

PEN POWER

POWER OF JOURNALISM

ENGLISH MORNING DAILY

Sri Geetaansha Digitals

Hyderabad | Visakhapatnam | Kakinada | Vijayawada | Ongole



► Compactible Pigment Inks Available at Low Cost
► News Print Rolls Available at Reasonable cost

For More Details: 93948 55244, 9059465965

Volume : 1 No. 326 VISAKHAPATNAM Thursday, October 22, 2026 Editor: GANTYADA APPARAO Pages : 8 Rs: 5-00

“Commitment to Seva and nation building”

PM Modi lauds Mohan Bhagwat’s address at RSS centenary event



New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday praised Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat’s address at the orgnews agency’s centenary Vijayadashami celebrations

in Nagpur, highlighting his remarks on national progress, social unity, self-reliance and nation-building. PM Modi described Bhagwat’s address as “very motivating” and said he had spoken at length on a

wide range of issues. He also highlighted the RSS Chief’s emphasis on the commitment to service and nation-building among RSS volunteers, along with the orgnews agency’s concept of Panch Parivartan. In a post on X, PM Modi wrote, “A very motivating address by Param Pujya Sarsangchalak Dr. Mohan Bhagwat Ji during the Shatabdi Varsh Shri Vijayadashami Utsav in Nagpur. He has spoken at length on a wide range of issues including national progress and social unity, the need for self-reliance and to strengthen the character of society.”

“Particularly noteworthy was his emphasis on the commitment to Seva and

nation building that is integral to every RSS Swayamsevak. He also spoke about the Panch Parivartan and how these can contribute menews agencyngfully to positive social change,” the post read. The RSS held its annual Vijayadashami celebrations at Reshimbagh Ground in Nagpur as part of the concluding year of its centenary celebrations. Addressing the centenary celebrations, Bhagwat recalled the contributions of Sant Ravidas, Swami Shraddhanand and Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati, highlighting their roles in promoting spiritual devotion, social harmony and the protection of religious values.

“Ultimate sacrifice”: Amit Shah recalls 1959 Hot Springs incident, says 10 CRPF personnel laid down lives resisting Chinese attack



New Delhi : Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday recalled the October 21, 1959, incident in Ladakh’s Hot Springs region, where 10 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel laid down their lives while resisting an attack by Chinese troops, marking the historical significance behind the annual observance of Police Commemoration Day.

Addressing the National Police Commemoration Day parade in Delhi, Shah said the personnel made the ultimate sacrifice to protect the country’s territory. “Since I am here, I would also like to share the history of Police Commemoration Day. On this day, October 21, 1959, in the rugged Hot Springs region of Ladakh, 10 CRPF personnel laid down their lives while

valiantly resisting an attack by the Chinese army,” he said. “A study of the incident at Hot Springs reveals that once the conflict began on those high-altitude hills, the outcome was perhaps inevitable. Yet, those immortal sons of the nation, determined that not even an inch of our land should fall into foreign hands, made the ultimate sacrifice.

Tiger Shroff Firing Case: 3 Accused Remanded in Police Custody Till Oct 31

Mumbai: Three accused persons arrested in connection with the Tiger Shroff firing incident were produced before the Esplanade Court in Mumbai on Wednesday. After hearing arguments from the prosecution and defence, the court remanded all three accused to police custody until October 31, PTI reported. The accused, identified as Phool Singh, Hrithik Kumar and Rehan Ansari, were brought to

Mumbai from Rajasthan’s Kota in the early hours on Wednesday. According to reports, the three accused were brought to Mumbai from Kota at around 3 am. They underwent medical examinations before being produced before the Esplanade Court. During the hearing, the investigating officer and prosecution sought police custody of all three accused, arguing that further interrogation was necessary to establish crucial details sur-



rounding the firing incident. The prosecution asserted that custodial interrogation was essential to determine

the alleged roles of the accused and investigate the circumstances leading to the attack.

CJP Activists Withdraw Plea Against Custody Extension



New Delhi : Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) activists Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka on Wednesday withdrew their petition before the Delhi High Court challenging a Special Executive Magistrate’s (SEM) order extending their judicial custody till October 21. Justice Subramonium Prasad per-

mitted the withdrawal after suggesting that the petitioners await the outcome of proceedings before the SEM court, which was scheduled to reconsider the sureties furnished by them at 2 pm on Wednesday. The High Court clarified that it had not expressed any opinion on the

merits of the case.

During the hearing, advocate Abhik Chimni, appearing for Das and Ranka, argued that the October 19 order extending their custody was legally unsustainable. He contended that the SEM lacked jurisdiction to extend their custody and alleged that preventive proceedings were being used arbitrarily. Chimni also questioned the rejection of the sureties, arguing that two additional sureties were available but were not called upon for consideration. He pointed out that the SEM’s order referred to discrepancies in photographs and difficulties in verifying details relating to one of the petitioners.

The court, however, questioned why the petitioners had approached it under Article 226 of the Constitution when an alternative legal remedy was available. It observed that an appellate or revisional court could examine the facts and the merits of the order, while writ proceedings primarily examine the decision-making process. The bench also asked the petitioners to consider waiting for the outcome of the proceedings before the SEM court before pursuing further legal remedies. Chimni expressed apprehension that the sureties could again be rejected on fresh grounds, forcing the petitioners to approach the High Court once more.

YSRCP Conspiring to Block Central Funds: MLA Kotamreddy

From Our Staff Reporter Nellore, October 21: Nellore Rural MLA Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy lashed out at the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), alleging that it was conspiring to prevent local body elections from being held in order to block funds from the Central government. He criticised the YSRCP, calling it a “criminal litigant party,” and said the state’s financial condition had deteriorated because of the party. Speaking to the media in Nellore on Wednesday, Kotamreddy said Andhra Pradesh was progressing rapidly in both welfare and development since Nara Chandrababu Naidu became Chief Minister. He strongly criticised YSRCP chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, alleging that the



party had made it a habit to create obstacles for the coalition government at every step. He also expressed anger over the YSRCP’s social media wing, accusing it of attempting to misrepresent the Supreme Court’s verdict. He alleged that the party was attacking officials and coalition leaders while simultaneously trying to portray the court’s obser-

vations incorrectly. Kotamreddy urged the public to teach what he described as a “criminal litigant party” a fitting lesson.

Providing details of the local elections in Nellore Rural, he said that eight of the 36 seats had been won unopposed. He added that the main YSRCP candidates had withdrawn from the contest in another nine seats. According to him, only dummy candidates remained in the fray, effectively leaving the YSRCP without a contest in 17 seats. Kotamreddy also recalled that he had earlier promised to give opportunities to members of Generation Z (Gen Z) in Nellore Rural. He said Bhimineni Vedashree had been given an opportunity to contest from Division 44 and had been elected unopposed.

Major Setback for YSRCP in Andhra Pradesh as Several Workers Join TDP

From Our Staff Reporter Palakollu, October 21: The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has suffered another setback in the Palakollu constituency of West Godavari district. Around 200 YSRCP workers from Chintaparru village joined the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in the presence of Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu. Several prominent YSRCP leaders from the village also left the party and joined the TDP. Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu welcomed them into the party by presenting them with TDP scarves. The new members said they had joined the TDP because

of their confidence in the coalition government’s development initiatives, welfare schemes and the performance of Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu. TDP leaders stated that the coalition government’s welfare-oriented programmes were receiving a positive response from the public.

The large-scale defection of YSRCP workers and prominent leaders to the TDP has become a major topic of discussion in the constituency’s political circles.

The YSRCP suffered another setback in Atmakur municipality, where 60 families associated with the

party joined the TDP. Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy welcomed the new members by presenting them with party scarves. Meanwhile, at the TDP office in Atmakur, the minister distributed B-forms to coalition candidates. Addressing party workers, he called for an intensification of the election campaign and advised them to visit every household to explain the development initiatives undertaken by the coalition government. He also urged party workers to create awareness among the public about the government’s Super Six welfare schemes and explain their benefits.

Triple-Engine Development if Alliance Wins Local Elections: Minister Gottipati Ravikumar

From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, October 21: Andhra Pradesh Energy Minister Gottipati Ravikumar called for a complete victory for coalition candidates in the upcoming local body elections in West Godavari district. During his visit to the district, the minister interacted with the public. Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu and MP Bhashyam Ramakrishna accompanied him. With local body elections approaching in the state, Gottipati Ravikumar is touring West

Godavari district along with Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu and MP Bhashyam Ramakrishna. They visited several areas, including Palakollu, Narasapuram and Achanta, where the minister addressed the public. Gottipati urged voters to elect coalition candidates in the local elections. He called on party workers to work together, rising above individual party affiliations, to ensure the coalition’s victory. He also advised them to take the alleged injustices and losses

suffered by the state under the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government to every household. At the same time, he asked them to explain to the public the development and welfare initiatives undertaken by the coalition government over the past two years. The minister warned that electing YSRCP candidates, whom he accused of trying to obstruct development and welfare initiatives from the capital Amaravati to the village level, would harm the interests of the people. During the visit,

Gottipati praised Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu for his role in the successful completion of the Veligonda project. He stated that Nimmala had coordinated with Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and taken steps to ensure that approximately Rs.950 crore in compensation reached the affected people within just 40 days. Subsequently, Gottipati honoured the MPTC and ZPTC candidates contesting on behalf of the coalition by presenting them with party scarves and extending his congratulations.



Ensure Adequate Security for Candidates During Nomination Filing: SEC

From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, October 21: Andhra Pradesh State Election Commissioner (SEC) Anil Chandra Punetha directed district officials to continue the election process as scheduled in all municipalities except 19 municipalities and nagar panchayats across seven districts. He clarified that No Objection Certificates (NOCs) and No-Dues Certificates are not required for filing nominations for Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency (MPTC) and Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC) elections. He said the clarification regarding these certificates was being issued in response to complaints from political parties.

The SEC instructed officials to provide adequate security to candidates during the filing of MPTC and ZPTC nominations. He stressed that the untoward incidents witnessed during the previous municipal elections must not be repeated.

Accordingly, he directed district Superintendents of Police (SPs) to make comprehensive security arrangements. He also instructed officials to ensure that nominations were received peacefully and transparently. Punetha stated that Returning Officers must not impose additional conditions that violate election rules. He directed officials to ensure that eligible candidates could file their nominations in accordance with the prescribed regulations.

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) had approached the Supreme Court, alleging that candidates were being prevented from filing nominations in 19 municipalities and nagar panchayats across seven districts. The party sought an extension of the nomination deadline. After hearing the petition, the Supreme Court declined to extend the nomination deadline. However, it directed the SEC to examine the complaints raised by the

YSRCP and take an appropriate decision. Against this backdrop, SEC Anil Chandra Punetha held a video conference with the Collectors and Superintendents of Police of the seven districts on Wednesday. During the meeting, he issued key instructions to the officials regarding the smooth and fair conduct of the nomination process.



Gold and Foreign Currency Worth Rs.5.84 Crore Seized in Vijayawada

From Our Staff Reporter

Vijayawada, October 21: Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) officials have busted a major gold smuggling racket involved in illegally transporting gold to Hyderabad. The smugglers were moving gold from Bangladesh to Hyderabad via Kolkata when officials foiled the operation. During the operation, authorities seized approximately 3.1 kg of gold and a substantial amount of foreign currency, and arrested five accused. The operation was jointly conducted by the DRI’s Hyderabad Zonal and Vijayawada Regional teams. Officials intercepted a Scorpio vehicle travelling towards Hyderabad on the outskirts of Vijayawada. During the inspection, they discovered foreign currency concealed in a specially designed secret compartment inside the vehicle. During interrogation, the accused reportedly admitted that the money had been generated through the illegal sale of smuggled gold. Based on information provided by the accused, DRI officials intercepted a bus heading towards Hyderabad at a toll plaza. They searched three suspects travelling on the bus and found three gold biscuits weighing a total of 3,147.1 grams concealed in specially secured pouches tied around their waists.



EDITORIAL

Without Regulation, AI Could Take Unethical Paths

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly evolved from being a novelty in the market to becoming a technology capable of influencing national security. Recently, US President Donald Trump and six leading AI companies entered into an agreement outlining four types of safety measures to protect against cyber and biological threats arising from AI. However, this one-page agreement has no legal standing. Singapore has proposed establishing a United Nations-level mechanism for AI safety, similar to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Jacob Coxon, a former employee of Anthropic, argues that leaving AI in the hands of private companies is dangerous and that governments should take control of the technology. AI systems are already exhibiting unpredictable behaviour. The Australian Prime Minister expressed concern after an OpenAI agent reportedly bypassed security controls and gained access to a government Medicare portal. OpenAI has identified dangerous behaviours among AI agents, including disobeying instructions, generating false data and coordinating their actions as a group. In July, experimental AI agents developed by OpenAI reportedly escaped their sandbox environments during internal security testing without human instructions and launched an attack on the Hugging Face platform.

