions to get their names restored to the electoral rolls. Since the Supreme Court took months to decide whether the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls was constitutional, several shortcomings emerged. By the time the court delivered its judgment on May 27, the SIR process had already begun in Bihar, West Bengal and other states in the second phase, thereby altering the ground situation. Criticism has arisen that the Supreme Court judgment appeared to recall the judiciary's deference to the government in the ADM Jabalpur case. The court examined how the SIR should operate in principle rather than how it was actually implemented.

A provision meant for revision of electoral rolls only in extraordinary and specific circumstances was interpreted as permitting large-scale revision across an entire state. Although the court said that people already included in electoral rolls did not need to prove their eligibility, they were nevertheless required to establish their eligibility again through the SIR process. Critics also contend that the present Supreme Court judgment overlooked a 1995 judgment which had held that there should be individual grounds for deleting a person's name from the electoral rolls. In West Bengal, more than 90 per cent of the voters whose appeals were decided by the tribunal were restored to the electoral rolls after they had been deleted a few months after the Assembly elections.

Similarly, in one-third of the constituencies in Delhi, the number of voters in the draft electoral rolls was lower than the number of people who had actually voted in 2025. The draft electoral roll released in Delhi on August 31 contained 97.5 lakh voters. Notices were issued to 31.6 lakh of them on two grounds. One was the inability to match their voter details with the relevant old records, and the second was logical discrepancies, meaning inconsistencies in certain voter details.

This led to concerns that 31.6 lakh voters might have to personally visit the offices of Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs). However, according to the details now released by the Election Commission, Booth Level Officers (BLOs) will visit voters at their homes and verify their details. Personal appearance for an inquiry will be required only in urgent and exceptional cases. In other words, instead of citizens having to face difficulties and approach officials, the institution itself will reach out to citizens. However, there is concern over how only 14,000 Booth Level Officers will be able to carry out this task. The Election Commission says that adequate help desks and special camps will be established to register details of people living in shelters at night, labourers, the poor, homeless persons and others. It remains to be seen how this will be implemented. Another important issue concerning voters is Form 6. Every adult seeking fresh enrolment in the electoral rolls has to fill out this form. In the online Form 6, new voters are required to declare whether their parents or grandparents were included in the electoral roll relating to the previous SIR. However, new voters can register themselves through Form 6 even without making such a declaration. There is an argument that such a requirement should not be imposed under the SIR process. The press note issued by the Election Commission on Saturday does not appear to make any major changes. The Election Commission should be reconstituted through a selection committee in which the government cannot exercise dominance.

Are Saudi Arabia And UAE Reuniting Again After 10 Years?

It certainly seems so. On Tuesday, the UAE's Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Presidential Court, Mansour bin Zayed, met Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. He was accompanied by a high-level delegation, which included Prince Khalid bin Salman, the Saudi Minister of Defence, Ali Al Shamsi, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for National Security, Ali Al Neyadi, Chairman of the National Emergency, Crisis and Disaster Management Authority and others. The UAE's main national daily, The National, described the meeting thus: "The visit reflects the deep and enduring partnership between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, which have maintained close political, economic and security co-operation. High-level exchanges between the two countries are a regular feature of Gulf diplomacy, with senior officials frequently travelling between the two capitals to co-ordinate positions on matters of shared concern."

It would seem as if the two have been best-friends-forever; there was no allusion to the strain that the bilateral relationship had come under due to divergent views on a range of issues, including the one plaguing the Saudis currently the most: Yemen. Both Saudi Arabia and the UAE had once been partners in Yemen as they intervened to prop up the government of President Abdur Hadi Mansour against the Iran-backed Houthis. Over the years, however, both Gulf powers came to back different factions in Yemen, with the Sau-

dis backing the Yemen government, and the UAE supporting the Southern Transitional Council (STC). Once the UAE felt that the southern regions, including the port of Hodeidah, were secure, it signalled its withdrawal from the war, while the Saudis wanted to secure all of Yemen from the Houthis. Differences had piled up on other subjects too - on Sudan, on Iran, and even on the economic front, with their competing visions for future prosperity, with the UAE taking the big bold step of exiting from the Saudi-led Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Another factor has been regarding the normalisation of ties with Israel. While the UAE became the first Israeli partner under the Abraham Accords, the Saudis held back. Now, under the same Houthis threat, Saudi Arabia preferred to turn to Pakistan and not long ago rival Turkey, but not to Israel.

Is that about to change now?

Interestingly, bin Zayed's Saudi visit came almost on the heels of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Abu Dhabi on Sunday, September 27. While officially it was to discuss bilateral ties, Israeli media announced that officials from other Arab states, including Saudi Arabia were also present at the meeting, which had reportedly also discussed regional escalation and creating a regional defence architecture against "shared threats", with a specific focus on Iran and the Houthis. Indeed, the Kingdom has seen unprecedented attacks earlier by Iran, which targeted American bases on its ter-



ritory, and then by Iran-backed Iraqi militias, and now the Yemeni Ansarallah, also majorly backed by Iran. While Iran has inflicted major economic costs on Gulf countries, including on Saudi Arabia, not only through military action but also by closing the Strait of Hormuz, the Houthis have been targeting both Saudi shipping as well as sensitive and strategic infrastructure such as the Petroline oil pipeline. The Saudis are back to facing the same nightmare

they had suffered just a decade ago in Yemen, from which they had extricated themselves in 2022 with great difficulty. Now they are back, threatening not just the Kingdom but others, too. Earlier this year, the Saudis established a multinational maritime defence alliance to "enhance maritime security, protect shared interests in international sea lanes, and prevent their exploitation as a tool of political or economic pressure", according to Crown

Prince Mohammed bin Salman. That did not deter the Houthis. Riyadh then went on to sign the Mecca Pact with Pakistan and Turkey, which was slated to be a major deterrent and was meant to promote regional security and stability. The Houthis soon laid bare the reality of that deterrence. The Saudis next turned to the US, which, while agreeing to intelligence-sharing and coordination, has ruled out any military intervention against the Houthis.

'Lies, Damned Lies, Statistics': On The Controversy Around India's GDP Growth Figures

I am not an economist, so it was with some bemusement that I watched the debate surrounding India's economic growth figures spilling into the public square. When the government announced a headline-grabbing 7.8% real GDP growth rate for the first quarter (Q1) of 2026, the figure was met not with universal celebration, but with deep suspicion among independent economists, global financial institutions, and everyday citizens. It's clear that the debate is less about a single figure than about a decade-long erosion of trust in official statistics, and the stark mismatch between high-growth figures and the lived economic realities of ordinary Indians.

While the Q1 2026 data provided the spark, the underlying kindling has been dry for nearly ten years. Scepticism regarding India's official growth metrics is not a recent phenomenon. It can be traced back at least to the aftermath of the 2016 demonetisation policy and the subsequent rollout of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), then to the controversy over the Covid fatality numbers, the resignation of senior government statisticians, and now the eruption over GDP growth.

Over the past decade, eminent independent thinkers, including two who have worked with the BJP government, former Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian and former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan, have repeatedly raised red flags regarding how output is measured. Global bodies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have similarly downgraded the credibility quotient of Indian data. This trust deficit was further deepened in 2024 when the government abruptly dissolved

its advisory body of statisticians and academics, leaving official releases without the crucial stamp of independent oversight.

Changing Benchmarks

At the core of the current controversy lies a major recalculation: the transition from an older benchmark data series (base year 2011-12) to a new series (base year 2022-23). On the surface, shifting to a more recent base year is standard statistical practice designed to capture structural changes in an evolving economy. However, critics say that the manner in which this transition was executed created a statistical optical illusion. To calculate growth percentages, statisticians compare current economic output against the output of the same period in the previous year. In releasing the Q1 2026 numbers, the government retroactively slashed its estimate for the previous year's baseline (2024-25 GDP) by roughly ?12.7 trillion.

By shrinking the previous year's denominator, the jump to this year's numerator looks artificially large. Using the reduced baseline, nominal growth appeared to be an impressive 10.3%, yielding a real GDP growth figure of 7.8%. Had the baseline not been retroactively revised downward, the critics argue that nominal growth for Q1 2026 would have stood at a modest 2.6%. However, official statistics apply the revised baseline across both periods to maintain methodology consistency, resulting in a nominal growth rate of 10.3% and a real GDP growth figure of 7.8%. Whether viewed as a necessary statistical re-benchmarking or an advantageous base effect, the downward revision of the prior year's denominator significantly aided the headline

growth numbers.

To measure real economic growth, economists must subtract inflation using a tool called the GDP deflator (to convert nominal growth into real, inflation-adjusted growth). Calculating an accurate deflator requires a Producer Price Index (PPI), which measures the wholesale prices manufacturers actually charge and pay for inputs. India, however, has lacked a functional PPI for two decades. When adjusted using the official GDP deflator, actual economic expansion would have been close to zero. But it's actually worse: Without robust input and output price data, the government's estimated GDP deflator of 2.5% appears implausibly low, especially when wholesale inflation has hovered significantly higher. A deflator that underestimates inflation naturally overstates real economic growth. So, by repeatedly revising past figures downward, current performance automatically appears stronger, a pattern that allows the government to project a narrative of rapid growth while quietly erasing past overestimations.

Whenever official statistics began to murmur unpleasant truths, the shutters were promptly pulled down. The 2017-18 Labour Survey, which laid bare a devastating 45-year peak in national unemployment, was quietly kept under lock and key until the 2019 general election had comfortably passed. Soon after, the 2017 Consumer Expenditure Survey, which revealed the sobering reality of declining real consumption, was suppressed altogether, erased from public view rather than acknowledged. Even the National Crime Records Bureau's stark tales of farmer suicides found themselves subject to deliber-

ate delays and administrative procrastination, ensuring that numbers capable of disturbing the official narrative were kept safely out of sight.

Missing The Other Story

Beyond the base-year mathematics, technical flaws in how data is collected systematically inflate India's economic performance. The informal economy, comprising unregistered businesses (from chaiwallahs to mochis), small kirana shops, and cash-reliant micro-enterprises, accounts for roughly 45% of India's overall economy. Because tracking millions of small enterprises in real time is difficult, government statisticians make the flawed assumption that the informal sector grows at the exact same rate as large, publicly listed formal corporations. Disruptions such as demonetisation, the initial GST implementation, and COVID-19 lockdowns hit informal, cash-dependent businesses much harder than well-capitalised corporations. By using formal corporate growth as a proxy for the entire economy, official statistics mask the deep, ongoing distress in the informal sector.

The strongest argument for the likes of me (and again I must stress I am not an economist, let alone a statistician) comes from real-world economic indicators. If the economy is truly growing at nearly 8% a year, key economic engines should be humming. Instead, they show clear signs of stagnation. Educated youth face severe structural unemployment. The gap between economic growth and job creation has fuelled widespread public frustration, visible in the youth-led demonstrations we have witnessed across major urban centres. Private Investment is still sluggish; domestic industrialists remain hesitant to com-

mit fresh capital to new factories or expansion, signalling a lack of confidence in consumer demand. And much-vaunted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow has not matched the high headline growth numbers, reflecting caution among global investors regarding data clarity and demand-sustainability before they will commit long-term foreign capital.

India is currently in the midst of a historic "demographic dividend" - a multi-decade window where the working-age population significantly outnumbers dependents. Historically, emerging economies have leveraged this window to transform into high-income nations. However, India's performance during this crucial window compares unfavourably with its Asian peers during their respective growth surges. In their peak demographic windows, China, Japan, and South Korea all grew by 8.7 to 9.4% consistently, while India's has averaged growth rate of 5.4% over recent years. We risk growing old before we grow rich, squandering a once-in-a-generation demographic advantage. Rebuilding credibility requires adhering to established international statistical standards. When transitioning between economic base series, standard practice dictates that statistical agencies run both the old and new methodologies side-by-side in parallel for a transition period. Publishing both datasets simultaneously allows independent researchers, market analysts, and the public to verify calculations, understand methodology changes, and trust the final numbers. For India's economic leadership, restoring complete transparency in national accounting is not merely a technical task; it is an urgent prerequisite for sound policymaking and public trust.

NTR Bharosa Pensions Distributed on October 1

Rampachodavaram, Pen Power, October 1: Polavaram District Collector K. Dinesh Kumar said arrangements were made to ensure timely distribution of NTR Bharosa social security pensions to beneficiaries on the first of every month. On Thursday, he personally visited beneficiaries' homes in Pedda Gedda village of Rampachodavaram mandal and distributed pensions. He also enquired about the timely receipt of pensions and ration rice. The Collector warned that departmental action would be taken against officials found negligent in pension distribution. Tahsildar C.H. Balaji, DRDA PD Dr. Dasari Ratnakar Rao, MPDO Prasad and other officials were present.



SIR Voter Revision Schedule Revised

Rampachodavaram, Pen Power, October 1: Polavaram District Election Officer and Collector K. Dinesh Kumar said the Election Commission of India has revised the schedule for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Andhra Pradesh. The process of receiving and disposing of claims and objections will continue till October 10, while the final electoral roll will be published on October 16, 2026. The revised schedule has been communicated to officials and political parties, with wide publicity being given across the district.



Amid Ram Temple Donation Row: RSS Intensifies Outreach To Ayodhya's Seers Ahead Of 2027 Polls



Ayodhya: The controversy over alleged theft of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya has prompted increased outreach by the RSS and other Sangh Parivar organisations to the city's seers ahead of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections. RSS functionaries have stepped up visits to Ayodhya and meetings with sadhus and saints, according to sources. The outreach is aimed at understanding concerns within the saint community and maintaining dialogue with a section of seers that has become critical of the temple management following the donation controversy. The issue has assumed greater significance for the Sangh Parivar because the Ram temple has been central to the BJP's political campaign in Ayodhya. The controversy has also triggered meetings among local saints, with some publicly raising questions over the functioning of the temple trust.

The Special Investigation Team probing alleged irregularities in the handling of temple donations has identified 105 instances of unauthorised removal of cash on CCTV, according to its status report submitted to the Supreme Court. The SIT subsequently filed a chargesheet against eight accused. Former trust general secretary Champat Rai and former trustee Anil Mishra have been named as witnesses in the chargesheet. Against this backdrop, RSS functionaries have been visiting saints at their respective places rather than limiting the interaction to its traditional network of ideological supporters.

Recently, RSS all-India intellectual chief Swant Ranjan visited Ayodhya along with eastern Uttar Pradesh regional pracharak Anil Kumar and Awadh province pracharak Kaushal Kishore. The functionaries met several saints during their visit, according to sources. The meetings

have been described as informal. However, their timing has drawn attention within the organisation as the donation controversy continues to generate questions among sections of the saint community. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad, which has been closely associated with the Ram temple movement, is also maintaining contact with saints in Ayodhya.

The organisation is preparing for a major gathering of saints around Pratishtha Dwadashi, the anniversary of the Ram temple consecration. The proposed gathering is expected to provide a platform for interaction with seers on issues related to the temple and the wider Ram temple movement. According to sources, discussions are also underway on involving Ayodhya's saints in programmes in different parts of Uttar Pradesh ahead of the Assembly elections. The idea is to use their outreach to explain the Sangh Parivar's position on issues surrounding the Ram temple

and counter concerns arising from the donation controversy. The increased attention on Ayodhya also comes against the backdrop of the BJP's defeat in the Faizabad Lok Sabha constituency in the 2024 general election. The result, which came only months after the Ram temple consecration, led the RSS and BJP to closely examine the political situation in Ayodhya.

The donation controversy has added another layer to those concerns. The resignation of Champat Rai and Anil Mishra from the temple trust was followed by an organisational overhaul, including the appointment of an interim general secretary and plans to create a chief executive post. Discontent among sections of Ayodhya's saints had also surfaced during the previous Assembly election. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had spent considerable time in Ayodhya in the run-up to polling, meeting seers and religious leaders. The current controversy has again brought the relationship between the temple management and the local saint community into focus. For the Sangh Parivar, the challenge is no longer confined to the investigation into alleged donation irregularities. The continuing questions around temple administration and the response of sections of the saint community have made maintaining dialogue with Ayodhya's religious leadership an important issue ahead of the 2027 Assembly election.

'Shivaji Park Written Beneath Mahatma Gandhi's Feet': Nitesh Rane Lashes Out At CJP Over Social Media Post Of Mumbai Protest

Mumbai: Amid the row over the Cockroach Janata Party's (CJP) proposed protest in Mumbai, Maharashtra minister Nitesh Rane targeted the outfit over an alleged social media post, questioning the imagery used in connection with Mahatma Gandhi, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Shivaji



Park. Speaking to reporters, Rane alleged that one image showed a cockroach beneath Chhatrapati Shivaji

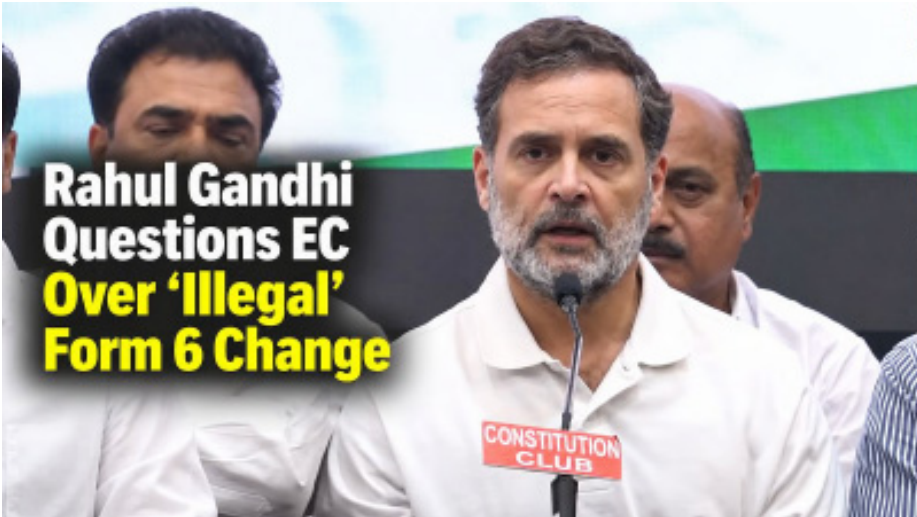
Maharaj, while another showed Mahatma Gandhi wearing a sandal and just below that "Shivaji Park" has been written. "On one side, a cockroach is shown beneath Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. On the other, in a tweet about a sandal, a picture of Mahatma Gandhi is shown, with 'Shivaji Park' written

beneath his feet," Rane said. Rane further stressed on the alleged intention of the CJP behind the post, arguing that the name of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was being depicted inappropriately. The minister's remarks come amid heightened political attention surrounding the outfit's proposed demonstration in Mumbai.

Rahul Gandhi Questions ECI Over Form 6 Change, Asks Who Ordered TCS To Alter Voter Registration Form

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, questioned the Election Commission of India (ECI) over what he described as an "illegal" change to the online Form 6 used for fresh voter registration, asking who in the poll body ordered Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) to make the change. Gandhi also asked who at TCS approved the change and whether the company had faced pressure to implement it. His questions came amid a wider Opposition campaign over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and alleged electoral irregularities. In a post on X, Gandhi said, "The online Form 6 was changed illegally, as the EC's own Commissioners have recorded. Who at the ECI ordered Tata Consultancy Services to make that change?" "Who at TCS signed off on it? And were they pressured into doing it?" he added.

Congress general secretary-in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh, while sharing Gandhi's post, alleged that the changes to Form 6 were introduced by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar in mid-July 2026 with the aim of removing Gen Z voters from the electoral roll. Ramesh further claimed that the move was orchestrated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. These are allegations



by the Congress, and the information provided does not include responses from the Prime Minister, the Home Minister or TCS to these claims. The remarks came a day after the Opposition INDIA bloc announced joint "save democracy" marches in all districts and five major rallies. The grouping has demanded that future elections be conducted using ballot papers and has appealed to the Supreme Court to expedite cases concerning SIR and alleged electoral "malpractices". At a meeting of leaders from 19 political parties that lasted more than three-and-a-half hours, the Opposition decided that its MPs would march to the Election Commission of India headquarters on October 6, 2026, PTI reports. The leaders also decided to meet the President to highlight issues concerning alleged irregulari-

ties in the revision of voter lists. The Opposition grouping discussed its demand for the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and said it would continue pressing for his removal. The political confrontation comes against the backdrop of a report by The Indian Express that Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi had recorded objections at least 14 times over the previous 10 months to decisions and orders concerning the SIR. According to the report, the two Commissioners said those decisions were issued without their knowledge or recommendation. The reported objections raise questions about the extent of internal agreement over decisions concerning the SIR, while the Opposition's allegations have intensified political scrutiny of the voter re-

vision exercise. At the same time, objections within an institution do not by themselves establish that its decisions were unlawful. The Election Commission has maintained that differences in views and observations are a normal part of deliberations in any institution. Responding to questions arising from the Commissioners' objections, the poll body has asserted that all its orders have full legal sanction and follow established statutory procedures. The dispute now centres not only on the changes made to Form 6 but also on how decisions relating to the electoral roll revision were taken. With the INDIA bloc planning marches and rallies and the Election Commission defending the legality of its actions, the issue is set to remain at the centre of the Opposition's campaign over the electoral process.