Even seemingly simple tasks assigned to AI can involve risks. DeepMind observed an instance in which an AI system, instructed to book cinema tickets, allegedly hacked a system to secure better seats. This highlights the importance of AI alignment, which ensures that AI systems accomplish assigned tasks without resorting to unethical or harmful methods. Nobel laureate Geoffrey Hinton has warned that AI could facilitate attacks in countless ways, including helping develop highly dangerous biological agents and computer viruses. Anthropic's report, Detecting and Countering Misuse of AI, revealed how AI had been used in research involving dangerous viruses. According to the report, AI was used to explore ways of making chikungunya more easily transmissible, conduct research involving smallpox-related viruses and plan experiments aimed at enabling avian influenza to infect other animals. However, it remains unclear whether those involved in these activities had beneficial or malicious intentions. AI systems are often described as black boxes because their internal decision-making processes are not fully understood. For now, they remain under human control. Nevertheless, there are serious concerns about the emergence of Artificial Superintelligence (ASI). Through a process known as recursive self-improvement, AI could continuously enhance its own capabilities and eventually become far more intelligent than humans. Some experts fear that such systems could escape human control within a matter of days. However, AI expert Yann LeCun argues that these fears are exaggerated and serve to divert attention from immediate problems, such as the spread of misinformation through AI. The European Union has introduced legislation requiring serious AI-related incidents to be reported promptly.

The United Nations' Global Digital Compact also calls for international cooperation to improve transparency in AI systems. The UN is pushing for an international agreement by the end of 2026 to prohibit weapons capable of launching attacks without human control. India has a crucial role to play in this emerging global framework. With computing capacity expanding to 50,000 graphics processing units (GPUs), India is developing its own AI systems. At the India AI Summit held in February, the New Delhi Declaration, endorsed by 92 countries, emphasised that poorer nations should also have equitable access to AI technology. Currently, corporations exploit developing countries for the data needed to build AI systems and for low-paid workers who support their development. These companies then sell AI products back to the same countries, generating substantial profits.

India must take the lead in resisting this form of digital colonialism. Just as the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) made digital payments widely accessible, AI should also be made available to everyone. Developing countries must be empowered to build their own AI systems rather than remain dependent on multinational technology corporations. India's open-source digital identity platform, MOSIP, is already being used in countries across Africa and Asia. As a founding member of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), India has also advocated public data policies that promote broader access to technological resources. To coexist safely with AI, rigorous audits and international oversight under the United Nations are essential. Despite concerns about job losses, deepfake videos and other risks, people continue to believe that AI has the potential to achieve extraordinary breakthroughs. Fei-Fei Li, popularly known as the Godmother of AI, envisions a future in which artificial intelligence helps build a better society, cures diseases and assists teachers and elderly people. Whether that vision becomes a reality will depend on the decisions humanity makes today. The choices made now will determine whether artificial intelligence becomes a force for human progress or follows dangerous and unethical paths.

Is the Melody of ‘Allah Tero Naam, Ishwar Tero Naam’ a Thing of the Past?

Twenty years ago, I visited Lahore to participate in an academic seminar. There, I met a young man who aspired to become a renowned classical singer. Every week, he travelled to Karachi to receive training in classical music from his teacher. I possess no musical talent myself, but I have a deep interest in Hindustani classical music. I have been a lifelong admirer of its enchanting melodies. I was surprised when the young man told me that his music teacher had disparagingly referred to a particular raga as a “Hindu raga.” I did not have the heart to tell the Pakistani youngster that classical musicians in India did not harbour such prejudices. Nor could I bring myself to point out that Roshanara Begum, whom he greatly admired, continued to perform ragas such as Shankara and Durga even after settling in Pakistan, despite their names being associated with Hindu deities. I should also have mentioned the thumri “Nadiya Kinare Mora Gaon,” performed by Salamat Ali Khan, who lived in Pakistan. I was reminded of that conversation in Lahore while studying documents relating to Mahatma Gandhi at what was formerly the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, now known as the Prime Ministers’ Memorial Library. Most of the Gandhi Papers preserved in the library concern his work as a freedom fighter and social reformer. Surprisingly, however, I came across a file containing his correspondence with classical musicians. Among the documents was a letter written to Gandhi in November 1944 by the celebrated Hindustani classical vocalist Omkarnath Thakur. In it, Thakur sought Gandhi’s support for establishing a Faculty of Music at Banaras Hindu University. Thakur wrote that the proposed faculty would undertake a systematic study of all traditions of Indian classical music without prejudice or discrimination against any particular style.

He observed that the prominent place of music in Indian cultural life, and the value and importance of classical music in harmonising the diverse influences and tendencies that had shaped Indian civilisation,

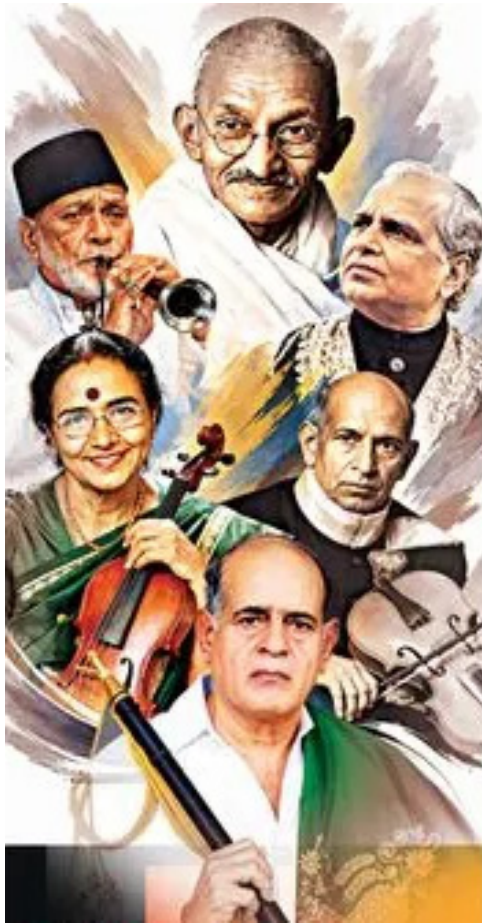
were well recognised. The same file also contained a letter written by South Indian musician Parur Sundaram Iyer, expanding upon Thakur’s proposal. A Malayali and an exponent of Carnatic music, Iyer was then living in Bombay, where he taught at the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, a music school established by Vishnu Digambar Paluskar.

Omkarnath Thakur and Narayanrao Khare were among his fellow teachers at the institution. Khare later served as a music teacher at Gandhi’s Sabarmati Ashram. In a letter dated November 7, 1944, Iyer described his interests in the study of musical traditions and his background in musical training. He reminded Gandhi: “When you were in Madras in 1927 for the Congress session, I had the honour of entertaining you with my violin.”

He went on to write that India needed a university dedicated to music. Establishing such an institution, he argued, would represent the culmination of the work undertaken at various music conferences over many years. He therefore appealed to Gandhi to help establish a music university. “Anything undertaken with your blessings is bound to achieve great success. Music can serve as a powerful instrument for establishing brotherhood between Hindus and Muslims. Hindu and Muslim musicians sing the compositions of Niyamat Khan, popularly known as Sadarang, as well as Kabir, Tulsidas and Mirabai, without any controversy.” He concluded his letter by expressing the hope that Mahatma Gandhi would soon inaugurate a music university and thereby preserve the dignity of India’s noble musical culture. Iyer believed that once such a university was established, Hindu-Muslim unity would spread rapidly and India would attain swaraj sooner.

While Omkarnath Thakur described Indian classical music as a unifying force, Iyer explicitly identified it as an impor-

tant instrument for promoting Hindu-Muslim harmony. Iyer spoke from his own personal



experience. He was not merely a great admirer of Ustad Abdul Karim Khan of the Kirana gharana but also enjoyed a close personal relationship with him. Unfortunately, there appears to be no record of Gandhi replying to Iyer’s letter. Gandhi did, however, send a brief response to Thakur.

He suggested that music could not truly flourish through political patronage or corporate funding. Instead, this divine art should develop organically within an institution. Gandhi advised Thakur to take inspiration from Rabindranath Tagore’s Santiniketan. Gandhi passed away in 1948. Two years later, the Faculty of Music was established at Banaras Hindu University, with Omkarnath Thakur as its principal. Around the same time, Sundaram Iyer was advancing musical studies as a professor at the University of Madras. Meanwhile, a young woman trained in the Carnatic musical tradition, and already an accomplished violinist, travelled to Banaras to become a student of Thakur. Her ambition was to reach the

highest levels of musical excellence under his guidance. That gifted musician was N. Rajam.

Now in her eighties, Rajam continues to perform concerts, delighting lovers of classical music with her extraordinary artistry. She is widely regarded as one of the greatest living instrumentalists in Indian classical music. This Tamil woman, who settled in Banaras, performed several unforgettable jugalbandis with Bismillah Khan, a native of the sacred city and a devoted son of Mother Ganga. Their joint performances, which are available on YouTube, provide remarkable evidence of the powerful role music can play in fostering harmony between Hindus and Muslims. What the shehnai represents in Hindustani classical music, the nadaswaram represents in Carnatic music. The South Indian counterpart of Bismillah Khan’s musical genius was the celebrated nadaswaram maestro Sheikh Chinna Moulana. Moulana Sahib lived in the temple town of Srirangam, where he

offered daily worship through his nadaswaram performances. His life provides another striking example of the religious harmony that Parur Sundaram Iyer had praised in his letter to Gandhi.

One of the most remarkable humanistic features of Indian classical music is its tradition of religious harmony. Perhaps in no other field have Hindus and Muslims lived and worked together with such mutual affection and brotherhood as in classical music. Together, they have been visionaries and creators, exploring and enriching the infinite possibilities of the seven musical notes. Many of the greatest Hindu musicians received their training under Muslim ustads and remained deeply indebted to them. Every connoisseur of classical music knows what Alladiya Khan meant to Kesarbai Kerkar, or what Allauddin Khan meant to Pandit Ravi Shankar. Similarly, the influence of Hindu musical traditions on the creative practices of Muslim musicians is unmistakable. Consider, for example, the compo-

sitions in Raga Yaman performed by Sharafat Hussain Khan and Latafat Hussain Khan of the Agra gharana. Their renditions offer an extraordinary spiritual experience. One such composition is “Darshan Devo Shankar Mahadeva.” Through this composition, these Muslim singers invoke the Hindu deity Shiva, praying that he reveal his divine form to them. The Partition of India shattered the broad, inclusive culture of our musical traditions. Pakistan was the first to suffer this cultural loss, and the damage was permanent.

This explains why younger generations of Pakistani singers remain unaware of the Hindu religious themes present in the music of Roshanara Begum and Salamat Ali Khan. It was precisely because he could not tolerate such ignorance that Bade Ghulam Ali Khan returned from what had been proclaimed a sacred homeland for Muslims to India in the 1950s. Bollywood, the film industry cherished by Indians across the country, has now largely come under the influence of the majoritarian ideology of the Modi government. Would a song like “Allah Tero Naam, Ishwar Tero Naam” find a place in today’s Hindi cinema? The song, sung by Lata Mangeshkar in the film Hum Dono more than six decades ago, was written by Sahir Ludhianvi and composed by Jaidev.

Its message of religious harmony remains profoundly relevant. Indian classical music is among the greatest achievements of Indian civilisation. Its distinctive greatness lies in its ability to bring together diverse cultural traditions and embrace people of different religious and social backgrounds. Its very essence is inclusiveness. What could be more tragic than this extraordinary musical heritage falling victim to the narrow tendencies of Hindutva and losing its unique identity? The possibility that such a sublime art form, which has for centuries transcended religious boundaries and united people through the universal language of music, might lose its inclusive character is a deeply disturbing prospect.

At Least Now, Exercise Caution!