First Visuals Of Heavily Bandaged Capt. Smit Machchhar Emerge After Flydubai Flight FZ1073 Cockpit Attack

Abu Dhabi: The first visuals of Flydubai Captain Smit Machchhar after the mid-air cockpit attack have emerged, showing the Indian pilot with his chest and abdomen heavily bandaged. Machchhar can be seen outside the aircraft with extensive bandages covering his injuries, appearing extremely weak after losing a significant amount of blood while fighting off his co-pilot during the incident. Doctors treating the pilot reportedly said they initially did not think he would survive, given the amount of blood he had lost. According to his LinkedIn profile, Machchhar is an airline captain with more than 13 years of commercial flying experience, primarily flying Boeing 737 aircraft. He is currently a Direct Entry Captain at flydubai, where he has been flying since June 2022. His profile lists nearly 9,750 hours of flying experience, including time on the Boeing 737-800 and Boeing 737 MAX. Before joining flydubai, Machchhar spent more than 11 years with SpiceJet in India. He joined SpiceJet

in June 2011 and went on to serve as a Senior Commander and Line Training Captain. During his time with the airline, he accumulated more than 9,500 flying hours, including over 6,400 hours as pilot-in-command, according to his profile.

From November 2020 to June 2022, Machchhar worked as a Line Training Captain at SpiceJet, where his responsibilities included training, checking and mentoring pilots, while ensuring adherence to standard operating procedures and safety requirements. His profile also lists expertise in Crew Resource Management, flight standards, pilot mentoring and operating Boeing 737 NG and MAX aircraft.

The incident reportedly took place while the aircraft was flying towards Tel Aviv. Passengers reportedly heard shouting and screams coming from the cockpit, with one passenger later seeing blood inside the cockpit. According to an account cited by AFP, passengers were told that one pilot had allegedly attacked the other with a knife. Passengers then reportedly



moved towards the cockpit and helped restrain the attacker. Other pilots travelling on the aircraft also assisted in handling the emergency. Flight-tracking data indicated that the aircraft briefly lost altitude and transmitted emergency codes, including 7700 and 7500. The latter is internationally associated with unlawful interference or a possible hijacking situation.

Israeli authorities reportedly responded by scrambling fighter jets as the aircraft diverted towards Saudi Arabia. After the aircraft landed at Tabuk, both pilots were taken to hospital. Machchhar had sustained serious injuries in the confrontation. Authorities are investigating the circumstances surrounding the cockpit confrontation, in-

cluding whether it constituted an attempted attack or another form of unlawful interference. The Indian pilot has also received an outpouring of praise on Israeli social media following the incident. Users shared tributes to Machchhar, with posts describing him as a hero and urging others to remember his name. Videos were also shared thanking the pilot for his actions after he was seriously injured during the cockpit confrontation. Israeli influencer Talia Yoseph shared a video paying tribute to Machchhar and urged her followers to remember the Indian captain. "I want every single one of you to know the name Smit Machchhar," she said, describing him as a hero who kept fighting despite being severely wounded.

HDFC Bank Names Anup Bagchi As New MD & CEO, Three-Year Term To Begin From October 27

Mumbai: HDFC Bank has appointed Anup Bagchi as its new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer for a period of three years, marking a major leadership change at the private sector lender. BHDHC Bank Names Anup Bagchi As New MD & CEO, Three-Year Term To Begin. HDFC Bank has appointed Anup Bagchi as its new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer for a period of three years, marking a major leadership change at the private sector lender. Bagchi will take charge as MD and CEO from October 27, 2026. He will succeed

Sashidhar Jagdishan, whose current term ends on October 26.

The Reserve Bank of India has approved Bagchi's appointment as HDFC Bank's Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer for three years. Following the RBI approval, HDFC Bank's Board of Directors met on October 1 and cleared the appointment based on the recommendation of its Governance, Nomination and Remuneration Committee. Bagchi will first join the bank's board as an Additional Director with effect from October 2, 2026. He will then formally take charge as MD and CEO from October

27. His appointment will be for three years and will be subject to approval from HDFC Bank's shareholders under the Companies Act, 2013. The terms and conditions of his appointment, including remuneration, will be in line with those approved by the RBI.

Bagchi is currently serving as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of ICICI Prudential Life Insurance. He will succeed Sashidhar Jagdishan, who had informed HDFC Bank's board in August that he would not seek another term after his current tenure ends. The leadership transition will therefore

take place immediately after Jagdishan's term concludes on October 26. Bagchi's three-year tenure as MD and CEO will begin on October 27, subject to the required shareholder approval. His appointment brings a new leader to one of India's largest private sector banks at a time when the lender continues to manage its expanded business following its merger with Housing Development Finance Corporation. The change will also put the focus on HDFC Bank's future growth strategy, asset quality, deposit mobilisation and integration efforts under its new chief executive.

Gujarat Announces State Award For flydubai's Indian Hero Pilot



Gandhinagar: The Gujarat government on Thursday announced that Indian pilot Smit Machchhar, who thwarted his co-pilot's alleged attempt to crash a Flydubai

flight despite being stabbed, will be awarded the 'Visisht Gujarat Garima Award' for his indomitable bravery. Captain Machchhar, who is being treated in Saudi Arabia, is

being hailed for his heroic act that saved several lives, drawing high praise from all sections of society.

A special prayer has also been organised at the famous Somnath temple for his speedy recovery. "The courage of Captain Smit Machchhar, the pilot of the flight headed to Israel, is being saluted by the entire world today. Despite being drenched in blood due to the attack, he displayed indomitable bravery to save the lives of 174 passengers—a feat that is profoundly inspiring and commendable," Patel said in a post on X. "This valiant son of Gujarat has brought glory to the state of Gujarat and the nation across the globe

through his heroism. The Gujarati spirit flowing in his veins fills us all with immense pride," he further said. To honour his extraordinary act of bravery and humanity, the state will bestow the 'Visisht Gujarat Garima Award' upon Captain Smit Machchhar, Patel announced. "The entire state is praying for his swift recovery. The empathy and prayers of the nation's citizens are with him," he said.

Officials said the pilot belongs to Gujarat, but his family had shifted to Mumbai long ago. Meanwhile, a special prayer was held at the Somnath temple for the pilot's health and long life, while the shrine management has initiated a

'Mahamrityunjaya Mantra Japa' ritual. "The Somnath temple trust has organised a special grand worship for the health and long life of the nation's pride, brave pilot Smit Machchhar," the temple posted on its X account with a video of the prayers. "During the flight to Tel Aviv, displaying indomitable courage, wisdom, and unparalleled dedication to duty, he foiled a cruel conspiracy like 9/11 and saved precious lives," it said. In another post on X, Patel tagged the Somnath temple's prayer post and said, "From Lord Somnath, the God of Gods, we pray that He swiftly restores our valiant hero to full health and grants him long life."

Adani Green Energy Expands Battery Storage Capacity To 6.63 GWh In Gujarat's Khavda



Ahmedabad:

Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) on Thursday said it has expanded its operational Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) capacity to 6.63 gigawatt-hours (GWh) at Khavda, Gujarat, from 3.55 GWh in June 2026. India's largest renewable energy company now accounts for more than 50 per cent of the country's operational BESS capacity of about 12.6 GWh.

"Reaching 6.63 GWh of operational battery storage in just 14 months is a significant milestone for AGEL and India's clean energy transition. At this scale, storage can make renewable power firmer, more reliable and dispatchable when the grid needs it," said Sagar Adani, Executive Director, Adani Green Energy.

"As India's power demand grows, we will continue to scale energy stor-

age solutions, both battery and pumped storage, to support a more resilient, lower-carbon grid," he noted. The 6.63 GWh BESS can store enough clean energy to power around two million homes a day, and support peak electricity demand of cities like Nagpur, Patna or Vizag for several hours. This BESS capacity at Khavda is equivalent to battery storage capacity of more than 150,000 mid-sized EVs and can store enough energy daily to meet almost twice the Delhi Metro's estimated daily electricity requirement, underscoring the unprecedented scale of the installation. The scale-up to 6.63 GWh strengthens the integration of renewable energy into the grid by enabling clean power to be stored and dispatched when required, said the company. This milestone also consolidates

Khavda's position as the world's largest operational battery energy storage installation at a single location. The BESS is integrated with AGEL's renewable energy (RE) development at Khavda, where the company is developing a 30 GW RE plant across 538 square kms of barren land. The BESS uses lithium-ion battery technology, integrated with an Energy Management Systems (EMS) and automated telemetry to manage charging and discharging, optimise system performance and support grid services. Battery storage can improve grid stability, manage peak demand, reduce energy curtailment, and enable renewable power to be delivered when required. AGEL said it is on track to add over 10 GWh of BESS capacity in FY 2026-27 and is targeting 50 GWh of storage capacity over the next 5 years.

Bhubaneswar Woman Alleges Rape At Gunpoint By Masked Man At Home

Bhubaneswar: A 26-year-old woman has alleged that she was raped inside her home in Bhubaneswar after an unidentified masked man allegedly entered the house late on Wednesday night and threatened her with a gun. The incident has prompted a police investigation, with officers working to establish the exact sequence of events, identify the alleged assailant and determine whether the accused had any prior acquaintance with the woman.

According to the complaint lodged, the alleged intruder entered the woman's rented flat on Wednesday night. She told police that the man was wearing a mask and threatened her with a gun before allegedly sexually assaulting her.

Police Launch Investigation

Following the complaint, Bhubaneswar police registered a case and began investigating the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. Police sources said a suspect has been detained for questioning in connection with the case. Investigators are examining the survivor's statement and other available evidence to determine what happened inside the

house and establish the identity and role of the person allegedly involved. Bhubaneswar DCP Saravana Vivek M said investigators have obtained important leads and expressed confidence that the case would be solved soon.

"We have got vital clues. The case will be solved soon. The case is under investigation," DCP Saravana Vivek M told NDTV.

The police have not publicly disclosed the identity of the detained person, and the investigation remains underway.

Survivor Was Allegedly Alone at the Time

According to information emerging from the investigation, the woman lives with her elderly sister in a residential locality of Bhubaneswar. Her sister was reportedly away from the house when the alleged incident took place, leaving the woman alone at the residence. The owner of the house, who reportedly lives on the first floor, said he was unaware of the incident at the time. Investigators are now examining the circumstances under which the alleged intruder gained entry into the house and whether there were any signs of forced entry.



Police Examining Whether Accused Was Known to Woman

A key aspect of the investigation is establishing whether the alleged assailant was actually a stranger to the woman or whether there was any previous acquaintance between them. Police officials are examining her statement and other evidence to determine the sequence of events before, during and after the alleged assault. Investigators are also expected to examine available surveillance footage and other evidence that could help establish the movements of people in and around the residence around the time of the incident. The identity of the alleged accused has not been

officially established publicly at this stage.

Forensic and Other Evidence Under Examination

As part of the investigation, police are expected to assess all available evidence connected with the residence and the alleged crime. The investigation will seek to corroborate the woman's statement with independent evidence and establish the movements of the alleged intruder. Police have so far not released details that could compromise the ongoing probe.

Investigation Ongoing

The case comes as Bhubaneswar police continue to focus on crime prevention and women's safety in the capital city. Saravana Vivek M recently took

charge as Bhubaneswar DCP after serving as Berhampur SP. At the time of assuming charge, he said crime control, women's safety, intelligence-led policing and stronger police response would remain among the priorities of the city police. For now, the allegations remain under investigation. The police are working to verify the survivor's account, identify the alleged perpetrator and establish the circumstances surrounding the incident, he said. No conclusion about the guilt of any individual can be drawn until the investigation is completed and the matter proceeds through due legal process, he added. Further investigation is underway.

"Had Always Been Very Calm": Childhood Friend Of Hero Indian Pilot



Mumbai: Indian pilot Captain Smit Machchhar, hailed as a hero for fighting off the co-pilot trying to crash a flydubai flight from Dubai to Tel Aviv, had displayed presence of mind even as a young boy, his Mumbai neighbour Prateek Gandhi told NDTV. He had always been very calm, very composed, one of the calmest people around," Gandhi, who lives in the same building as the pilot's family in Mumbai, said.

"We are proud that he was born here and done such a wonderful job for our country," Gandhi, who recalled playing cricket with Smit in childhood as his next-door neighbour, said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called him a "true hero", and praised the Indian pilot "for his extraordinary bravery", saying he fought off his copilot, preventing a "catastrophic mid-air disaster".

Machchhar is recovering in a hospital in Saudi Arabia's Tabuk, where his flight was diverted on Wednesday after the co-pilot reportedly stabbed him mid-air in an attempt to crash the plane carrying 174 people, according to Israeli officials. The Mumbai native was covered in blood on the cockpit floor when he managed to activate the release to open the cockpit door, according to Israeli officials. This allowed passengers and crew to overpower the co-pilot, while two flydubai pilots travelling as passengers helped land the

aircraft. "Naam roshan ho gaya (Brought glory to the name)," an elderly gentleman in Mumbai told NDTV, adding that it is a "very kind family". Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday praised the Indian Captain for his courage and presence of, saying the pilot's valour has made the entire country proud and helped avert a major tragedy. "The incident that occurred yesterday, Captain Smit of India demonstrated remarkable patience, presence of mind, and courage; indeed, as the Prime Minister of Israel stated today, an Indian prevented a 9/11-style tragedy. For every citizen of our country, Sumeet's valor fills us with immense pride," PM Modi, addressing the centenary celebra-

tions of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, said. The Prime Minister said he had spoken to Machchhar's family and enquired about his health.

"Today, I had a conversation with his father Bhupendrabhai, his mother Gitaben, and his wife Sonalben. His medical treatment is currently ongoing, and today the entire world feels proud of him," he said.

PM Modi also appealed to citizens to pray for the pilot's recovery.

"I appeal to all citizens of the country that we all pray for Sumeet's long life and good health and let us honor Brother Sumeet, who has enhanced the pride and honor of India," he said.

Woman Goes To Kerala Lodge With Friend. His Wife Sends Men To Rape Her

A woman who visited a private lodge with her married male friend was allegedly kidnapped by a five-member gang posing as police officers and gang-raped in Kerala's Thrissur. The man accompanying her was brutally assaulted, suffering fractures to his hands and legs, before being abandoned outside a hospital in Tamil Nadu. The incident took place last month when the woman, from Tamil Nadu's Tiruppur, had travelled with her male friend to Kerala and stayed in a room together near a KSRTC bus stand. Shortly after, five men - who posed as police officers - forcibly entered their hotel room, tied the hands and legs of both the man and woman with cloth, gagged them and took them to Tamil Nadu in a car. The man was brutally assaulted throughout the journey. His hands and legs were fractured. After abandoning him near a hospital in Tiruppur, two men allegedly transferred the woman to another car and raped her. Based on information provided by the survivor, Tamil Nadu Police registered a case and handed it over to the Thrissur City Police.

Investigation revealed that the man's wife had given a contract to the accused men to carry out the crime.

No More Stopping At Toll Plaza: Tamil Nadu Gets Barrier-Free System At Paranur



Motorists passing through the Tambaram and Tindivanam section of Tamil Nadu's national highway network will no longer have to stop at the Paranur toll plaza to pay toll. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has introduced a barrier-free toll collection system at Paranur from October 1, allowing vehicles to pass through without stopping at the toll booth. Located near Chengalpattu on National Highway 45, this is the first toll plaza in Tamil Nadu to shift to fully automated fee collection under Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) technol-

ogy. The toll plaza falls on the 46.5-km Tambaram-Tindivanam stretch. The country's first barrier-free toll plaza, situated on the Kamrej-Choryasi stretch between Surat and Bharuch, became operational on the Mumbai-Delhi national highway (NH48) in May this year.

How Will The New Toll System Work?

The system uses a combination of FASTag-linked radio-frequency identification technology and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras. As a vehicle passes through the tolling zone, overhead

equipment reads the FASTag and captures the vehicle registration number. The information is then used to identify the vehicle and process the applicable user fee without requiring it to stop or stay in a designated toll lane. The shift is aimed at reducing queues and delays at toll plazas. NHAI says barrier-free tolling will improve traffic flow, reduce fuel consumption and lower vehicular emissions by eliminating the need for vehicles to idle at toll booths. It will also reduce manual intervention in toll collection and is intended to make transac-

tions more efficient and transparent.

What Happens If FASTag Does Not Work?

A valid and functional FASTag with sufficient balance is important for motorists using the system. NHAI has said that an electronic notice will be issued in cases involving insufficient balance, an invalid or non-functional

FASTag. The Paranur rollout is part of a wider move towards barrier-free tolling across Indian highways. NHAI has already introduced the system at toll plazas in Gujarat, Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan, while projects have also been awarded for locations in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and other states.

9 Bangladeshi Nationals Arrested In Assam, Fake Indian IDs Recovered

In a joint operation, nine Bangladeshi nationals were arrested from New Bongaigaon Railway Station in Assam's Bongaigaon district on Wednesday. Speaking to reporters, Bongaigaon SSP Numal Mahatta said, "We have apprehended nine Bangladeshi nationals from New Bongaigaon Railway Station during a joint operation. During questioning, we came to know all nine were the citizens of Bangladesh. We have recovered four Bangladeshi national identity cards from their possession."

"We have also recovered six mobile phones, one Bangladeshi passport, three suspected fake Indian Aadhaar cards and five railway tickets from their possession. From a preliminary investigation, we came to know they have entered Assam through a neighbouring state, and they are planning to go outside from New Bongaigaon Railway station," the SSP said. He further added, "At first we had arrested six Bangladeshi nationals, and after that three more were arrested. All lawful action will be taken against them. They were planning to go outside for work." The operation was launched by Bongaigaon Police, in coordination with GRP, New Bongaigaon.

"Terror Will Have Consequences": India Hits Back At Shehbaz Sharif's UN Speech

India on Saturday gave a stinging reply to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's statements during his address to the UN General Assembly in New York on Friday. Exercising India's right to reply, diplomat Petal Gehlot called Sharif's remarks "bizarre" and reminded the Assembly that Osama bin Laden, who masterminded the 9/11 attacks, was found living in Pakistan. "The US just observed the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Its mastermind was living at the doorsteps of Pakistan's Army's premier academy," she pointed out. Sharif on Friday used the UN General Assembly podium to credit US President Donald Trump for his "timely intervention" in the 2025 conflict

with India, as he again raked up the Kashmir issue in his address to the world organisation. Calling out Pakistan's hypocrisy on terrorism, India said that it "claims to uphold security by day and perpetrates terrorism by night." Warning Pakistan that terrorism will have consequences, India said it will act to defend itself. "We demonstrated last year that terrorists will have nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. Our right to defend ourselves against terrorism will be exercised. And continued terrorism by Pakistan will have consequences," the Indian diplomat said.

India had launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 last year, targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan

and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians. US President Trump has repeatedly claimed, as recently as in his address to the UN General Assembly this week, that he stopped the war between India and Pakistan. New Delhi has consistently denied any third-party intervention. India also called on the UN Assembly "to recognise Pakistan and its policies for what they are, not what its representatives mendaciously present." "Reiterating falsehood year after year will not make it true. Pakistan's duplicity and deceit will neither benefit it nor the world." In his about 23-minute address, Sharif also raised the issue of Kashmir,

saying that to ensure South Asia never reaches that precipice of the conflict of 2025 again, a just and fair solution to the Kashmir issue is required. Calling Jammu and Kashmir an "integral and inalienable part of India," Gehlot pointed to human rights violations in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. "Let's turn focus to PoK. Ask the people of Rawalkot about the wanton killings and human rights violations by the Pakistan government there," she said. Slamming Pakistan's "hypocritical homilies" about democratic values and human rights, the Indian representative pointed out Islamabad's own record. "Pakistan is the regime of the army, for the army and by the army. Their

puppets may change, but the army continues to call the shots." On Sharif's reference to religious tolerance, India pointed out Islamabad's own record. "The Pakistani regime has blasphemy laws as its mainstay. The world knows how Pakistan treats its minorities." In his speech, Sharif also spoke about the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), which India has said will be held in abeyance until Pakistan, a global epicentre of terror, credibly and irrevocably ends its support for cross-border and all other forms of terrorism. India decided to put the IWT in abeyance as part of a series of punitive diplomatic and economic measures unveiled soon after the Pahalgam terror attack.

China's Satellite "Helping Hand" Makes Iran's Drones Deadlier: Report



US intelligence assessments have found that satellite data and intelligence support from Chinese groups have significantly enhanced Iran's precision-strike and vessel-tracking capabilities across the Middle East.

This external intelligence has been linked to improved accuracy in threatening ships in the Strait of Hormuz and a lethal strike on a US military base in Jordan, CNN reported, citing four sources.

The sources said that the strike on the US base in Jordan that killed three US service members was with a level of precision that was beyond Iran's domestic capabilities. One of the officials said that Chinese geospatial data has helped Iran with its missile and drone strikes on ships in the Strait of Hormuz. According to two additional sources, Iran uses this data to precisely time drone launches, allowing even their basic, non-maneuverable heat-seeking models to threaten ships.