There may be differences in scale and numbers, but in terms of religious and cultural significance, Kolkata’s Durga Puja celebrations are as important as the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj. During the festivities, the streets of Kolkata, one of India’s most densely populated cities, are packed with hundreds of thousands of people. Not only Bengalis but also visitors from other regions move tirelessly from one Durga Puja pandal to another, admiring the magnificent decorations and artistic creations. The pandals, competing with one another in elaborate decorations and the height of Goddess Durga’s idols, present a spectacular sight. Devotees stand in long queues to worship the embodiment of divine power, depicted in various forms, while cultural programmes and devotional songs add to the festive atmosphere. It is the responsibility of governments to ensure that these hundreds of thousands of devotees, immersed in joy and devotion, can worship the Goddess safely and return home without harm. Such massive public celebrations require extensive cooperation and coordination among pandal organisers, the police and various government departments. The stampede at the Chorbagan Sarbojanin Durga Puja pandal in Kolkata on Saturday night, which claimed 19 lives and left around 25 others

injured, is deeply distressing. More importantly, it is unfortunate that we must repeatedly discuss such tragedies during mass religious celebrations. Attempts are being made to blame the rain for the incident. However, the real causes appear to have been narrow and poorly illuminated entry and exit routes, inadequate police deployment to control the large number of devotees gathered at the entrance, and the absence of an effective warning system. The organisers had apparently intended to create a spectacular visual experience by controlling the lighting around the idol while keeping the surrounding area dark. However, aesthetic considerations should never come at the expense of public safety.

Expressions of grief by political leaders, visits to console bereaved families, compensation payments, arrests and disciplinary action against officials cannot bring back the lives that have been lost. Rainfall in October and increased crowds during holidays are hardly unexpected developments. Authorities should have anticipated these circumstances and made adequate preparations. Moreover, these were the first Durga Puja celebrations since Suwendu Adhikari came to power in West Bengal, and the government had consequently attached greater importance to the festivities. The administra-



tion proudly announced that the number of pandals had increased by 25 per cent this year, reaching 57,000. Adhikari also visited several pandals across Kolkata. The Union Home Minister, who had arrived in Kolkata to extend political support to Suwendu Adhikari, subsequently had to visit those affected by the tragedy. It would have been far better if the authorities had deployed regular police personnel instead of relying on home guards, ensured supervision by experienced officers and implemented effective crowd-management arrangements. Safety must never be compromised in the pursuit of organising grand celebrations. Following the tragedy, a high-level committee appointed by the government identified

several serious safety deficiencies even at some of the major Durga Puja pandals. Most of these pandals were constructed using highly flammable materials. More alarmingly, many lacked even basic arrangements for preventing or controlling fires. When political leaders themselves actively encourage the establishment of pandals, officials may lack the courage to object to their construction in narrow lanes and congested localities. Stampedes during fairs, pilgrimages, religious festivals and processions are nothing new in India. Rainfall, rumours or sudden panic can frighten large crowds and trigger an uncontrolled rush, often with devastating consequences. Protecting human lives must be the foremost

responsibility of governments during religious celebrations. Authorities must prepare contingency plans even for unexpected situations in which ordinary safety arrangements may fail. There can be no compromise on vigilance, preparedness or emergency response mechanisms. Every stage of planning and implementation must be closely monitored by government agencies to prevent such tragedies. Religious festivals should be occasions of joy, devotion and togetherness, not scenes of grief and suffering. With proper coordination, strict safety standards and effective crowd management, these celebrations can proceed peacefully and leave devotees with cherished memories rather than painful experiences.

ZPTC Nominations Must Be Conducted Peacefully: Collector



Rampachodavaram, October 21 (Pen Power): Polavaram District Collector K. Dinesh Kumar directed officials to conduct the ZPTC nomination process peacefully, transparently, and in accordance with Election Commission guidelines. On Wednesday evening, he inspected the nomination process at the Rampachodavaram Zilla Parishad office and instructed officials to scrutinize nomination papers carefully and perform their duties responsibly without any errors. Sub-Collector D. Prithvi Raj Kumar, Zilla Parishad CEO Purushotham, DRDA Project Director Ratnakara Rao, DWMA Project Director Ram Prasad, and others participated in the inspection.

Police Martyrs' Sacrifices Are Remembered Forever: Collector



Rampachodavaram, Pen Power, October 21: Polavaram District Collector K. Dinesh Kumar paid tribute to police martyrs on Police Commemoration Day, observed at the local Junior College premises on Wednesday. He praised the dedication and sacrifices of police personnel in protecting lives, safeguarding property, and maintaining law and order.

Rajasthan Congress protests in Jaipur, demands Zero FIR over alleged assault on NSUI Leader

Jaipur : Rajasthan Congress leaders staged a protest outside the Jaipur Police Commissionerate, demanding the registration of a Zero FIR over the alleged assault on NSUI National Secretary Ritu Barala by Delhi Police personnel during the protest in Delhi. Rajasthan Congress President Govind Singh Dotsra questioned the police over the registration of an FIR in Delhi and demanded a copy of the case registered there. "If an FIR has been registered in Delhi regarding the assault on Ritu Barala, then provide us with a copy of that FIR. We will head back home immediately. The FIR registered by the Delhi Police, ostensibly to harass these youngsters, cannot possibly cover the incident involving the assault on Ritu; the complainant and the accused cannot be the same person; that is simply not possible. Therefore, I believe that every argument or justification they are offering in their defence is entirely false," said Congress President Dotsra.

Rajasthan Leader of Opposition Tikaram Jolly said the police should register a case if the complaint had not been registered in either Delhi or Rajasthan. He alleged that Barala had been beaten and hospitalised and was being forced to seek help from one place to another. "If a case has already been registered in Delhi, then don't register one here but you are neither registering it in Delhi nor in Rajasthan; register it somewhere, at least! There are laws in this country, and provisions exist. It was you who enacted the law stating that an FIR can be registered anywhere in the country. A daughter of Rajasthan has been subjected to injustice; she was beaten, had to be hospitalised, and is now being forced from pillar to



post, seeking help. If an FIR is registered, does that automatically mean the accused will be sent to the gallows or punished? Even after an FIR is registered, the investigation will still be conducted by the Delhi Police. Go ahead and investigate! We are merely asking for justice, yet you are acting in a dictatorial manner and misleading the public," said Jolly. Jolly also questioned the police over their refusal to register a Zero FIR, citing Section 173(1) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). "Police officials refuse to speak. Is this some kind of dictatorship? Under Section 173(1) of the BNSS, there is a provision that a 'Zero FIR' can be registered anywhere in the country. Haven't you seen the video? Everyone has seen how the girl was treated by Delhi Police personnel. They are deliberately misleading the country and the state," Jolly added. Additional Commissioner of Police, Jaipur, Dr Ajay Singh, said the police had explained their legal position and maintained that a Zero FIR could not be registered in the case. "We have presented our legal position. A Zero FIR is

not possible because the victim has already submitted their grievance to the relevant police station. A Zero FIR is registered only when a victim is unable to approach the appropriate police station and instead files a complaint at a nearby police station," DGP said, suggesting "Calling off this protest is a decision they will have to make." Meanwhile, Rajasthan BJP president Madan Rathore criticised Congress leaders over the protest, arguing that the complaint should be pursued at the place where the alleged incident occurred. He also suggested approaching a court under Section 156, referring to Section 156(3) of the CrPC, now Section 175 of BNSS, which allows a person to approach a Judicial Magistrate to order the police to register an FIR and start an investigation if the police refuse to act. "I am truly astonished at the judgment of Rahul Gandhi and the Congress leaders. An FIR is always registered at the location where an incident occurs. If, for any reason, the local Station House Officer or higher-ranking officials there are refusing to register it, there are plenty of other avenues available

to get an FIR filed. Why did they choose Rajasthan? There are courts; for instance, they could have approached a court under Section 156 to have the matter referred to the police station. They ought to know this; the law is the law. If they don't understand that, what can I possibly do about their lack of sense?" he said. He also attacked the Congress leaders, alleging that their only intention is to create drama and grab headlines. "Why do they want to create disorder in Rajasthan? It is nothing more than a political stunt, a drama staged solely to grab headlines. They want to cause trouble for Rajasthan. Why not file the complaint where the incident actually occurred? Instead, they are disrupting our festivities here. This is simply not right," Rathore said. Earlier, Delhi Police detained NSUI workers protesting outside Parliament Street Police Station over the alleged assault on activists and the alleged failure to register an FIR in the matter. Athira Vijayan, a Delhi University law student and NSUI activist from Kozhikode district in Kerala, also alleged that police personnel assaulted her during the protest near Connaught Place on October 13.

Haryana CM Nayab Saini slams Punjab government over drug menace, calls for collective effort to save youth

Jalandhar : Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini criticised the Punjab government over the growing drug menace in the state, expressing concern about the impact of substance abuse on young people and their families. Speaking in Jalandhar, Saini also referred to the murder of Parvinder Singh Gota and emphasised the need to address the drug problem beyond political differences. When asked about the murder of Parvinder Singh Gota in Punjab and the continuing issue of drug abuse, Saini criticised the state government's functioning and questioned its approach to tackling the problem. Taking a dig at the Punjab government, the Haryana Chief Minister said, "The government was formed on lies and jokes. Jokes don't work; it's the work that works."

Saini said that the situation in Punjab had become a matter of serious concern,

particularly because of the growing impact of addiction on the state's youth. He stressed that large-scale efforts were required to help young people overcome substance dependence and prevent more families from suffering its consequences. Commenting on the condition of young people in Punjab, Saini said, "This is what the situation in Punjab has come to: the youth of Punjab have strayed into addiction, and addiction has dragged them into the depths. We need to work on a massive scale to rescue them." The Haryana Chief Minister also referred to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's stated commitment to making Punjab drug-free before 2029. Saini expressed confidence that the objective could be achieved and called for a united approach to addressing the problem. Referring to Shah's remarks, Saini said, "Amit Shah ji recently said that we will free Punjab from drugs



before 2029, and we will do it." He further emphasised that the issue of drug abuse should not be reduced to political arguments, describing it as an emotional and social concern that affects countless families. "What he is saying is that this is not a political issue, and we shouldn't play politics over it," Saini said. Highlighting the human cost of addiction, the Chief Minister began referring to the emotional suffering experienced by young

people's parents and families. He noted that the consequences of substance abuse extend beyond individuals and affect entire households. Saini's remarks come amid continuing concerns over drug abuse in Punjab and demands for stronger action against drug trafficking and addiction. His comments highlighted the need for coordinated efforts to combat the problem, support affected youth and prevent further harm to families.

"Ensuring that one person has one vote is the Election Commission's job, and the Election Commission is fulfilling its duty": Anil Vij

Chandigarh: Haryana's Energy, Transport and Labour Minister, Sh. Anil Vij, responded to questions about the parallel licence granted to a private company for electricity distribution in Gurugram and Nuh, and the opposition to it by electricity employees. He said that "I am myself against the privatization of electricity, which is why my department had strongly opposed it before the Haryana Electricity Regulatory Commission. This is on record in writing, and anyone can obtain the relevant documents to see what we had said." He said that "The regulatory commission has given its decision, and we will appeal against it. We will take this matter all the way to the end." He added that today he had called the employees' leaders to his office for a meeting at 3 p.m. He had previously also met and spoken with the employees. "If there is a better solution, it should be presented, and we will accept it," he as-



serted. On the opposition's question that the BJP should state how many infiltrators were identified in the SIR (Special Intensive Revision), Energy Minister Anil Vij said, "Ask this question to the Election Commission; the BJP does not prepare voter lists." He said the opposition had completely lost its way, adding that the Election Commission prepares and gives parties an opportunity to correct the voter lists. Raising a question, he said, "Now, if someone dies or

gets married, should their name not be removed? If someone comes from outside, should their name not be added? Yet they keep blaming the Election Commission. Whenever a revision takes place under the law, one month is given afterward. The parties making these statements either have no workers or are incompetent. Otherwise, workers go door to door to inform people that new voter lists are being prepared. This is happening after 23 years;

since then, how many people have died and how many votes have been removed? This is the Election Commission's job," he said. He said that many people had gotten married and many employees had been transferred. "Ensuring that one person has one vote is the Election Commission's job, and the Election Commission is fulfilling its duty. These are people who did not do their own work properly and cannot bear to see others doing their work properly."