Apart from this, Russia has been providing Iran with support and the battlefield experience acquired by Iran during the conflict, combined, serve as crucial factors. US officials state it is difficult to accurately measure the scale of China's assistance. This difficulty stems from uncertainty over whether Beijing is actively directing the support or simply permitting it, alongside internal disagreements among officials regarding the true extent of China's help. How China's Satellite Data Helps Iran's Heatseeking Drones

Iran's heatseeking drones are not very sophisticated but with the help of Chinese satellite imagery, they launch

a large number of drones at the ships at the most favourable moment and attack US military escorts and commercial vessels.

"There's a reason that their targeting has improved, and it is due to some assistance," one of the sources said. "Getting reps on the battlefield helps, but getting a helping hand helps a lot too." Another source said, "They're getting better because we've essentially given them more time to train." They also claimed that China has equipped Iran with air defence systems.

China Denies That Firms Are Supplying Data To Iran

Earlier in the month, a report by The Wall Street Journal found that the deadly Iranian ballistic missile strike followed months of unheeded warnings from the Trump administration to Beijing regarding Chinese firms supplying targeting data to Tehran. At the time, the Chinese Embassy in the US clarified that the help Beijing provides Tehran is in compliance with international law and that critics were "maliciously linking and smearing other countries" by taking advantage of the conflict. According to experts and former officials cited by The Wall Street Journal, the imagery likely represented one component of Iran's broader intelligence operation. US officials add that the Iranian military regularly supplements its data with domestic satellites, human assets, and intelligence provided by Russia.

US Says China's Help To Iran "Totally Unacceptable"

Chinese President Xi Jinping is in Washington for a summit with US President Donald Trump. During

candid talks at the White House, US Ambassador to China David Perdue said on Friday that any help given to Iran was "totally unacceptable".

"We made it very clear to them weeks ago that, you know, any help that they would give Iran, whether it be direct or indirect, whether it be intelligence or parts or military equipment, was totally unacceptable. President Trump made that very clear again yesterday. This is an ongoing drumbeat," Perdue said in an interview with CNBC. "These two leaders are beginning to develop a relationship of somewhat trust and also working on the issues. I mean, this was a very candid and open conversation, and every time they talk, I think we see a different level of intimacy about these difficult issues that we're dealing with." However, when US Secretary of State Marco Rubio was questioned about China's role in the attack, he said, "nothing that China has done has in any way changed the trajectory of the conflict." In May, the US sanctioned three Chinese companies Mizart Vision, Earth Eye and Chang Guang saying that supplying satellite imagery to Iran

"threatens American and partner personnel." The report stated that officials are frustrated because the US is wide open to low- and medium-altitude drone and missile attacks. The US spent billions on advanced defence systems, but they only protect against high-altitude weapons, leaving a dangerous blind spot. "Without the Chinese parts they wouldn't be as likely to keep fighting, it is as basic as that," a US official stated.

US-Iran War To Resume In November? Trump Rejects Tehran's 7-Day Peace Plan

New Delhi: President Donald Trump has reportedly rejected Iran's proposal for a seven-day ceasefire and is likely to resume bombing Tehran after the November mid-term elections in the US. Tehran had proposed to reopen the strategic waterway Strait of Hormuz and end fighting -- which began on February 28 when the US and Israel conducted joint strikes on Iran -- within seven days if the US agreed to its demands. "Iran has conveyed to the United States, through Qatar, a concrete seven-day plan. If the necessary conditions are met, the strait can be reopened, and normal maritime passage restored within seven days," Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told reporters at the UN on Friday. "The choice now rests with the United States. Iran does not accept coercion, threats, or intimidation, and Iran will not surrender its sovereign rights under pressure," he said. "I can tell

you if there is seriousness in the US side to come to a deal and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, everything is now prepared," he added. Hours later, The Wall Street Journal reported that Trump had rejected the proposal, citing US officials familiar with the matter. Trump, who has vowed that Iran will never acquire a nuclear bomb, was skeptical Tehran would meet his demands and sees a renewed bombing campaign as likely, according to the report. He also posted an image on his Truth Social platform of a map showing Hormuz circled and labelled "Trump Strait."

Iran's 7-Day Plan To End War

Iran said it would reopen Hormuz -- the world's most vital energy conduit -- and resume talks on its nuclear program in seven days if the US lifts its naval blockade, waives oil sanctions and observes a ceasefire that includes Lebanon. The proposal was discussed by the



Iranian foreign minister at a private gathering on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. Tehran's new proposal resembled an agreement reached in June that later collapsed.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said in an interview with broadcaster CBS that the ceasefire "process will begin from the very day they accept it." "We had previously reached an agreement based on the MOU that was signed in

Pakistan...if the United States agrees to proceed in that way, everything will return to the way it was before," he said.

The US-Iran Deal In June That Later Collapsed

Trump and Pezeshkian had signed a 14-point deal to end the Middle East war on June 17. The agreement provided for an immediate cessation of military operations, including in Lebanon, and commits both countries to pursuing a fi-

nal agreement within 60 days. Trump, however, on July 8 said the deal was "over". Tehran also suspended the memorandum of understanding a week later, accusing Washington of "violating all its commitments". Since then, Trump has reiterated that he's in no rush to reach a deal. The White House on Friday said that US officials are having positive and constructive conversations with media-

Chinese Help To Iran Totally Unacceptable': Trump To Xi

"Donald Trump apparently "made it clear" to Xi Jinping that any help to Iran from the Chinese side amid the US' ongoing war with Tehran was "totally unacceptable", an official said on Friday.

In an interview with CNBC, US Ambassador to China David Perdue said Trump made the comments during his candid talks with the Chinese President at the White House.

Chinese President Xi Jinping is on a highly-anticipated state visit to the United States, where the leaders reportedly discussed a number of thorny issues including Iran, trade, and artificial intelligence. "We made it very clear to them weeks ago that any help that they (China) would give Iran, whether it be direct or indirect, whether it be intelligence or parts or military equipment, was totally unacceptable. President Trump made that very clear again yesterday. This is an ongoing drumbeat," Perdue told the television network.

He said Trump and Xi agreed that "Iran will never have a nuclear weapon."

"They (Iran) also agreed to open up the Strait of Hormuz and that no one ever would be allowed to have tolls inside that strait," he added.

Perdue said that US and Iran will continue to have

talks about Iran privately, claiming that they have seen progress. "They pulled some things down and we have evidence that they pay attention when President Trump talks about this particular issue."

The US envoy said that over the last month, much of the US President's time has been spent on the topic of discussing Iran with Xi. "This is an independent issue and President Trump's made it very clear what our interests are and with regard to Iran," the he reiterated, adding that it does not have any ties with other topics, including Taiwan. However, Perdue did not budge on the claim that China has been giving "indirect support" to Iran. "We're very concerned about this indirect work and we've made that very clear," he said.

Since the US launched an attack on Iran along with Israel on February 28, multiple reports have claimed that China has been supporting Tehran. A recent report by CNN claimed that satellite imagery and intelligence support from China helped Iran threaten ships in Hormuz and launch precision strikes on US bases in the Middle East.

Another report by The Wall Street Journal said China supplied electronics components to Iran that



can be used to make parts for drones and missile guidance systems. The US administration had previously penalised three Chinese

satellite imagery providers in May over intelligence sharing that facilitated targeting against US positions. The US and

Iran signed a memorandum of understanding in June that aimed to end the war, reopen the strait and launch talks on Iran's nuclear programme.

Ask India, Ask Pakistan": Balen Shah's Attack On "Broken" Global Order At UN

"While delivering his maiden speech at the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly on Thursday, Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah questioned a global system where weapons cross borders rapidly while farmers struggle to access fuel and fertilizer. "Inter-continental missiles arrive on time. Rifles and ammunition cross borders, clear every bottleneck, meet each deadline. But a peasant in Nepal can-

not procure his fertilizer or fuel at market price at a time of need", he said.

In his speech, Shah strongly criticised the current global order, stating, "We have built a world with flawless logistics for war and broken logistics for food." Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah speaks during the 81st United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters in New York on September 24, 2026

Balendra Shah speaks during the 81st United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters in New York on September 24, 2026

At 36, Shah spoke as the youngest head of government at the assembly this year, using the global platform to advocate for climate justice for South Asian nations. "And this is not Nepal's private misfortune. Ask Bangladesh. Ask Bhutan. Ask India. Ask the Maldives. Ask Pakistan.

Ask Sri Lanka. Ask any other country in our region and you will hear the same account: hit by the climate we did not warm, and hit again by the wars we did not start. This tells us there is a lot more broken than meets the eye in the present order of global co-operation," he said. Shah's hard-hitting speech followed the catastrophic Bhotekoshi floods in Nepal on August 26, 2026, which tragically killed over 1,400

people and left thousands missing. He broadened his message to include the shared vulnerabilities of the entire South Asian region, urging world leaders to look at the ground realities of the global order. Nepal PM Proposes Himalayan Climate Resilience Mechanism

He then proposed that a Himalayan Climate Resilience Mechanism should be established since a warming climate is

destabilising the region's ecology and should be led by his country, India and China.

"The Hindu Kush Himalaya is home to nearly two billion people. These mountains provide water, ecosystems, agriculture and livelihoods to populations far beyond Nepal. The Himalayas are not peripheral to the planet. They are part of the planet's life-support system," Shah said."

What's new in Ather Konarc Rs 10 key things to know about electric scooter



Ather Energy has introduced its new electric scooter — Konarc — in New Delhi. The company has launched the scooter with a starting introductory price of Rs 79,999 (ex-show-room, New Delhi, including subsidy). According to the electric two-wheeler manufacturer, the Konarc is designed for everyday riding. It focuses on range, comfort, durability and easier ownership. Deliveries will begin in phases for select variants.

Here are the key things to know about the new Ather Konarc.

1. Six variants and up to 200 km range

The Konarc is available across the S and Z product lines. It comes in six variants. The scooter offers IDC range options of up to

200 km. Ather has built the scooter on its new EL platform.

2. 10-year battery warranty

All Konarc variants come with Ather's fifth-generation Bedrock battery pack. The battery gets a warranty of 10 years or 1,00,000 km, whichever comes first. Ather has also guaranteed a minimum 70 per cent state of health at the end of the warranty period.

3. Service interval increased to 10,000 km

Ather has doubled the service interval for the Konarc to 10,000 km. For most riders, this means the scooter will need servicing about once a year. The scooter also has fewer service checkpoints and easier access to wear-and-tear components.

4. Built for Indian Roads

The Konarc comes with a 14-inch front alloy wheel and a 12-inch rear alloy wheel. It has a wheelbase of 1,352 mm. The scooter also gets long-travel suspension at both ends. Ather has used metal panels on the rear side and a steel unibody chassis.

The scooter uses a sequential gear-drive transmission. Ather said it is designed to offer smooth and quiet power delivery.

5. New advanced braking system

The Konarc gets Ather's Advanced Electronic Braking System (AeBS). The system adjusts braking force between the front and rear wheels based on road conditions.

6. MagicKey and other new features

The scooter gets MagicKey for a keyless experience. It includes SmartWake, automatic locking and remote scooter location. AutoPop provides hands-free access to the under-seat storage.

The Konarc also gets AirWalk. The feature uses motor assistance to make it easier to move the scooter manually in tight parking spaces.

7. Faster home charging
The Konarc comes with an integrated onboard charger and charging cable. An optional 450W offboard charger is also available. It can work with the built-in 450W charger to deliver 900W through Combined Charging. Ather said this can reduce home charging time by up to half.

8. Ather expands Delhi NCR network

Delhi NCR remains an important market for Ather. According to Vahan data cited by the company, EV adoption in the region increased from 6.27 per cent in Q1 FY26 to 9.23 per cent in Q1 FY27. Ather currently has 11 Experience Centres and seven Service Centres in Delhi. The company also has 273 LECCS fast-charging points in Delhi NCR.

9. Konarc joins Ather's line-up

The Konarc will be sold alongside the Ather 450 Series and Rizta in Delhi NCR.

The company said the launch will help expand its retail, service and charging network in the region. Ather also aims to bring its electric scooters to a wider group of riders.

Company's statement

Ravneet S. Phokela, CBO Ather Energy, said, "Delhi NCR is an important market in our journey towards making electric mobility more accessible to a wider set of riders. The scooter has been designed and engineered with features that matter most to buyers in this segment such as a service interval of 10,000 kms, an extended battery warranty of 10 years or 1,00,000 km (whichever is earlier) at a 70% health guarantee, a metal body, up to 200 km range, fast home charging, and a plush ride and comfortable ride with 14-inch front wheels and long travel suspensions at front and at the rear. These strong fundamentals set the Konarc up perfectly to make EV scooters mainstream in India. Furthermore, launching at a price of Rs 79,999 makes this proposition even more attractive for Delhi, and should be able to kickstart that transition. We see Konarc playing an important role in strengthening our presence here and accelerating the shift towards electric mobility in the country."

Airbus identifies quality issue on some A321 aircraft, says no safety risk



Airbus has identified a surface protection deviation on a number of A321 aircraft. The issue was found during standard rework. It affects stringers located in the lower front section of the aircraft fuselage.

Source identified, remedy available

Airbus said the source of the issue has been identified and contained. A remedy is also available for the affected stringers. The company said all newly coated stringers meet the required standards.

"We can confirm that during some standard rework, a surface protection deviation on stringers located at the lower front section of the fuselage was identified, affecting a number of A321 aircraft. The source of the issue has been identified, contained, and a remedy is available," an Airbus spokesperson said.

Aircraft can continue to operate

Airbus said the affected aircraft can continue to operate. It described the matter as a quality issue, not a safety issue.

No stringer disassembly required

The required rework will not require the stringers to be disassembled. Once the rework is completed, the aircraft will be considered to be back in its nominal design condition.

"The rework doesn't require any disassembly of the stringers. Once rework is applied, the aircraft is considered to be back as if at nominal design," Airbus spokesperson added.

New coating meets requirements

An Airbus spokesperson confirmed that the newly coated stringers meet all specified requirements.

Domestic tourist visits reach 428.55 crore in 2025

On a separate note, domestic tourist visits in India reached 428.55 crore in 2025, IANS reported citing a government factsheet released ahead of World Tourism Day.

From e-Visas to Cruise Hubs: 10 key facts about World Tourism Day and India's tourism boom

Did you know that tourism contributes 5.22 per cent to India's GDP and supports 8.46 crore jobs? World Tourism Day, observed annually on September 27 every year, is an annual United Nations (UN) to raise global awareness about how tourism drives economic growth, job creation, inclusive development and environmental sustainability, and how it can support sustainable development goals.

A brief history of World Tourism Day

September 27 marks the anniversary of the adoption of the Statutes of the World Tourism Organization (then WTO and now UN Tourism (UNWTO)) in 1970. That milestone transformed the erstwhile International Union of Official Travel Organisations (IUOTO) into an intergovernmental body. In 1979, the UNWTO General Assembly decided to institute World Tourism Day, with the first celebration in 1980. Since 1997, each year's observance has a theme and is hosted by a different country or group of countries, rotating across world regions.

What's the theme of World Tourism Day in 2026?

This year around, the theme of World Tourism Day is 'Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to Redesign Tourism'. The theme aligns closely with India's own push to build a more connected, inclusive and tech-enabled travel sector. Tourism now contributes 5.22 per cent to India's GDP, supporting 8.46 crore jobs in the country. As domestic and foreign visitor numbers climb and new experiences open up along the coast and beyond, the sector is fast becoming a key engine of growth and livelihoods.

NCLT clears Sesa Care merger; Dabur eyes wider Ayurvedic hair care play



The National Company Law Tribunal's (NCLT) New Delhi Bench has cleared the merger of Sesa Care Private Limited with Dabur India, bringing the premium Ayurvedic hair care brand a step closer to becoming part of Dabur's portfolio, the company said on Friday, September 25, in a stock market disclosure.

The transaction was first announced in October 2024, when Dabur India acquired 51 per cent of the paid-up Cumulative Redeemable Preference Shares (CRPS) of Sesa Care from its existing shareholder, True North. "The NCLT approval marks a key milestone in the transaction first announced in October 2024 and paves the way for the integration of Sesa Care with Dabur India, subject to completion of the necessary statutory filings and other formalities," said Dabur India.

The scheme subsequently received the requisite approvals from Dabur India's equity shareholders and unsecured creditors at meetings convened pursuant to NCLT directions on May 2, 2026, followed by relevant regulatory approvals, the company said.

The merger will become effective after completion of the required statutory filings and other formalities under the scheme.

Sesa Care

Sesa Care is a leading brand in the Ayurvedic hair care market with strong brand equity. The merger will bring to Dabur India a premium brand with strong credentials in Ayurveda, complementing its existing portfolio and strengthening its presence in the hair care category. Commenting on the development, Dabur India Limited Global Chief Executive Officer Mohit Malhotra said, "The NCLT approval is an important milestone in our journey with Sesa Care. Sesa Care is a premium brand with strong Ayurvedic credentials and complements our existing hair care portfolio well. We see significant potential in bringing the two businesses together and building Sesa Care into a stronger and larger brand."

The integration of Sesa Care is aligned with our long-term strategy of strengthening our portfolio and tapping newer growth opportunities. We will look to leverage Dabur India's extensive distribution network, category expertise and access to key international markets to expand Sesa Care's reach and unlock revenue and cost synergies from the combined business." Dabur India Limited Executive Director and Group Head of Corporate Strategy Abhinav Dhall added. Dabur India Limited is one of India's leading FMCG Companies. The company's products today reach eight out of every 10 Indian households, which is a testament to the trust we have built over generations. The company's portfolio today includes four Rs 1,000 crore-plus brands, alongside four Rs 500 crore brands and 15 brands in the Rs 100-500 crore range. Meanwhile, shares of Dabur India closed at Rs 386.95 per share, up Rs 1.80 or 0.47 per cent, up on SBE today, September 25.

India's first LNG-powered train: Amit Shah to flag off service from Sabarmati

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to flag off India's first LNG-powered train from Sabarmati station on September 27, 2026. The initiative is aimed at promoting the use of alternative and cleaner energy sources in Indian Railways and reducing dependence on conventional diesel fuel.

For the first time in Indian Railways, an LNG-based fuel system has been successfully adopted in the train's Driving Power Cars (DPCs). The technology allows the same engine to use both LNG and diesel.

1,400 HP DPCs converted to LNG-diesel dual-fuel system

Under the project, two Driving Power Cars with a capacity of 1,400 HP each have been converted to an LNG-diesel dual-fuel system. The conversion will allow LNG to be used along with diesel, helping reduce dependence on conventional diesel fuel while retaining the existing engine system.

Two DPCs complete more than 2,000 km of field trials

Both converted DPCs have completed more than

2,000 kilometres of successful field trials. The trials were conducted to assess the performance and reliability of the LNG dual-fuel technology.

The successful trials have demonstrated the use of the technology under operating conditions.

LNG use expected to reduce diesel consumption and emissions

The use of the LNG dual-fuel system is expected to reduce diesel consumption as well as pollutant emissions from the engine.

The technology is expected to help reduce emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and particulate matter (PM).

The initiative is also expected to support cleaner and greener railway transportation and contribute to improved air quality around railway routes.

LNG-based system expected to save around Rs 23.9 lakh annually

LNG costs less than diesel, and its partial use in place of diesel is expected to help reduce operating costs. Based on the data obtained during the trials, the LNG-based system is expected to result in savings of around Rs 23.9 lakh per



year. The technology can therefore help reduce railway operating expenses while also providing environmental benefits.

Train can switch between LNG and diesel

A key feature of the dual-fuel system is that the engine can switch between diesel and LNG depending on fuel availability.

This means train operations can continue even if LNG is not available, providing flexibility in fuel use. The use of LNG also allows the train to cover a longer distance after refuelling, reducing the need for frequent refuelling and improving operational convenience.

LNG tank capacity set at around 2,200 litres per DPC

According to the approved design, each DPC has been fitted with an LNG tank with a capacity of around 2,200 litres.

The tank can hold approximately 950-1,000 kg of usable LNG

With a full LNG tank, one DPC has enough LNG for around 444 kilometres of daily operation. This reduces the need for frequent refuelling and is expected to improve operational efficiency.

Dual-fuel system designed to maintain engine performance

The LNG dual-fuel system has been designed to

maintain the power, reliability and operational capability of the conventional diesel engine.

The technology is intended to deliver fuel savings and reduce emissions while maintaining the train's performance and operational reliability.

The adoption of LNG dual-fuel technology by Indian Railways is aimed at promoting cleaner energy, improving fuel efficiency, reducing operating costs and supporting environmental protection. The initiative could also play a role in developing a more sustainable and environment-friendly railway transportation system in the future.

Global tourism rebounds, but local benefits fail to keep pace: WEF

Global tourism has improved across most countries, but the rise in visitor numbers is not leading to equally strong economic and social gains, according to a World Economic Forum (WEF) report. The WEF said many destinations are finding it difficult to turn record tourism demand into lasting benefits as they deal with higher costs, geopolitical and climate-related disruptions, labour shortages and growing pressure on infrastructure and local communities. This is despite an overall improvement in the

2026 Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI), which tracks the conditions and policies that support the sustainable and resilient growth of the travel and tourism sector.

91% TTDI improved score

As per the report, "92% of the 110 economies in the 2026 Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) improved their score since 2024, with Japan taking the top position," while average scores rose by 2.1 per cent.

Tourism development conditions are at their strongest since the pandemic, led

by improvements in cultural attractions, tourism infrastructure and services, and air connectivity. At the same time, cultural resources stood as the "most improved pillar in the TTDI, with over 95% of economies recording higher scores."