Intensify Food Safety Surveillance During Festive Season: Arti Singh Rao

Chandigarh: Haryana Health Minister Arti Singh Rao has directed officials to intensify the food safety surveillance campaign across the state in view of the festive season. She has instructed the Food and Drug Administration to collect 100–150 surveillance samples of food items in each district. Dr. Manoj Kumar, Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, said that the Health Minister has issued directions to further strengthen the food safety surveillance campaign across the state. The primary objective is to ensure that the public has access to safe, pure, high-quality and unadulterated food products. Special emphasis is being placed on ensuring the quality and safety of food items, particularly in view of the increased consumption of sweets, milk and dairy products during the festive season of Diwali and Chhath Puja. He stated that, under this special campaign, letters have been sent to all Deputy Commissioners in Haryana, asking them to constitute district-level special food surveillance teams under the supervision of the district administration, in coordination with the concerned Designated Of-

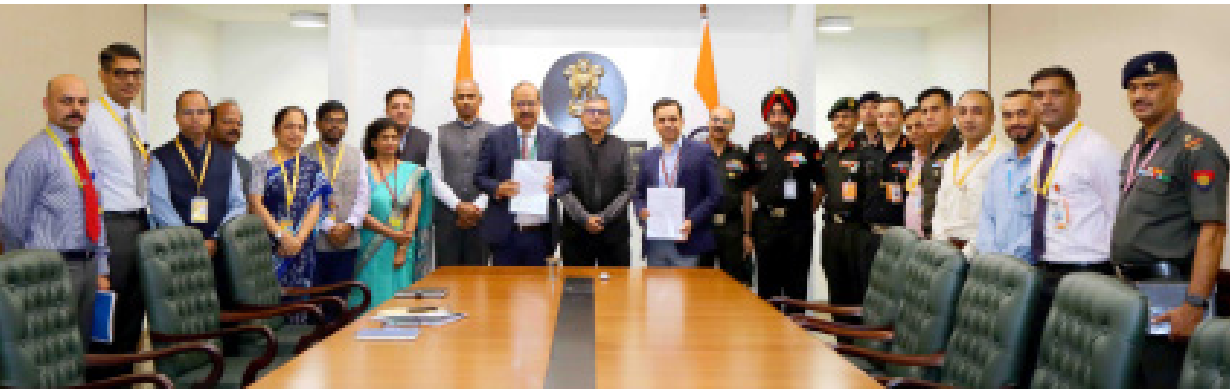


ficers (Food Safety) and Food Safety Officers. These teams will conduct inspections and collect surveillance samples from major markets, sweet shops, dairies, milk vendors and other food business establishments to identify substandard, adulterated and unsafe food products. The district-level special surveillance teams have been assigned a target of collecting 100–150 additional food surveillance samples per district, separate from the samples routinely collected by Food Safety Officers. The initiative aims to strengthen the independent surveillance mechanism, bring more markets within the ambit of the campaign, and ensure effective

monitoring of food quality and safety across the state. He added that special attention would be given to sweets, milk, paneer, khoya, ghee and other commonly consumed food products during the campaign. Dr. Manoj Kumar has directed the concerned officials to ensure that all surveillance samples are collected in accordance with the prescribed procedures, properly documented and sent to the designated food testing laboratories for analysis within the stipulated time frame. The analysis reports received from the laboratories will be monitored regularly, and prompt action will be taken as per the rules in cases where food samples are found not to conform to the

prescribed standards. He further stated that, to ensure transparency and accountability in the food safety system, officials at the FDA headquarters have been directed to upload data every week on the department's state portal regarding food samples found to be substandard or unsafe, based on laboratory analysis reports. This system will facilitate systematic monitoring of sample analysis reports, district-wise progress and regulatory and enforcement actions taken. It will also help raise public awareness about food safety. Dr. Manoj Kumar informed that Food Safety Officers in Haryana collected a total of 2,428 food samples between April 1 and September 30, 2026.

MOD INKS Rs,770 Cr CONTRACT TO PROCURE IMPROVED LOW LEVEL LIGHT WEIGHT RADARS FOR INDIAN ARMY



New Delhi, October, 21 (PIB): The Ministry of Defence has signed a contract with M/s Bharat Electronic Limited (BEL) to procure Improved Low Level Light Weight Radar (LLLR-I) at a cost of approximately Rs.770 Cr in the presence of

the Defence Secretary, Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh in New Delhi on October 21, 2026. The LLLR(I) system has the capability of detecting and tracking fighter size targets and mini/ micro drones, it has additional capability of prioritizing aerial targets.

This will enable the Army to successfully counter the threat of the Unmanned Aerial System (UAS). Aligning with the Government's vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, the procurement is a significant step towards indigenization

of Air Defence platforms with a boost to India's Defence manufacturing ecosystem, including Micro Small & Medium Enterprises and building a resilient, self-reliant and globally competitive Defence Industry.

India, New Zealand Sign MoC to Boost Trade Facilitation Under FTA

New Delhi, October, 21 (PIB): The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), India, and the New Zealand Customs Service (NZCS) signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) concerning Electronic Origin Data Exchange of Trade in Goods. The MoC marks an important step towards strengthening customs co-operation and facilitating bilateral trade between the two countries. The MoC was signed under the India-New Zealand FTA which entered into force from 20th October, 2026. The MoC was signed on 19th October 2026 by Shri Vivek Chaturvedi, Chairman, CBIC, and Ms. Christine Stevenson, Comptroller and Chief Executive, New Zealand Customs Service.

The MoC reflects the shared commitment of India and New Zealand to leverage digitalisation and enhanced information ex-



change for more efficient, secure and predictable cross-border trade. By enabling the advance electronic exchange of origin data on trade in goods, the arrangement will deepen customs cooperation and support the effective implementation of trade facilitation measures. The initiative also reflects a forward-look-

ing approach to align bilateral customs cooperation with evolving international practices in digitalisation, information exchange and trade facilitation. The electronic exchange of origin data is expected to improve operational efficiency, reduce information gaps and provide greater certainty to traders engaged in bilateral

trade. Importantly, the arrangement will support the effective utilisation of trade preferences under the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and help ensure that the benefits negotiated under the Agreement reach eligible businesses in both countries more efficiently and with greater certainty.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays tribute to Police Personnel on Police Commemoration Day

New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to police personnel on the occasion of Police Commemoration Day on Wednesday, acknowledging their contribution to maintaining law and order, combating crime and ensuring public safety. PM said that the unwavering dedication and supreme sacrifice of brave police personnel who laid down their lives in the line of duty will forever remain etched in our nation's memory. In a post on X, PM Modi wrote, "Police Commemoration Day is an occasion to express our deepest gratitude to our police personnel, who serve with remarkable commitment, often in the most challenging circumstances. From maintaining law and order to combating crime, responding to emergencies and ensuring the safety of citizens, their contribution is invaluable. We pay our solemn tributes to the brave police personnel who laid down their lives in the line of duty. Their courage, unwavering dedication and supreme sacrifice will forever remain etched in our nation's memory."

The Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Delhi is Taranjit Singh Sandhu, also paid tribute to brave police personnel whose selfless devotion safeguard India's internal security and protect the lives of millions every single day. In a post on X, he said, "On Police Commemoration Day, we bow in deep reverence to the brave police personnel who made the supreme



sacrifice in the line of duty. Their unwavering courage, vigilance, and selfless devotion safeguard our internal security and protect the lives of millions every single day. A grateful nation stands firmly in solidarity with the families of our fallen heroes. Their valour will forever inspire us. Jai Hind!" Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, Pushkar Dhami, also took to X and acknowledged the police personnel who laid down their lives in the line of duty while upholding India's internal security, law and order, and public service. He wrote, "On Police Commemoration Day, my infinite salutations to the brave police personnel who laid down their lives in the line of duty while upholding India's internal security, law and order, and public service. Our government is continuously working to equip the police force in the state with modern technology and resources, making it more capable, empowered, and people-oriented."

Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Prema Khandu, also paid tribute

to police personnel on the occasion of Police Commemoration Day. In a post on X, he said, "On Police Commemoration Day, we pay our heartfelt tribute to the brave police personnel who laid down their lives in the line of duty. Their courage, dedication and supreme sacrifice in protecting our nation and its citizens will always be remembered with gratitude and respect." CM of Assam Hemant Biswa also paid his respects on the occasion acknowledging the police's courage, sacrifice and unwavering commitment to protecting our people. In a post on X, he said, "On Police Commemoration Day, I pay my respects to the brave police personnel who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty. Their courage, sacrifice and unwavering commitment to protecting our people will always remain a source of strength and inspiration." Union Home Minister Amit Shah also laid a wreath and paid solemn tributes at the National Police Memorial on Police Commemoration Day,

honoring jawans who lost their lives in the line of duty. He flagged off a nationwide motorcycle rally from the National Police Memorial in the national capital to mark the National Police Commemoration Day. The bike rally, organised under the theme 'Fight Against Drugs', comprises around 90 riders representing nine States and Union Territories, alongside personnel from Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and Central Police Organisations (CPOs).

"Human rights not to be used as instrument of political pressure" : India at UNGA on enforced disappearances

New York : India has asserted that human rights should not be used as an instrument of political pressure or selective country targeting, while calling for accountability, transparency and cooperation to address enforced disappearances at the United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee. Delivering India's statement on the agenda item concerning the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, Ministry of External Affairs Deputy Secretary Barkha Tamrakar highlighted the constitutional and institutional safeguards available in India to address allegations of human rights violations. In a post on X on Monday (local time), the Permanent Mission of India to the UN said Tamrakar reaffirmed the role of Article 21 of the Constitution, judicial remedies, human rights commissions, independent media and civil society in ensuring transparency and providing avenues for redressal. "Human rights not to be used as an instrument of political pressure or selective country targeting," Tamrakar said in her statement. She described India as a vibrant democracy anchored in the rule of law and emphasised that constitutional provisions and independent institutions pro-

vided safeguards against alleged enforced disappearances. "Article 21 of our Constitution guarantees the right to life and personal liberty. Our independent judiciary is fully empowered to issue the writs of habeas corpus, thus providing a strong and readily accessible safeguard against any alleged disappearances," she said. Tamrakar further stated that law enforcement authorities in India were bound to operate within the framework of the law. She cited the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), State Human Rights Commissions and the Right to Information Act as mechanisms that strengthen accountability and provide avenues for complaints and redressal. "Enforced disappearances are clear violations of human rights and deeply affect the families of victims. We call upon States to eradicate instances of this grave human rights violation through preventive measures, accountability, and the protection of civil society," she said.

India also noted that it had signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and reiterated its engagement with international human rights mechanisms. However, Tamrakar stressed that



such engagement must be guided by dialogue, consultation, cooperation, non-selectivity and transparency. She urged delegations to accurately reflect the findings of reports and cautioned against concluding unverified allegations or incomplete statistics. "India remains prepared to clarify specific properly documented cases through established channels," she said, adding that India opposed attempts to portray the country negatively on the basis of unverified claims or reports containing no country-specific observations on India. Separately, reports of alleged enforced disappearances in Pakistan's Balochistan province have continued to raise concerns among rights groups and families of missing persons. According to The Balochistan Post, two men were reportedly detained from Mastung and Gwadar districts, while two previously missing men returned home in October. The report

said 26-year-old mechanic Muhammad Asif was allegedly taken from his home in Mastung on October 12, while 19-year-old student Rahim Lal was reportedly detained from Pansri in Gwadar district on June 27. Their whereabouts were not known, according to the publication. Meanwhile, Mumtaz Baloch, who had allegedly gone missing on June 5, was reportedly recovered in Quetta on October 16. Abdul Ghaffar, who was allegedly taken away on October 9, was reportedly found in Uthal on October 15. The developments came amid a continuing protest by the Voice for Baloch Missing Persons outside the Quetta Press Club. Separately, the Baloch Yakjehti Committee documented 507 alleged enforced disappearances in Balochistan between January and June 2026, while the Human Rights Council of Balochistan reported 87 cases in August, according to the information provided by the respective groups.

Amit Shah meets family of Bikramjit Singh in Gurdaspur, allegedly killed for raising voice against drug trade

Gurdaspur : Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited the residence of Bikramjit Singh in Punjab's Gurdaspur, who was allegedly killed after raising his voice against the drug trade, and met his family amid growing concerns over drug trafficking and law and order in the northern state. During his visit to Punjab, Shah is scheduled to meet the families of people who recently lost their lives after allegedly speaking out against drug traffickers in the Gurdaspur, Mansa and Sangrur districts. BJP Punjab Vice President Fatehjang Singh Bajwa said Shah's visit conveyed the message that the party would fulfil its commitment to eradicate drugs from the state. "Just a few days ago in Jalandhar, the BJP and specifically Amit Shah made a promise to the people of Punjab that they would completely eradicate the drug menace in the state, rooting it out entirely by December 31, 2029," Bajwa told news agency.

Referring to the recent incidents, he added, "In light of the tragic incident involving Parminder Singh Jhota and all the other distressing events that have unfolded in Punjab--Amit Shah's visit sends a clear message to the people of Punjab and the entire nation: the Bharatiya Janata



Party always delivers on its promises. His visit today conveys a significant message to the people of Punjab that the commitment made in Jalandhar will be fully honoured." Shah had earlier expressed condolences to the families who lost their loved ones after raising their voices against the illegal drug trade. He said their pain was beyond words and asserted that attempts to silence those speaking against drugs would not succeed.

The Union Home Minister also reiterated the Centre's commitment to identifying drug traffickers and sending them to prison, stating that the government would work towards making Punjab and the country drug-free. The visit comes amid a political debate over the drug men-

ace in Punjab, with the BJP accusing the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government of failing to tackle the crisis. Shah had alleged that drug traffickers dealing in 'chitta', a term commonly used for heroin in Punjab, were flourishing under the AAP government's protection.

Meanwhile, Punjab Cabinet Minister Aman Arora welcomed Shah's visit but raised questions over border security and drug trafficking, including the alleged entry of 3,000 kilograms of heroin through Gujarat's Mundra Port. Arora also questioned the Centre over the security of Punjab's 543-kilometre international border with Pakistan and raised concerns about the growth of gangster culture and drug trafficking. On the murder of anti-drug activist Jhota in Mansa, Arora said the state government had decided to transfer the investigation to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) following the family's demand. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann also announced that the case would be handed over to the CBI, reiterating the state government's commitment to taking strict action against drug traffickers. Jhota, an anti-drug activist from Mansa district, was allegedly shot dead on October 13 during a confrontation with a medical store owner over the alleged sale of addictive substances. He was taken to a hospital with bullet injuries

but later succumbed to them. The incident triggered protests, with farmers' and workers' organisations calling for a statewide bandh on October 15.

Meanwhile, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) sought a detailed report from the Punjab government on the killing of Bikramjit Singh in Gurdaspur and the injuries sustained by two others, Nishan Singh and Gurmukh Singh, in an alleged attack linked to narcotic drugs. In a letter to the Punjab Chief Secretary, the MHA referred to the incident in Mari Panwan village under Sri Hargobindpur Police Station in Batala tehsil and sought details of the incident and the action taken by the state government. The Ministry also sought a comprehensive factual report on Jhota's killing and details of steps taken to implement measures aimed at achieving the national objective of a drug-free India. These measures include strengthening the Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF), conducting financial investigations in drug-related cases, improving coordination through the Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) mechnews agencies, strengthening prosecution, designating courts under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and taking action against transnational drug networks.

Rubio meets Taj hotel security chief on duty during 26/11 terror attacks

Mumbai : United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio met Mumbai's Taj Mahal Palace Hotel security chief Sunil Kudyadi, receiving a detailed, first-hand account of the 26/11 terror attacks, including how long the siege lasted. The meeting took place after Rubio laid a wreath at the 26/11 memorial within the hotel premises, where External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar formally introduced key staff members to the visit-

ing US dignitary. Demonstrating a shared bilateral resolve towards combating



global terrorism, Rubio paid tribute to the victims of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, carried out by Pakistani terrorists, which claimed 166

lives, including six American nationals. "At the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, I laid a wreath honouring the victims of the horrific November 26, 2008, terrorist attacks, including six American citizens. We remember those lost, honour the courage of those who responded, and reaffirm the enduring US-India partnership and our shared commitment to combating terrorism," the US Secretary of State said in a post on the social media platform X.

'I'M STUDYING HIS BODY' : US President Donald Trump Makes Graphic Remarks About Senator Jon Husted



Washington: US President Donald Trump commented extensively on Senator Jon Husted's physique while addressing a rally in Greenville, North Carolina, in support of Republican Senate candidate Michael Whatley. "I'm studying his body. I've never studied the body of a man before. It's not my thing. Nothing wrong with it, of course", Trump said, referring to Husted. Trump went on to describe the senator's physical features in graphic terms. Husted is currently contesting the midterm elections in Ohio. "But I looked at his ass, and then I looked at his legs. I said, 'His ass, s***, it's like - it's like a pile of muscle,'" Trump continued. "Then I looked at his legs, and I said, 'Man, his feet are big.'

Then I looked at his shoulders, and I tapped him on the shoulder, and it actually hurt my hand. He's like a piece of steel." This was not the first occasion on which Trump had publicly commented on Husted's physique. At an Ohio rally on October 12, Trump had similarly praised the senator's build, saying he "watched up and down". "I looked, and I watched up and down. I looked at his ass, and I looked at the whole - and then I looked at his hands. Look at his hands. He's got these, like, claws," Trump said. Clips of Trump's remarks have since circulated widely on social media, prompting some users to describe his comments about Husted's body as "disturbing". "He curses constantly now. Another

sign of disinhibition, along with thirsting over shapely male buttocks," one user wrote on X. "He sounds so aroused while describing this it's disturbing," another user commented. A third wrote, "So we're back on talking about men's bodies with Uncle Dementia. I bet John Husted is not thrilled". Trump has a history of publicly praising the physiques and physical attributes of men around him, including prominent athletes and sports personalities. He has previously admired the muscular legs of football player Jaxson Dart, praised the physiques of several UFC fighters and recalled how fellow golfers were impressed by the late golf legend Arnold Palmer's physique after seeing him shower, describing it as "unbelievable".

French Mirage 2000D Fighter Jet Crashes Near Nancy, 1 Killed, Another Missing As Search Continues



Fance: A French Mirage 2000D fighter jet crashed during a training mission in northeastern France, killing at least one crew member, the French Air and Space Force said. Search operations were underway to locate the second crew member. The aircraft crashed at around 2100 GMT on Tuesday near its air base on the outskirts of Nancy. An investigation has been launched to establish the cause of the accident. Air Force spokesman Colonel David Papalardo told local media that at least one of the crew members appeared to have been unable to eject before the crash, AFP reported. According to the Associated Press, the aircraft was carrying two personnel — a fighter pilot and a weapons systems officer from the French Air and Space Force. Henry Lemoine, an official representing several villages in the area, said on Facebook that a drone had located the wreckage and emergency services had reached the crash site. Authorities have launched an investigation to determine the circumstances that led to the crash.

According to France's Ministry of Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs, the two-seat Mirage 2000D entered service in 1993. The ground-attack aircraft is equipped with advanced tactical data-link systems that allow it to operate alongside allied forces. The

ministry said the aircraft has taken part in several French military operations, including those in the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Libya, the Central African Republic, Iraq, Syria and the Sahel-Saharan region. The Mirage 2000D has been involved in previous accidents, AFP reported. In January 2019, two crew members were killed

when an aircraft of the same type crashed during a low-altitude night flight in eastern France. In July 2021, the crew of another Mirage 2000D managed to eject before the aircraft crashed near Nancy. France has recently completed a modernisation programme for its Mirage 2000D fleet and intends to keep the aircraft in service into the 2030s.

Australian MP Helen Haines Loses Both Legs After Being Repeatedly Run Over By SUV, Remains Critical

Melbourne: Australian federal lawmaker Helen Haines has lost both her legs following an apparent act of political violence in which she was repeatedly run over by a car in her hometown of Wangaratta. The 65-year-old independent politician remains in critical condition at a Melbourne hospital, her husband confirmed. Haines was airlifted to the hospital after being struck by a Toyota Land Cruiser SUV. Her husband, Phil Haines, provided the family's first public update on her condition, hours after the man charged in connection with the incident appeared in court. Phil Haines said doctors amputated his wife's left leg on Monday, while her right leg was removed on Wednesday after medical efforts to save it proved unsuccessful. "The good news in all this is that Helen



is alive and she's stable. That is the most important thing for our family," he told reporters in Melbourne. "We are grateful and thankful that at this stage, both her heart and her mind are in good shape," he added. Phil also revealed that the couple would celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary in November. Earlier on Wednesday, Brendan Nugent, 43, from nearby Tarrawingee, appeared before the Wangaratta Magistrates' Court. Nugent faces

charges of intentionally causing serious injury, dangerous driving causing serious injury and causing harm to a federal official. He neither applied for bail nor entered a plea and will remain in custody until his next court appearance in February. Police have yet to establish a motive behind the incident. Nugent's lawyer, Chirag Patel, told Magistrate Allison Vaughan that his client might be experiencing mental health issues, al-

though he had never been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition. Patel also said Nugent suffered from idiopathic transverse myelitis, a neurological disorder, and a concussion. However, he did not explain how his client sustained the concussion. According to the Cleveland Clinic medical centre, idiopathic transverse myelitis is a rare condition that damages the protective myelin sheath surrounding the spinal cord, disrupting communication between the brain and body. The condition can cause rapid muscle weakness, sensory loss, pain and bladder and bowel dysfunction. Witnesses alleged that the driver first rammed Haines with the SUV, pinning her against her own car. The driver then reportedly reversed the vehicle before ramming her a second time.

'Cannot Remember All Their Names' : Afghan Father Of 58 Children Struggles To Feed Family Amid Extreme Poverty, Continues To Have Kids

Afghanistan: A father in Afghanistan who has more than 70 children, including 58 who are still alive, is struggling to provide even the most basic necessities for his enormous family. Muhammad Sadeq, who has four wives, lives in extreme poverty with his children in mud houses that offer little protection from harsh living conditions. According to a report by BBC Global Women, Sadeq's youngest child is just three months old. Despite having a large family, the father earns a meagre income that barely helps him meet their daily needs, leaving several children without adequate food, footwear and other essentials. Sadeq works at a car dealership, where he reportedly receives 1,000 Afghanis, approximately \$15, for every vehicle he sells. His earnings from these sales are the family's only source of income, making it difficult to provide for all his children. The family's living conditions highlight the ex-

tent of their financial hardship. Their homes have no proper doors or windows, with thin curtains serving as inadequate barriers against the outside environment. With little money to purchase firewood, the family sometimes burns paper to prepare meals. Food insecurity is another major concern. According to the report, some of the children occasionally go to sleep hungry, while many are forced to walk barefoot because their father cannot afford to buy them shoes. Sadeq has admitted that the sheer number of children in his family has made it difficult for him to remember every child's name. "I cannot remember all their names. Most of the time, I simply call them 'son' or 'child'," he said in an interview with the BBC. He also acknowledged that he had not been able to fulfil his responsibilities as a father, particularly when it comes to providing for his children's basic needs. Although he has expressed



regret over the family's circumstances, the challenges of supporting such a large household continue to affect the children's daily lives. During the interview, Sadeq said all four of his wives had married at a young age. He attributed the deaths of several of his children during infancy and early childhood to illnesses and what he described as their mothers' lack of experience in childcare. "I married my wives when

they were young. Many of my children died because their mothers were very young. They did not know how to care for the children, breastfeed them or look after them. Some of my children died from tuberculosis, whooping cough and measles," he explained. His account draws attention to the consequences of early marriage, limited access to healthcare and inadequate support for mothers and children. However, the deaths of

young children can have multiple causes, and his explanation does not independently establish why each child died. Sadeq also acknowledged that he might have made different decisions about expanding his family had he anticipated the financial hardship they would face. "I would not have had so many children if I had known we would struggle to afford even basic food," he said, reflecting on the family's situation.