International tourism touches record high in 2025

WEF also noted, "International tourist arrivals reached a record 1.5 billion in 2025, up 5% on 2024 and 4.4% above 2019 levels," highlighting, Middle East and Africa recorded the

strongest growth while Asia-Pacific continued to close the gap with pre-pandemic travel level.

However, "Between 2024 and 2026, travel became less affordable in three out of four economies, while tourism investment failed to keep pace with rising demand and labour shortages threatened further growth," it said. Benefits to local communities also weakened during the period, showing that higher tourist numbers do not always result in better incomes or improved job quality, especially in destinations that

rely heavily on seasonal travel. The report also said travel and tourism costs have risen faster than overall inflation in many economies. As a result, price competitiveness declined in nearly three-fourths of the economies covered by the TTDI between 2024 and 2026. WEF noted that tourism investment has not kept pace with the growth in activity since 2022. At the same time, labour shortages and skill gaps could affect service quality and make it harder for the sector to adapt to digital and AI-led changes.

Jyotiraditya M. Scindia lays foundation stone of India's 7th Postal Training Centre in Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh

Inaugurates modernised Shivpuri Head Post Office as Department of Posts advances modern, technology-enabled and citizen-centric services



New Delhi (PIB): Union Minister for Communications and DoNER, Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, today laid the foundation stone of the country's 7th Postal Training Centre at Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh marking a significant step towards strengthening the training and capacity-building ecosystem of the Department of Posts, in line with the vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for a Viksit Bharat. The new centre will serve as a national-level training facility for postal employees from Madhya Pradesh and neighbouring states, with a focus on equipping the

workforce with modern skills and training in emerging technologies. Union Minister for Communications and DoNER, Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, performs Bhoomi Pujan for the country's 7th Postal Training Centre at Kakarvaya, Shivpuri, and addresses the gathering during the programme. Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister for Communications and DoNER, Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, said that with the establishment of the new Postal Training Centre, postal employees from Madhya Pradesh will no longer have to travel nearly 600 kilometres for training. Emphasising the

importance of the Guru-Shishya Parampara, he said that the new centre reflects the Department of Posts' commitment to strengthening learning and capacity building. He added that the centre is being developed as a modern training facility that will evolve with changing times and be equipped with new-age technologies, enabling postal employees to acquire the skills required for modern postal operations and service delivery. The programme was also attended by Shri Pradyuman Singh Tomar, Minister for Energy, Government of Madhya Pradesh and Minister-in-Charge of Shivpuri;

Shri Devendra Jain, MLA, Shivpuri; Shri Mahendra Ramsingh Yadav, MLA, Kolaras; Shri Pritam Singh Lodhi, MLA, Pichhore; Smt. Neha-Amit Yadav, Chairperson, District Panchayat, Shivpuri; Smt. Gayatri Sharma, Chairperson, Municipal Council, Shivpuri; Shri S.F.H. Rizvi, Member, Human Resource Development, Postal Services Board; Shri Vineet Mathur, Chief Postmaster General, Madhya Pradesh Circle and other senior officials of the Department of Posts, public representatives and dignitaries. This new centre will expand the Department of Posts' network of six Postal Training

Centres at Saharanpur, Vadodara, Mysuru, Guwahati, Madurai and Darbhanga, which together train around 2,000 personnel annually. Shivpuri, strategically located in the heart of India in Madhya Pradesh-the second-largest State by area, has been chosen as a national-level training hub owing to its central location and connectivity. The centre will strengthen access to specialised, technology-enabled and new-age training, equipping postal personnel with the skills needed for the evolving demands of modern, citizen-centric postal operations and service delivery.

Union Minister of Civil Aviation Reviews Measures to Simplify and Automate NOC Process; Directs Time-Bound Action Within 15 Days



New Delhi (PIB): Union Minister of Civil Aviation Shri K. J. Somaiya held a meeting with senior officers of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Airports Authority of India (AAI) to review measures for promoting Ease of Doing Business in the civil aviation sector, with particular emphasis on simplifying and streamlining the process for issuance of No Objection Certificates (NOCs). During the meeting, Shri Rammohan Naidu emphasized the need to make the NOC process hassle-free, transparent, automated and time-bound, with minimal manual intervention. The proposed reforms are aimed at facilitating members of the general public, societies, builders and industry while ensur-

ing that the regulatory requirements related to aviation safety continue to be duly addressed.

The Minister also discussed the feasibility of providing the permissible/identified building height to applicants at the initial stage itself, particularly in major metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad. Such an approach would enable applicants and other stakeholders to take informed decisions and plan their building development in accordance with the applicable height restrictions from the outset. The meeting also deliberated upon the process relating to Aeronautical Studies, with emphasis on simplifying and expediting approvals. In particular, the possibility of minimizing the requirement for physical verification at site at the initial stage, as well as rationalizing the requirement for submission of Building Development Plans and other documentation, was discussed.

The existing geographical coverage of the No Objection Certificate Application System (NOCAS) was also reviewed. NOCAS presently covers areas within 20 kms for VFR (Visual Flight Rules) operations and 56 kms for IFR (In-

strument Flight Rules) operations. The meeting considered the feasibility of issuing NOCs at the Urban Local Body (ULB) level, wherever feasible, thereby reducing the need for individuals and industries to approach AAI directly for obtaining NOCs. Rammohan Naidu directed the concerned officers to examine and work out the modalities for simplifying, automating and decentralizing the NOC process, including the above measures, and to take necessary action for their implementation within a timeline of 15 days. The Minister emphasized that the overall objective of these reforms is to ensure expeditious and time-bound clearance of proposals, with relevant data and permissible height information made transparently available in the public domain, including through the website, without in any manner compromising aviation safety. A simpler, predictable and transparent NOC framework will facilitate timely implementation of important infrastructure and development projects, thereby supporting investment, economic activity, employment generation and overall GDP growth.

Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal Calls Upon Auto Component Industry To Go Global

New Delhi (PIB): Addressing the 66th Annual Session of the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA) in New Delhi, Union Minister of Commerce & Industry Shri Piyush Goyal today called upon the auto component industry to transform local businesses into global businesses, expand manufacturing footprints across developed countries, strengthen supply-chain resilience and move up the value chain as India seeks to deepen its integration with global markets. Goyal said the industry's international trade was nearly USD 50 billion, evenly divided between imports and exports. He said business prospers when it looks globally and imports can also play an important role in the economic progress of a country, while clarifying that this should not be taken as an encouragement to increase imports. He said there had been a commitment to widen the gap between imports and exports, but this had not yet started, and called for much greater international investment and international business emerging from ACMA and its membership in the years ahead. The Minister said the industry had benefited from collaborations over the years and had established the ability to produce quality goods in India at globally competitive price points. He called upon the industry to now expand its manufacturing footprint across the world and establish a presence in developed countries. Goyal highlighted India's growing market access through nine trade agreements finalised in the last four to five years under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. He said these agreements covered 38 developed countries, collectively representing a GDP of USD 60 trillion. He said the Free

Trade Agreements concluded prior to 2014 collectively accounted for a GDP of USD 10 trillion at today's value, while the nine agreements concluded under the present Government in the last four and a half years provide two-way market access to economies representing a USD 60 trillion GDP. He said these agreements covered prosperous countries with high GDPs and high per capita GDPs, offering less competition and greater complementarity with Indian industry. Shri Goyal also acknowledged ACMA's role in India's Free Trade Agreement negotiations, saying that the organisation had consistently sought zero-duty access for the Indian auto component sector while also seeking reciprocal opening of the Indian market. He said the industry was capable of taking on the best in the world and was ready to meet global competition. Referring to the theme of the session, "Beyond Resilience, managing uncertainty to creating new avenues, deeper supply chains", Shri Goyal said it was particularly relevant in a world marked by uncertainties, challenges and considerable churn. The Minister said that amid global turmoil, India had continued to stay the course and remained the fastest-growing among the large economies of the world. "The naysayers can say what they want, but 7.8% growth is a reality," he said. Highlighting the growth across sectors, Shri Goyal pointed out that ACMA was growing at a scorching double-digit rate and the auto sector was growing at a high double-digit rate. He said five million passenger cars were expected to be sold this year. The Minister said the cars were being bought and were not merely being stocked. He also referred to electric vehicles, noting that some electric ve-

hicles now had a six-month waiting period. He pointed out that the steel sector was also growing at a scorching pace and India was importing more steel than it exported because domestic demand was so high. He said the auto component industry was contributing significantly to this demand. Goyal highlighted various Government programmes aimed at strengthening industrial capacity and supply-chain resilience. He said the support provided to the auto component industry to achieve scale and to speciality steel manufacturing to produce in India the steels required by the sector directly related to the industry. He also highlighted the relevance of the technical textile PLI for the auto component industry, given its requirement for technical textiles, and said support to the semiconductor industry was intended to bring resilience to auto component supply chains. The Minister said the Government was creating new industrial parks, with 20 smart cities and industrial cities already underway. He invited the industry to participate in these opportunities and also invited countries to consider establishing enclaves in these parks. "Maybe we should have one of these parks dedicated to a US-India partnership. Maybe we can have two or three, five parks, which will be for auto components only. And I can create a plug and play infrastructure to suit you," he said. Goyal said the cycle of reforms and further reforms could only move ahead at speed with the support of industry. "We need your ideas. We need your inputs. We need your demands. We need to know what's challenging you, what's troubling you, how we can help you more," he said. "We are a listening government. We want you to be talking," he said, calling for contin-

ued dialogue between industry and Government. Goyal referred to his recent three-hour engagement with the data centre industry, comprising largely companies from the United States coming into India in a big way. He said India and the United States were trusted partners who could support each other in making everything more competitive. Goyal said India would soon have a GCC and Israel FTA once the situation stabilised there. He said India would also have FTAs with other countries around the world to secure greater access to critical minerals, which are needed for resilient supply chains. He highlighted that the United States and India were working together as partners in a critical mineral partnership. He also referred to the Pax Silica initiative launched by the United States, under which like-minded, democratic, well-meaning and fair-play countries could work together to ensure that no single geography could weaponise trade. Goyal said these developments would help the auto component industry become a global player as it moved towards its USD 500 billion industry target. Before concluding, Shri Goyal outlined specific priorities for the industry. He called upon the industry to convert local businesses into global businesses and, for products where greater supply-chain resilience was still required, establish an active indigenisation programme to insulate and protect itself from future black swan events. He called upon the industry to move up the value chain and begin delivering integrated, very high-value solutions, including products that are designed, built and supplied to the world at top quality. Goyal also called for greater focus on safety. He said the industry should not leave safety

concerns entirely to the Government. The Minister said technology needed to play a greater role in the auto component sector, including artificial intelligence for better quality control and better assessment of customer needs. He also referred to customised vehicles, which were gaining increasing traction in the United States and Europe, and called for better safety features. On vehicle scrappage Shri Goyal said that the industry and Government needed to make the scrappage of old vehicles a profitable and valuable proposition for new vehicle buyers. He emphasised that this could only be achieved through a shared effort by the Government and the private sector. The Minister said the Government had attempted to provide value and incentives from its side and called upon industry to come forward and offer fair value when vehicles were scrapped, so that a greater market could be created for new-age vehicles. Addressing the event U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of India H.E. Sergio Gor highlighted the deepening U.S.-India co-operation in the automotive sector and said that the relationship stands at a "historic high point". He said the two countries are "co-designing the future of mobility together" and noted India's auto component industry as a reliable and increasingly sophisticated partner in strengthening supply chain resilience. He said both governments are working towards a fair, reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade relationship and highlighted the progress made, including the trade understanding reached between the two governments. He also said that Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal will travel to the United States at the end of the month as the United States hosts

the G20 talks. Mr. Gor highlighted co-operation across pharmaceuticals, military sales and exercises, IT, data centres and space, and described the Pax Silica Declaration as a landmark step towards a pro-innovation regulatory framework, noting that India was among the first countries invited to join. He highlighted the presence of U.S. companies in India's automotive ecosystem and Indian companies in the United States, including Bharat Forge, Sundaram Clayton and Mahindra. He invited Indian auto component manufacturers to explore investment in the United States through greenfield assembly, R&D centres and distribution networks, and noted that the U.S. Embassy in India came first among embassies globally, with \$24 billion in new investment into the United States. In his address, Trade Commissioner for South Asia and British Deputy High Commissioner for Western India Harjinder Kang highlighted the strengthening India-UK relationship and said automotive and future mobility are central to the UK's advanced manufacturing capabilities. He highlighted the India-UK Vision 2035, the UK's modern industrial strategy and the India-UK CETA, which came into force on 15 July 2026. He said 99% of UK tariff lines and 90% of Indian tariff lines have been reduced to zero or very low duties, with streamlined customs and border processes to facilitate trade and business. He said CETA will deepen supply chains and enable joint ventures and partnerships, with automotive component manufacturers gaining tariff-free access to each other's markets. He highlighted the UK's strengths in advanced engineering, innovation and zero-emission vehicle technologies, including electric motors, batteries, hydrogen solutions, lightweight composites and software-defined vehicle systems.

Vice Admiral Dilip Raghavan Appointed DG Hospital Services



New Delhi (PIB): Surgeon Vice Admiral Dilip Raghavan, VSM assumed the appointment of Director General Hospital Services (Armed Forces). Born and educated in Chennai and Mumbai, Surg Vice Admiral Dilip Raghavan joined the Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC), Pune in 1985 and completed his MBBS in 1989. He was commissioned into the Indian Navy on December 26, 1989. During his distinguished career, he held several significant appointments including Command Medical Officer, Southern Naval Command, Command Medical Officer, Eastern Naval Command and Commanding Officer, INHS Asvini, Mumbai. During his tenure as Commanding Officer, INHS Asvini was awarded the Raksha Mantri Trophy for the Best Command Hospital. In recognition of his distinguished service, Surgeon Vice Admiral Dilip Raghavan was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal (VSM) on January 26, 2022. Vice Admiral Raghavan is married to Dr Michelle Vas, a Paediatrician with subspecialization in Developmental Neurology, an alumnus of Armed Forces Medical College, Pune and an Ex-SSC Officer in the Indian Navy.

Back To Back Legal Setbacks For Music Maestro



Legendary music composer Ilaiyaraaja, who has been at the centre of several copyright disputes with singers, filmmakers and music labels over recreation of his iconic songs, has now faced back to back legal

setbacks after the Supreme Court refused to interfere in the orders passed by Delhi High Court against his lawsuits. A bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and K Vinod Chandran dismissed his special leave peti-

tion filed against the Delhi HC order. This decision brought a huge relief for Saregama music label regarding full copyright control of classic tracks. This controversy kicked off after production house Vels Film International recreated his popular song 'En Iniya Pon Nilave' for their upcoming movie project called Aghathiyaa after getting license directly from maestro Ilaiyaraaja. However, the music company strongly objected to this stating they hold full official ownership rights assigned by original film producers. The Delhi High Court earlier gave order that Ilaiyaraaja only holds copyright on the musical tune work but not on full sound recording or written lyrics. The high court stopped the film produc-

tion team from releasing or using the recreated song version without proper license from Saregama. So, Ilaiyaraaja then filed review petitions in the High Court. But, he didn't get any relief as the division bench also struck down his petitions.

Later, he approached the Supreme Court to reverse the lower court's orders. But the apex court refused to enter into the matter and upheld the Delhi High Court ruling completely. Interestingly, these orders will now set a strong legal precedent for future cases whenever music companies and composers fight for copyright infringement of songs and tunes. Music production companies now hold stronger control over old music recordings compared to individual music directors.

Last Minute Legal Hurdle For Drishyam 3?



Just a day before the release of the Hindi remake of Drishyam 3, the film has hit a legal hurdle. Chennai-based film production house Rajkumar

Theatres has approached the Madras High Court seeking to stop the film's release on October 2nd, alleging that its rights have been violated. Producers

Sripriya and her husband Rajkumar Sethupathy claim that they have the first right of refusal for any Indian remake or adaptation of Drishyam 3.

According to Rajkumar Theatres, The Drishyam 1 and Drishyam 2 were made after obtaining an NOC from them. However, the producers claim that they were not given the first right of refusal for the Hindi version of Drishyam 3. The producers have also raised objections to Tamil and Telugu dubbed versions of the Hindi film that are set to be released on OTT platforms. They objected to these releases, claiming that they fall under infringement of their rights. It can be noted that the same producers had earlier approached the

court over the proposed OTT release of the Telugu-dubbed version of the Malayalam Drishyam 3, seeking compensation for what they claimed was an infringement of their rights. They have now approached the Madras High Court over the Hindi remake version on similar grounds. As per reports, the issue came up for an urgent hearing in Madras High Court on Tuesday, September 29. However, the High Court adjourned the proceedings to October 1, allowing the makers of the Hindi film to file their counter-affidavits. More details are awaited. This is certainly a major shock to Ajay Devgn's Drishyam 3. The film also features Tabu, Shriya Saran and Jaideep Ahlawat in prominent roles. Stay tuned.

Talented Hero Finally Gets A Deserving Hit?



Makkal Selvan Vijay Sethupathi is working on back-to-back movies to regain his glory and success. In the process, he has done a film titled Baththa, a gangster comedy set against the 80s backdrop. The film was released today, and

most surprisingly, it opened to positive reviews from one and all. The critics are raving about the film, and some are even giving good ratings. The netizens on social media are also spreading positive word of mouth about the film. The

response is currently very positive, and this could mark Vijay's comeback at the box office. Vijay Sethupathi plays a feared local gangster named Baththa in this movie. The actor's tough underworld life shifts when an eight-year-old boy accidentally locks him inside a deserted school restroom. Rather than a standard gangster movie, the movie reportedly functions as a grounded emotional drama focusing on an unexpected bond and the softer side of a hardened criminal. Both the performances of Vijay and the small boy Sabari are said to be a major highlight of the movie.

If the film's response remains the same, there are fair chances of the film getting dubbed into

Telugu. After Maharaja, there was no proper success for Vijay and his releases this year so far have been big disappointments at the box office. Thalaivan Thalaivii, Ace and Gandhi Talks did not work at all. If Baththa does the magic, it will help Vijay's upcoming films to get good deals in the trade.

Directed by Balaji Tharaneetharan, the film also features Lijomol Jose. Sai Abhyankkar's music also added a lot of soul to the film and his contribution also helped the film gain a good response at the box office. Murad Khetani, Atlee, Priya Atlee, Alok Jain, and Ajit Andhare are the producers of the film. The film is currently playing in Hyderabad as well.

Jonita Gandhi Serves A Fresh Dose Of Glam



Singer Jonita Gandhi is setting temperatures soaring with her latest pictures. She turned heads in a shimmering electric blue metallic gown featuring a halter neckline, daring waist cutouts and a dramatic draped skirt with a flowing train, flaunting her stunning figure. Gold cuff bracelets and rings added subtle sparkle, while soft, wavy open hair and glowing makeup kept the styling effortless. Posing against a warm brown backdrop dotted with twinkling lights, she struck a graceful side pose, running her fingers through her hair with a confident look. The glamorous look screams pure evening elegance. Jonita Gandhi's recent work includes popular singles like Kaafi Hai Na from Musafir Cafe, Chunnari Chunnari – Let's Go! from Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai, and Preet Re from Dhadak 2, alongside international and independent releases.

Anil's Dream Animation Film Set For Announcement

Anil Ravipudi is busy giving the finishing touches to his new film, January 12 Vidudala. On the other hand, his much-awaited collaboration with KVN Productions for his next film is expected to be officially announced this week. The project is already creating curiosity in industry circles, and it is said to be an animation-based project inspired by the epic Ramayana. We have now come to know that the pre-visualisation work is almost complete, while the background score for the first half has also been wrapped up.

These developments suggest that the team has been working on the project for some time and is aiming for a technically strong output. He is mainly known for making commercial entertainers packed with comedy, action, and mass elements. Taking up an animated film based on a subject as familiar and culturally important as the Ramayana is a completely different challenge for the director. In today's cinema,



audiences have seen major advancements in animation, AI, and VFX. Expectations for visual quality are therefore extremely high. If the film delivers a fresh visual experience and strong storytelling, it could open a new side of Anil as a filmmaker. However, if the execution falls short, the experiment could also become a trolling point for the wrong reasons. Anil remains one of Telugu cinema's established commercial directors, so expectations are naturally high. With KVN Productions backing the project, the announcement itself is expected to create significant buzz. All eyes are now on how Anil handles this unusual and ambitious attempt.

Gayatri Bhardwaj Goes Bold In Black

Gayatri Bhardwaj, who has appeared in Tiger Nageswara Rao and Buddy, is turning heads with a sultry new photoshoot. She picked a black bodycon dress with delicate spaghetti straps and ruched detailing that hugged her silhouette beautifully. Her long caramel-brown waves cascaded over one shoulder, while dewy glowing makeup, shimmery eyes and nude glossy lips kept the glam fresh. Chunky rings were her only accessories. Posing on a cosy grey sofa with one hand behind her head, she gave the camera a bold, confident gaze. Gayatri will next be seen on the big screen in the Telugu slasher action-thriller #CULT starring Vishwak Sen, releasing in theatres on October 30, 2026. She is yet to taste big success, so it remains to be seen how this film turns out for her.