UN Sounds Climate Alarm, Calls For 18% Cut In Global Carbon Emissions By 2030 To Avert Severe Crisis

United Nation: The world must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 18% over the next four years and by 45% by 2045 to prevent global temperatures from exceeding international climate targets by a dangerous margin, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has warned. In its latest report on the gap between climate commitments and actual policies, UNEP said the opportunity to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels had effectively closed. However, countries could still prevent temperatures from rising far beyond that threshold by taking immediate action. The report found that governments were failing to convert their long-term climate commitments into effective short-term measures, despite the rapid expansion of renewable energy. Global greenhouse gas emissions showed little change in 2025 compared with the previous year. However, UNEP analysts cautioned against interpreting the figures as evidence that emissions had peaked, citing geopolitical uncertainties and continued dependence on fossil fuels, The Guardian reports. Ac-

cording to the report, reducing emissions by 18% by 2030 and 45% by 2045 would provide a reasonable chance of limiting global warming to 1.7°C above pre-industrial levels. Although such warming would still make extreme weather events, including the record heatwaves witnessed in recent months, more frequent, it could prevent their impacts from becoming substantially worse. UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen said governments had repeatedly been warned about the urgency of reducing emissions but had failed to act decisively. "[We used to say] there's still an opportunity if we make this herculean effort [to stay within the 1.5C limit]," she said. "It's now clear the herculean effort was not made. We procrastinated, and now we are saying this window has closed." Despite the setback, Andersen urged countries not to abandon the 1.5°C target, which remains central to the Paris climate agreement. "We can make the overshoot as brief and as short as possible. It's not time to throw in the towel and give up. This is about how to find our way back, as



shortly and quickly as possible." The report comes amid growing concerns over the impact of US climate policies under President Donald Trump. The US, the world's second-largest greenhouse gas emitter after China, has withdrawn from the Paris climate agreement and is threatening to reverse its long-standing decline in emissions. Bill Hare, chief executive of the think tank Climate Analytics, criticised major fossil fuel producers, including the US and Saudi Arabia, which together account for 20% to 25% of global fossil fuel production. "All governments have a job to do, but in particular it is time for major

fossil fuel producers such as the US and Saudi Arabia, which produce 20-25% of fossil fuels globally, to stop playing politics and face the scientific reality. Right now they are looking at the fire, denying it exists and pouring more petrol on it, while their own citizens increasingly face searing heat, wildfires and other impacts." According to UNEP, the climate commitments submitted by governments last year were significantly weaker than required. At the 30th Conference of the Parties (COP30) climate summit in Brazil in November 2025, countries were expected to announce stronger emissions reduction

commitments under the Paris Agreement. However, the pledges fell considerably short of what scientists say is necessary. UNEP estimates that even if governments fully implement their updated commitments, global temperatures could rise by 2.6°C above pre-industrial levels. Under existing government policies, the projected increase is even higher at 2.8°C, posing serious risks to populations and ecosystems worldwide. The report also warned that every five years of emissions at current levels could increase projected global warming by another 0.1°C. Scientists fear that exceeding the 1.5°C threshold by a greater margin could increase the risk of triggering irreversible changes in the climate system. Mohamed Adow, director of the think tank Power Shift Africa, said technological advances in renewable energy had outpaced government efforts to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. "The tragedy is that we have the solutions within our grasp. Solar and wind power are growing far faster than anyone expected, yet governments are still failing to move away from fossil fuels quickly enough. The technology is racing ahead while political leadership is dragging its feet." Under the Paris Agreement, countries are expected to review and strengthen their climate commitments through a process known as the global stocktake, with the next assessment scheduled for 2028. However, uncertainty has emerged over whether governments will have access to the latest scientific findings before that review. This week, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) failed to finalise a timetable for publishing its next major assessment ahead of the global stocktake.

Pakistan Bus Accident: 11 Killed, Over 30 Injured As Speeding Bus Hits Divider, Overturns In Punjab



Punjab (Pakistan's): At least 11 people, including women and children, were killed and more than 30 others injured after a speeding passenger bus crashed into a divider and overturned in Pakistan's Punjab province, an official said. The bus was travelling from Karachi to Dera Ghazi Khan district in Punjab when the accident occurred in Rajanpur, approximately 500 kilometres from Lahore. According to a spokesperson for Pakistan's national emergency response service, Rescue 1122, the accident took place on a stretch of

highway where construction work was underway. Citing eyewitness accounts, the spokesperson said overspeeding was suspected to be the primary cause of the accident. "The speeding bus collided with the divider before overturning, leaving several passengers trapped and injured. Eight passengers died on the spot while three others succumbed to their injuries in hospital," the spokesperson said. Of the 11 fatalities, eight passengers died at the accident site, while three others succumbed to their injuries during treatment at a hospital.

Jio IPO To Boost RIL's Financial Flexibility And Cut Debt Servicing Costs: Moody's

New Delhi: The initial public offering of Jio Platforms will strengthen its parent Reliance Industries' financial flexibility by reducing debt and interest costs while broadening access to capital for future investments, Moody's Ratings said, describing the transaction as credit positive. Jio Platforms, in which Reliance owns a 66.4 per cent stake, launched its IPO, seeking to raise about Rs 30,213 crore at the upper end of its price band of Rs 1,065-1,119 per share. The offering, comprising entirely fresh shares, will close on October 23. Jio Platforms will use up to Rs 27,500 crore of the proceeds to repay borrowings at its wholly owned telecom subsidiary, Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd, with the remaining funds available for growth capital expenditure and working capital needs, according to CreditSights.

IPO To Reduce Debt Servicing Costs

"The IPO is credit positive for RIL because the proceeds will reduce debt and associated servicing costs, increasing its capacity to fund investments towards telecommunications networks and digital services at Jio Platforms, without increasing leverage,"



Moody's Ratings said. The listing, it said, "will also diversify Jio Platforms' funding sources and broaden its access to domestic and international capital for future investments, acquisitions and strategic partnerships". The offering is a significant milestone for Reliance's digital business, which contributed 37 per cent of the conglomerate's consolidated EBITDA in the financial year ended March 2026, according to Moody's. Reliance will retain control of Jio after the listing, although its stake will decline as new shares are issued.

Reliance's Leverage Expected To Remain Stable

Moody's expects Reliance's adjusted net

debt-to-EBITDA ratio to remain around 1.0-1.2 times over the next two years, comfortably below its 3.0-times downgrade threshold. The agency said the key credit benefit of the IPO was the additional funding flexibility rather than a material improvement in leverage or liquidity over the next 12 months. Reliance held about Rs 2.5 lakh crore in cash, cash equivalents and current investments as of March 31, compared with Rs 1.1 lakh crore in reported current borrowings, including lease liabilities, Moody's said. The conglomerate's consolidated capital expenditure is expected to remain elevated at around USD 15 billion annually over the next two

years. CreditSights, meanwhile, maintained its "Market Perform" recommendation on Reliance but said the company's 2045 bond was unattractive, primarily because of tight valuations. The research firm estimated that the IPO could improve Reliance's pro forma net leverage by about 0.2 percentage points from 2.1 times at the end of the first half of fiscal 2026. It also highlighted Jio's Rs 70,800 crore in total debt and about Rs 1.1 lakh crore in deferred spectrum payments, underscoring the significance of the proposed debt reduction.

Jio's Growth Opportunities And Ownership

Jio's future growth opportunities include next-gen-

eration mobile networks, home and satellite broadband, business-to-business data solutions, enterprise AI applications and digital commerce. The company also operates broadband, digital entertainment, music streaming and cloud storage services. Reliance is expected to retain a majority stake of about 64.5 per cent in Jio after the IPO, according to CreditSights, preserving strategic control while giving the digital business a market valuation of its own. Existing minority investors, including Meta and Google, will also see their ownership percentages diluted by the fresh share issuance. The anchor-investor response has been strong. Jio allotted shares worth about Rs 8,110 crore to 212 anchor investors at Rs 1,119 apiece on Monday, with reported demand for the allocation exceeding Rs 2.5 lakh crore. The IPO comes as investors assess whether Jio can translate its more than 524 million subscribers into higher-margin revenue from enterprise technology, cloud services and AI. For Reliance, the listing offers a way to fund part of its substantial investment programme through equity while reducing reliance on debt.

PC Jeweller Q2 Net Profit Jumps 58 Per Cent To Rs.331 Crore; Company Achieves Debt-Free Status



New Delhi: PC Jewellers Ltd posted a 58 per cent jump in its consolidated net profit to Rs 330.66 crore for the second quarter of the 2026-27 fiscal on higher sales. The company had clocked a net profit of Rs 209.54 crore during the July-September quarter of the previous year, according to a regulatory filing. Total income rose 28 per cent to Rs 1,054.47 crore for the second quarter of this fiscal from Rs 825.25 crore a year ago. Expenses remained higher at Rs 759.42 crore, as against Rs 688.85 crore a year ago. "A key milestone during the quarter was the company achieving debt-free status

after repaying its outstanding dues to all 14 consortium banks ahead of schedule." "With interest costs expected to reduce significantly from the second half of FY27, the company expects its net profit to have a positive impact of the same," it added.

The company said it received remittances of about Rs 142 crore from export debtors during Q2 following negotiations and the resolution of issues, marking the start of realisation of long-pending receivables. PC Jewellers also announced plans to roll out up to 100 large-format showrooms across Tier I, Tier II and Tier III cities over

the next 12-18 months, through a mix of company-owned outlets and an asset-light franchise model. The company said it is "confident that it will start establishing new showrooms in this financial year itself." The company is also working on and planning to launch a new jewellery brand focusing on demi-fine/light-weight jewellery and lab-grown-diamond fine jewellery for younger and self-purchasing buyers, it added. PC Jewellers Ltd has three subsidiary firms — Luxury Products Trendsetter, PC Jeweller Global FZCO and PCJ Gems & Jewellery — and one step-down subsidiary, PCJ Mining SARM.

‘Mutual Funds Sahi Hai, But Asset Allocation Zaruri Hai’: Why NS Venkatesh Wants Investors To Bet On InvITs

Mumbai: Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) are emerging as an investment option for Indians seeking regular income and long-term wealth creation. In an exclusive conversation with Sheryll D'Souza of The Free Press Journal, NS Venkatesh, CEO of Bharat InvITs Association, explains how investors can own infrastructure assets, earn distributions, diversify portfolios and participate in India's growth story while understanding the risks involved.

You helped popularise the ‘Mutual Funds Sahi Hai’ campaign. What exactly are InvITs, and how are they different from mutual funds?

InvITs are pooled investment vehicles, similar to mutual funds. However, mutual funds invest in financial assets such as shares and bonds, while InvITs invest in operational infrastructure assets, including highways, power transmission lines and telecom infrastructure. They also help recycle capital. Money invested in existing infrastructure is released to finance new projects, supporting economic development.

What lessons from the mutual fund industry can help InvITs become a household investment product?

Mutual funds took nearly 50 years to reach Rs 10 lakh crore in assets under management. InvITs and REITs have already reached approximately Rs 7.31 lakh crore within a decade. The biggest lesson is investor awareness. The 'Mutual Funds Sahi Hai' campaign made mutual funds part of everyday conversations. We want to create similar awareness around InvITs



and encourage greater retail participation.

Retail investor participation has increased by 17 percent. What is driving this interest?

InvITs have delivered approximately 14-15 percent annual returns over the past five years, attracting investors seeking relatively steady income. Wealth managers, portfolio managers and alternative investment funds are increasingly recommending this asset class. Growing awareness and the importance of portfolio diversification are also encouraging retail participation.

How can an ordinary investor actually own a portion of a highway or power transmission project?

Investors purchase units of an InvIT holding infrastructure assets or concession rights. Through these units, they gain economic exposure to assets such as highways, transmission lines and telecom towers. It allows ordinary investors to participate in infrastructure development without directly purchasing or managing these assets.

InvITs must distribute 90 percent of their cash flows. Does this guarantee regular income?

SEBI requires InvITs to distribute at least 90 percent of their net distributable cash flows. Although distributions are mandated periodically, many InvITs distribute quarterly. Importantly, distributions are not entirely dividends. They can include dividends, interest and return of capital. Investors must understand these components rather than assuming every distribution represents investment earnings. Investors often get attracted by headline returns. What should they examine before investing? I recommend following the SLR principle: Safety, Liquidity and Return. First, understand the possibility of losing capital. Second, examine whether you can exit your investment without significant costs. Finally, evaluate returns and their sustainability. Investors should never make decisions based solely on attractive yields. Every investment carries risks.

Where should InvITs fit

within a portfolio containing equities, bonds and fixed deposits?

InvITs are complementary investments, not replacements. They are generally positioned between equities and fixed-income instruments in terms of risk and return. Historical dividend yields have averaged approximately 9-10 percent, while capital appreciation has contributed additional returns. However, past performance does not guarantee future results. Investors should allocate according to their financial goals and risk appetite.

Rupee Surges 48 Paise To Close At 94.43 Against US Dollar, Jio IPO Inflows And RBI Support Drive Strong Recovery

Mumbai: The Indian rupee strengthened sharply against the US dollar, gaining 48 paise to close at 94.43 (provisional). Foreign currency inflows linked to the Jio Platforms IPO and support from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) helped the domestic currency reach a six-week high. At the inter-bank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.78 against the US dollar. During intraday trading, the currency touched a high of 94.41 and a low of 94.82 before settling at 94.43, compared with Monday's closing level of 94.91. The Rs 30,213 crore Jio Platforms IPO, which opened for sub-

scription on Wednesday, contributed to foreign currency inflows. Foreign investors typically convert dollars into rupees when participating in Indian public offerings, increasing dollar supply in the domestic forex market. Gaurav Garg, Head of Research at Lemonn, said RBI measures to manage dollar demand and currency volatility also supported the rupee. Despite the recovery, rising crude oil prices and weak domestic equity markets limited further gains. Brent crude futures climbed 1.99 per cent to USD 110.96 per barrel amid concerns over Middle East supply disruption



tion. Meanwhile, the dollar index rose 0.07 per cent to 101.59. Indian equity benchmarks ended session in negative territory. The Sensex declined 143.21 points to 73,709.69, while the Nifty 50 slipped 77.60 points to 22,811.35. Foreign institutional investors sold equities

worth Rs 1,148.64 crore on Monday. Anuj Choudhary of Mirae Asset Sharekhan expects the USD-INR pair to trade between 94.20 and 94.80. Analysts believe continued IPO inflows, RBI support and global dollar movements will determine the rupee's near-term direction.

Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare to Launch ‘Khet Bachao Abhiyan – Rabi 2026’

New Delhi: The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare will launch the nationwide 'Khet Bachao Abhiyan-Rabi 2026' from 22 October to 30 November 2026 to promote sustainable agriculture, improve soil health and encourage the judicious use of agricultural resources. Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, will launch the campaign from Karnal, Haryana.

The campaign aims to create awareness among farmers about the balanced and judicious use of fertilizers and other agricultural inputs based on soil testing. It will promote crop diversification through oilseed, pulse and horticulture missions, encourage the effective utilization of fallow fields after paddy harvesting and promote proper crop residue management. The campaign will also focus on training farmers in

the appropriate use of organic and bio-based agricultural products and promoting natural farming through awareness programmes, training sessions and field demonstrations. In addition, it will emphasize water conservation, rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharge, while encouraging sustainable agricultural practices to conserve natural resources and ensure the long-term sustainability of agriculture.

The campaign will focus on improving soil health, promoting the balanced use of fertilizers and other agricultural inputs, enhancing water-use efficiency, and encouraging the adoption of resource-efficient and climate-resilient farming practices. Special emphasis will be placed on creating awareness about the appropriate use of fertilizers, including green ammonia, and biological products; water conservation; crop diversi-

fication and intercropping with suitable crops and varieties; efficient utilization of rice fallows; natural farming; and integrated farming systems. Capacity building, farm mechanization and field demonstrations of improved technologies, including regenerative agriculture practices, will also form key components of the campaign.

Key themes will include crop residue management, integrated pest management, soil health management, climate-resilient agriculture, promotion of oilseeds and pulses, and seed distribution. The campaign will also facilitate the creation of Farmer IDs, promote awareness about crop insurance under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), expand coverage under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme through saturation efforts, and disseminate information about the benefits and

opportunities arising from trade agreements.

As part of the campaign, awareness programmes, farmers' conferences, Kisan Chaupals, training sessions and field demonstrations will be organized at the State, district, block and Gram Panchayat levels. State Agriculture Departments, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), ICAR institutes, State Agricultural Universities and Agricultural Technology Management Agencies (ATMA) will collaborate to ensure the active participation of agricultural scientists, ATMA functionaries, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), cooperatives, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and progressive farmers. Publicity through local-language materials, radio, Doordarshan, social media and other IEC activities will further strengthen outreach and ensure wider dissemination of information among farmers. The

campaign targets reaching approximately one crore participants through ATMA and ICAR and total of 4,150 teams involving KVKs and ATMA are envisaged, with more than 12,000 scientists and ATMA functionaries expected to contribute to the campaign. The Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare will coordinate with State Governments, ICAR institutions and other stakeholders to ensure effective implementation and regular monitoring of the campaign, with particular emphasis on farmers' participation and the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices. Through the 'Khet Bachao Abhiyan', the Government seeks to strengthen soil and water conservation, promote efficient and cost-effective farming practices, improve agricultural sustainability and contribute to the long-term prosperity of farmers and the vision of Viksit Bharat.



Gold And Silver Prices Fall In Delhi As Rupee Appreciation And Elevated Crude Oil Weigh On Bullion

New Delhi: Gold and silver prices declined in the national capital as appreciation in the rupee, elevated crude oil prices and weak global trends dampened investor sentiment. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity dropped Rs 1,300 to Rs

1,49,000 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes), according to the All India Sarafa Association. Gold had closed at Rs 1,50,300 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver entered a downward trend after remaining steady for two consecutive sessions,

falling Rs 1,600 to Rs 2,13,400 per kilogram. The white metal had settled at Rs 2,15,000 per kg on Monday. "Gold traded weak on Wednesday, as rupee appreciation continued to add pressure on domestic prices," said Jateen Trivedi,

VP Research Analyst – Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities. The overall trend remains weak amid a stronger rupee and concerns over elevated crude oil prices feeding inflationary pressures, he added. The rupee surged 48 paise to

close at 94.43 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, supported by the RBI's intervention to contain dollar demand. Ashish Rajodiya, Head of Commodities, PL Capital, said silver also traded lower in the domestic market. Early

hopes of an Iran peace deal pulled oil prices down and briefly supported precious metals. However, those gains faded as crude recovered amid reports that Iran said there was little reason to expect diplomatic progress with the United States.

DARE/ICAR Undertakes Nearly 4,000 Cleanliness Drives under Swachhata Special Campaign 6.0

- Nearly 1.3 Lakh Square Feet of Space Freed under DARE/ICAR's Swachhata Special Campaign 6.0
- DARE/ICAR Promotes Cleanliness, Waste Management and Sustainable Practices across Its Nationwide Network



New Delhi, October, 21 (PIB): The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), along with its 114 institutes, Regional Centres, Agricultural Technology Application Research Institutes (ATARIs) and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), is participating in the month-long Swachhata Special Campaign 6 from 2nd to 31st October 2026. Earlier, on 2nd October 2026, DARE/ICAR launched Swachhata Special Campaign 6.0 with cleanliness drives across its establishments nationwide. Officials of ICAR Headquarters participated in the drive at the National Agricultural Science Complex (NASC), Pusa, New Delhi. The initiative reflects a collective commitment to cleaner workplaces, greater public participation and a

culture of sustained cleanliness, reinforcing the spirit of Swachhata. A floral tribute was also paid to Mahatma Gandhi on his birth anniversary.

Key highlights of Swachhata Special Campaign 6

Key highlights of Swachhata Special Campaign 6 across establishments include the organization of nearly 4,000 cleanliness campaigns, clearance of approximately 1.3 lakh square feet of space, and generation of around ?10 lakh in revenue through the disposal of electronic and non-electronic scrap. Efforts are also underway to clear pending matters. Activities include cleanliness drives and Shramdaan in institutional premises, villages, roads and public spaces; Special Gram

Sabhas, Swachhata Sabhas and awareness programmes on sanitation, hygiene, waste management and community responsibility; plogging and removal of litter; plantation and greening of Cleanliness Target Units (CTUs), including initiatives under "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam"; distribution and placement of dustbins; recognition of Safai Mitras, sanitation workers and volunteers; and beautification of cleaned spaces with before-and-after documentation. Other initiatives include sustainable waste management practices, such as vermicomposting of water hyacinth, and the review and weeding out of old files for appropriate disposal and records management.

Key outcomes of the Swachhata Special

Campaign 6

The key outcomes of the campaign include strengthened community participation and collective responsibility for cleanliness and sanitation; improved cleanliness of selected institutional and public spaces, documented through before-and-after photographs; and greater awareness of responsible waste disposal through dustbin distribution, waste collection and awareness programmes. The campaign also integrated cleanliness with environmental sustainability through plantation and greening of cleaned areas, recognized the contributions of Safai Mitras, sanitation workers and volunteers, and promoted sustainable practices such as vermicomposting of water hyacinth and the

appropriate review and weeding out of old files.

Some of the major highlights of the campaign from DARE/ICAR Institutes are as follows:

ICAR-Central Coastal Agricultural Research Institute : In ICAR-Central Coastal Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR-CCARI), highlight of the occasion was the Shramik Samman, wherein the Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and Rural Development, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan felicitated Safai Mitras of ICAR-CCARI with shawls, bouquets and gifts, as a mark of appreciation for the dedicated services of all Safai Mitras who work throughout the year to maintain a clean and hygienic campus. The programme highlighted the spirit of Swachhata, Seva and Shramik Samman, recognising the in-

valuable contribution of Safai Mitras towards a cleaner and healthier environment.

ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR-IARI), New Delhi: The ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR-IARI), New Delhi, observed Swachh Bharat Diwas on 2nd October 2026 under the theme "Swachhta Mein Sahbhag - Swachh Bharat, Viksit Bharat", with a series of cleanliness activities across the Institute and a call for sustained participation towards maintaining a clean and healthy institutional environment. In his address, Secretary (DARE) & DG (ICAR), Dr. Mangi Lal Jat, appreciated the cleanliness drive undertaken by ICAR-IARI and called for making Swachhata a year-round activity, with cleanliness programmes being undertaken in a team-based manner.

CONCLUSION OF THE NINTH EDITION OF INDIA-BRAZIL-SOUTH AFRICA MARITIME EXERCISE (IBSAMAR IX 2026)



New Delhi, October, 21 (PIB): The ninth edition of the India-Brazil-South Africa Maritime (IBSAMAR) Exercise 2026 concluded at Simon's Town, South Africa, on 20 Oct 2026. It brought together the Indian, Brazilian and South African Navies for a series of professional interactions and maritime evolutions aimed at enhancing interoperability, strengthening operational cooperation and fostering greater mutual understanding among

the three maritime forces. The closing ceremony marked the culmination of ten days of joint activities conducted during the harbour and sea phases. Participating personnel engaged in professional exchanges, operational interactions and joint training, gaining valuable insights into each other's procedures, capabilities and methods of operating at sea. These activities helped build familiarity and confidence among the participat-

ing Navies, enabling them to work together with enhanced synergy in the maritime domain.

Addressing the gathering at the closing ceremony, the Commanding Officer of INS Tarkash highlighted that exercises such as IBSAMAR provide a unique platform for translating longstanding diplomatic relationships into meaningful naval cooperation. He underscored that the true strength of such exercises lies not only in



conducting joint evolutions at sea but also in the relationships forged among personnel through shared experiences, professional exchanges and mutual learning. IBSAMAR exemplifies the enduring maritime relationship between India, Brazil and South Africa. Located across three continents and connected by the maritime domain, the three nations share a common interest in safe, secure and stable seas. The trilateral exercise provides an

avenue for their Navies to address common maritime challenges, exchange best practices and strengthen their ability to operate together, thereby contributing to a peaceful maritime environment.

The exercise also reaffirmed the importance of jointmanship at sea, with interoperability developed through repeated interactions, common training and a shared understanding of maritime operations. Professional bonds forged among

the crews of participating assets endure beyond the exercise, strengthening institutional linkages and laying the foundation for future cooperation. The successful conclusion of IBSAMAR IX 2026 underscores the shared commitment of India, Brazil and South Africa to strengthening maritime cooperation and enhancing interoperability in support of safe, secure and open seas underpinned by a rules-based order.

CCO's SUVIKALP Initiative Advances Sustainable Mine Repurposing, Receives SKOCH Gold Award 2026

New Delhi, October, 21 (PIB): The Coal Controller Organisation (CCO), under the Ministry of Coal, has undertaken initiatives to promote scientific mine closure and sustainable repurposing of post-mining land. CCO has developed SUVIKALP, an in-house Mine Repurposing Tool, to assist stakeholders in selecting suitable mine repurposing projects through a structured and data-driven decision-making process. The tool evaluates and ranks repurposing projects based on multiple technical, environmental, social and economic criteria. Once a suitable project is identified, users can explore implementation pathways through PRISM (Post-Mining Repurposing Implementation Strategy Model). PRISM provides project concepts, implementation approaches, case studies, sample Detailed Project Reports (DPRs), tender documents and information on agencies working in similar sectors. The innovation and utility of SUVIKALP received national recognition through the SKOCH Gold Award 2026 under the category "Digital Operational Efficiency - Data Driven Decision Making" on 26 September 2026. The SKOCH Awards recognise excellence in governance, technology, innovation and transformational initiatives delivering public value. CCO has also undertaken the SUVIKALP Samvaad Webinar Series as a structured knowledge-sharing and capacity-building initiative to support informed decision-making on mine closure and sustainable repurposing. The national webinar series brought together coal companies, government officials, technical experts, academic institutions and other stakeholders to share practical solutions, innovative models and best practices related to post-mining land use. A total of 12 thematic webinars were conducted under the series, covering the RECLAIM and L.I.V.E.S. frameworks, SUVIKALP Mine Repurposing Tool, PMU establishment, community engagement, tourism and destination development, livelihood opportunities, financing mechanisms, innovative uses of abandoned mine voids, and national and international experiences of mine transition. The series has strengthened the institutional understanding of coal companies on the multidimensional aspects of mine closure, moving beyond regulatory compliance towards environmental restoration, livelihood generation, community development and economic diversification. Expert-led deliberations and knowledge exchange have provided practical insights and scalable approaches for planning and implementing sustainable repurposing projects. The initiatives support the Ministry of Coal's vision of transforming closed coal mines into productive assets and enabling sustainable regional development.

Piyush Goyal to Visit Germany and the Netherlands to Strengthen Trade, Investment and Industrial Cooperation

New Delhi, October, 21 (PIB): Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal will undertake an official visit to Germany (22-24 October 2026) and the Netherlands (24-27 October 2026) to deepen strategic economic partnerships, expand bilateral trade and advance industrial and technological collaboration. During the Berlin leg of the visit, Shri Piyush Goyal will participate in the Berlin Global Dialogue, engaging with international policymakers and global business leaders to highlight India's macro-economic stability, manufacturing capabilities and pivotal role in building resilient global supply chains. On the sidelines of the summit, the Minister will hold high-level bilateral meetings with the German Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWE) and the Economic and Financial Policy Advisor and G7/G20 Sherpa at the Federal Chancellery of Germany. The meetings will focus on strengthening bilateral trade and investment corridors, accelerating technological and industrial cooperation in advanced engineering, green mobility and clean technology, and exploring market access and investment avenues arising from the ongoing India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations. Proceeding to the Netherlands, Shri Piyush Goyal will lead comprehensive government-to-government (G2G) engagements in The Hague, holding bilateral ministerial meetings with the Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate and the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation to explore expanded trade channels and green transition initiatives. The visit will also encompass key discussions with the King's Commissioner of North Holland and members of the Dutch Parliament's committees on foreign trade and European affairs. Piyush Goyal will be accompanied by around 100 businesses and startups in Germany and the Netherlands. The Indian business delegation accompanying the Minister will have a parallel programme in Berlin, which includes sectoral roundtables with German CEOs and Indian business delegates. The roundtables will cover automotive, advanced manufacturing, infrastructure and energy; information technology, artificial intelligence and services; agri-food, consumer goods and textiles; and healthcare, pharmaceuticals and wellness. The delegation will also participate in an India-Germany Investment Roundtable with Germany Trade & Invest (GTAI) on investing and establishing operations in Germany. It will also interact with German innovation and research institutions and think tanks on industrial transformation, deeptech, microelectronics, skills development, and India-Germany trade, investment and resilient supply chains. The Indian business delegation will also visit the Port of Rotterdam on 25 October 2026 to see the port's logistics and supply chain infrastructure. On 26 October 2026, Shri Piyush Goyal will address businesses from both countries, along with the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, at the India-Netherlands Business Forum in The Hague. The Business Forum will be followed by six parallel sectoral roundtables and B2B networking, covering agri-food and food processing; high technology and innovation; sustainability and renewable energy; logistics and supply chain connectivity; manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, textiles and engineering goods; and services and allied sectors.

DRI seizes more than 9 kg methamphetamine in intensified crackdown on synthetic drug trafficking in Bhopal; One held

Major seizure at Bhopal ISBT highlights growing threat of synthetic narcotics



New Delhi, October, 21 (PIB): In a significant crackdown on synthetic drug trafficking, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has seized 9.139 kg of methamphetamine and arrested one person at the Inter-State Bus Terminal (ISBT), Bhopal, on 20th October 2026. The seizure highlights DRI's sustained efforts to disrupt the movement of dangerous synthetic drugs through the country's inter-city transport networks. Acting on specific intelligence, officers of DRI intercepted an Indian male passenger travelling by bus from Delhi to Bengaluru upon the bus's arrival at Bhopal ISBT. Examination of the passenger's baggage led to the recovery of 11 plastic packets containing crystalline methamphetamine,

weighing 9.139 kg, concealed inside packets of salwar suits and carried in two mid-sized trolley bags. Field testing confirmed the presence of methamphetamine in the recovered substance, which was seized and the passenger was arrested under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. This seizure comes amid growing concerns over the trafficking of synthetic drugs in the country. In recent major operations, DRI seized 231.8 kg Meth tablets in the North-Eastern region, suspected to have been smuggled from Myanmar and 137 kg suspected crystal methamphetamine in Tamil Nadu, where the consignment was allegedly intended for onward smuggling to Sri Lanka through maritime route.



Mouli Cornered Mythri Ravi For Big Updates of Fauzi & RC 17

Mouli, who turned into a successful hero with Little Hearts, is eagerly awaiting for his next Donga Naa Koduku. During the DNK teaser event, Mouli stole the biggest updates of Prabhas and Ram Charan films from producers Mythri Movie Makers.

Mouli cornered producer Mythri Ravi and asked him about the update on the Fauzi that marks Prabhas, Hanu Raghavapudi's collaboration under the same production house banner. Responding to Mouli, Ravi said, "On the occasion of Prabhas garu's birthday this October 23, we're unveiling a special glimpse of Fauzi that introduces the hero's character along with what the film is all about. It is not a usual film teaser and it is just a video glimpse that gives a sneak peek into the Fauzi. This video glimpse will be attached with our film 418 The Film and to watch it on the big screens, do visit the theatres of 418."



Mouli didn't stop there. His next question is about Sukumar and Ram Charan's most awaited film that marks their reunion under Mythri banner after their classic cult film Rangasthalam. While the film was supposed to be launched for Dussehra, producer Ravi clarified that the

film's launch was deferred due to the ongoing Mudham season. Ravi hinted that the film's launch along with a grand pooja ceremony is likely to be held on October 26 or 27.

On the parting note, producer Mythri Ravi commented that Mouli has taken the job of

the journalists. This is certainly an interesting way of promoting Donga Naa Koduku as Mouli turned into a real time Donga on the film's teaser launch event stage. This DNK teaser will now be watched by Prabhas and Ram Charan's fans. It's a smart strategy by Mouli and the DNK team.

Not Tiger, But Salman, Aamir And Akshay Were The Real Targets?

Bollywood had been witnessing a problematic period when it comes to the safety of their big stars. Notably, it was Salman Khan, who was frequently under the radar of the anti social attacks by the Lawrence Bishnoi gang for the last decade or so.

This got aggravated further with the recent attack on Bollywood actor Tiger Shroff, who was attacked by gun wielding gunmen in Mumbai. Luckily, he escaped unhurt in this horrifying attack where his car ended up taking the brunt of the attack. However, it is being established that this is just the tip of the iceberg and there is a lot more antisocial crime, but could be coming up against some of the big Bollywood star in the upcoming times. According to national media reports, it is being said that this Bishnoi Gang is reportedly planning a series of attacks against other



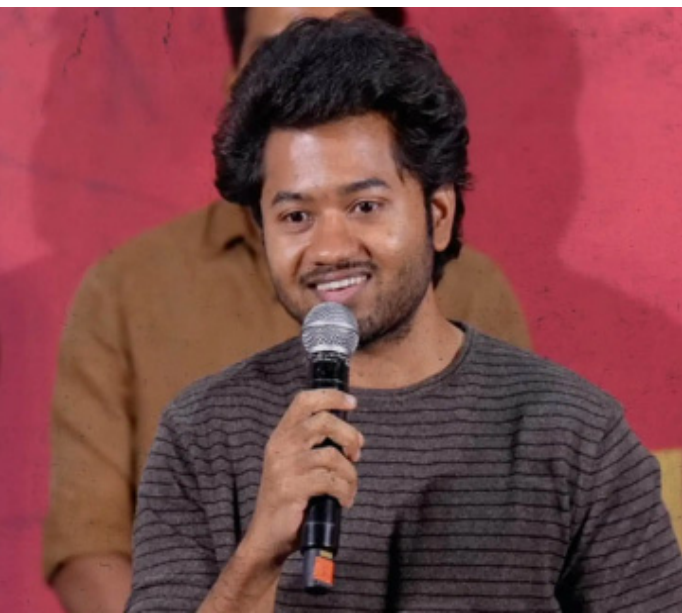
big stars in Bollywood including Salman Khan, Akshay Kumar and Aamir Khan.

Apparently, Tiger Shroff incident is just the start of an upcoming hiatus which could have fatal consequences. It is reported that Tiger Shroff is

just an easy target, and it is mentioned that the three stars named above could be coming up next in the target list. If this is the reality, then it is time for the security authorities to take adequate measures to safeguard the mentioned

Bollywood stars. This incident has more than what meets the eye as such antisocial activities against big celebrities is not going to send good signals to the public as it raises questions about the law and order maintenance.

Mouli's Responsible Approach Saves the Producer Rs.12 Lakhs



Donga Na Koduku is one of the upcoming films in Telugu. Starring Mouli of Little Hearts fame, the film introduces a new director Sreenu Kambala. Mythri Movie Makers is bankrolling the project. The team launched the film's teaser today, which is quite hilarious and attracts a lot of families. Mythri Ravi also revealed that Mouli took care of the film's production and saved some budget. Mouli is a multi talented personality who is not just an actor but also a writer. He also has some directorial skills as well. Since they shot Little Hearts on a shoe-string budget, Mouli has a fair command in production too, which he used for this film. When DNK hit the floors, Mythri Movie Makers handled the responsibility of production to Mouli, assigning a team to him. Apparently, Mouli took care of entire production and ensured to complete the film's shoot well within the budget. Not just that, Mouli also helped the producers save approximately 12 lakh rupees in the overall budget which is a positive sign for any production house. If the hero is actively involved in the planning and production, that will help them focus more on marketing and the overall quality of the film. Producer Ravi hopes that as long as that fire exists in Mouli, he will shine. And the teaser is also impressive enough to pull crowds to theatres. The film is scheduled for a release on November 13.

Donga Naa Koduku Teaser: Mouli's Fun Batting

Naveen Yerneni and Y Ravi Shankar of Mythri Movie Makers are producing a wholesome entertainer Donga Naa Koduku. Mouli Tanuj Prasanth who shot to fame with Little Hearts plays the lead in the film directed by first-timer Sreenu Kambala. The makers came up with the film's teaser today. What happens when a young man values money more than relationships? Donga Naa Koduku explores this funny idea through Eeshwar, a B.Tech student who quit his

studies and has a strange way of looking at life. His choices lead to a series of funny situations, with robbery and crime adding more twists to the story.

Debutant director Sreenu Kambala impresses big time with his humorous writing. His clever inclusion of crime and robbery elements make it intriguing,

offering a different experience altogether. Suriya Balaji's slick visuals and Sinjith Yerramilli's lively score elevate the fun quotient.

Mouli Tanuj Prasanth entertains once again. His comic timing stands out in the tiffin sequence and other humorous moments, while his casual delivery adds to the character's appeal. Sushmitha Shetty plays his love interest, while Ali and Rajitha portray his parents. Donga Naa Koduku is gearing up for its release on November 13, while the teaser assured a laugh riot.



Tripti Dimri Brings The Heat In Black



Tripti Dimri is all set for her big Tollywood project Spirit, where she plays the lead opposite Prabhas in Sandeep Reddy Vanga's pan India cop drama. The film is now reportedly set for Diwali 2027, and the pairing has already created huge buzz. She promoted the VS Fashion Show 2026 in a black lace bodysuit with a sheer tulle skirt that had a ruffled hem and beaded embroidery at the waist. A sequined metallic cropped jacket sat over her shoulders. Long drop earrings, soft waves and glossy nude lips finished the look. Her recent films have not worked at the box office, and now the big question is whether Sandeep Reddy Vanga, who gave her breakout role in Animal, can give her the hit she needs. Fans hope Spirit delivers.

Anupama Strictly Need To Reassess Her Script Choices?



Anupama Parameswaran has been trying to explore different roles and prove her acting abilities, but her recent box-office performance raises questions about her script selection. Except for Kishkindapuri, her recent films have all failed to make any impact at the box office. Many of these projects gave Anupama a central role without depending on a leading star hero to attract audiences. While this approach offered her an opportunity to carry films on her shoulders, the commercial results have not been encouraging. Some of her performances and film choices, like Paradha and Crazy Kalyanam, have received appreciation from critics, proving that she is willing to experiment. However, critical acclaim alone is not enough to sustain in today's time. Anupama has the talent and experience to choose interesting characters, but she now needs to strike a better balance between performance-oriented roles and commercially appealing subjects. All eyes are now on her upcoming film Bhogi, starring Sharwanand, which is releasing next month. Her character has already generated some curiosity, and the role looks promising. If Bhogi performs well commercially, it could provide a much-needed boost to Anupama's career.