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Over 400,000 March Across France, Clashes Erupt In Paris



France: Clashes erupted as a mass march drew to a close in Paris on Saturday, a week after widespread rioting and looting. More than 400,000 people rallied across France over school funding and soaring living costs, mounting a fresh challenge to President Emmanuel Macron's government. The Paris march began peacefully. But near its endpoint at Porte de Vincennes, some protesters threw projectiles while police fired volleys of tear gas and used water cannons to disperse people. The Interior Ministry put nationwide

turnout at 410,000, including 110,000 in Paris. Authorities had confined the capital's march to the city's southeastern edge, keeping protesters away from central neighborhoods hit by last weekend's destruction. Elsewhere in France, police used tear gas in Lyon, Clermont-Ferrand and Strasbourg and water cannons in Nice and Nantes, French media reported. In Marseille, officers fired tear gas during clashes with several dozen people near the march's endpoint. The Paris prosecutor's office said 64 people had been ar-

rested in connection with Saturday's demonstration and 40 placed in police custody. Those arrested included six minors. Most arrests concerned suspected weapons offenses or participation in a group preparing violence or property damage, the office said. The unrest is testing Macron's authority in the final months of his presidency before voters choose his successor in May. The stakes are high: the far-right National Rally has accused his government of failing to protect the public and urged people to channel

their anger into votes for them.

Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez had announced a nationwide deployment of up to 70,000 officers, backed by helicopters, armored vehicles and water cannons. Trade unions led the procession, followed by protesters in raincoats carrying flags and handmade placards. Camille Chesnier, 27, said she had been unable to find work despite having an engineering degree and a master's degree. "There are enormous numbers of people in the same situation as me but who aren't privileged and who find themselves living on the streets and in squats and, frankly, it's very tough," she said. What began last month as a protest over staff shortages at one high school southeast of Paris has spread nationwide, drawing students demanding better schools and workers seeking higher wages and pensions. In Paris, Bénédicte Pittion, a 46-year-old teacher, marched through steady rain with her 16-year-old daughter, Garance, a high school student.

"People Like Abhijeet Dipke..." : Piyush Goyal's Jab During Berlin Event

New Delhi: Union Minister Piyush Goyal took a jab at CJP leader Abhijeet Dipke while speaking about government-funded programmes to bring Indian talent back from around the world. Goyal, who was interacting with Indian science and technology research students in Berlin, cited China's state-sponsored initiative, which recruits top scientists, researchers, and technology experts from abroad (particularly overseas Chinese academics) to reverse brain drain and build China's domestic innovation capacity. "Wherever you go in the world, you find huge Indian talent. But how do we attract them back to India? But we have to also be careful that there is no misuse. In China, people are afraid of misuse. They can just disappear. If someone misuses it in India, I will disappear," the minister quipped.

Asked whether India would come up with an initiative similar to China's, Goyal said, "It's a good initiative but then comes the difference between dictatorship and democracy." "...If we do this, then people like Abhijeet Dipke



will come and say that it was the government's job to fund the students, grant scholarships so why should we do it on our own. Am I right or wrong? Unfortunately, such elements will come and mess with our heads. So we have to calibrate our policies from the point of view of our democracy," Goyal said.

The minister's remarks came as Abhijeet Dipke's CJP, whose sit-in protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar against the paper leak of the national medical entrance exam led to the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in July, is protesting against

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over allegations of voter-list manipulation during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. The minister further asked the Indian students to think about ideas that would help attract Indian talent back to the country. "You also think about ideas and tell us. We want to get you back; we want to attract talent back. How do we get all of you to come back? It's not always entirely economic...it's your motherland after all. We have to give back. Maybe sometime ahead in life, keep some space for homeland too," he said. Excellent in-

teraction with Indian Science and Technology researchers and students in Berlin. Heard their views on strengthening the support ecosystem for Indian talent abroad and urged them to continue to contribute in their way towards the Viksit Bharat journey. Assured them of full support to ensure that their efforts in the field of innovation and startups get a platform at important trade fairs and exhibitions and that the India story is strongly showcased. Goyal is on an official visit to Germany and the Netherlands from October 22 to 27 and is accompanied by a delegation of about 100 Indian businesses and startups.

'Why Won't You Give Your Sister the Property Your Father Left?': Chandrababu Questions Jagan



From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, October 24: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu launched a scathing attack on YSRCP chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, raising questions over family property disputes and making several serious allegations against him. Speaking to the media on Saturday, Chandrababu said, "Just because you have a mouth to speak and a newspaper to publish whatever you say, does that mean you can make reckless statements? If you have done nothing wrong, why did you seek adjournments 500 times? Why are you refusing to give your sister the property your father left for her? You even dragged your mother to court over property. Who doesn't know about you?" The Chief Minister claimed that Jagan's father had built houses for both his son and daughter at Yelahanka Palace in Bengaluru. He accused Jagan of behaving like the mythological character Kamsa by allegedly obstructing his niece's wedding.

Chandrababu also dismissed Jagan's security concerns as excuses. "I am mentioning these incidents only to expose his mental-

ity. Otherwise, I have no reason to discuss his family matters," Chandrababu said. He further alleged that Jagan had a controversial history even as a student. Referring to a past interview given by former Chief Minister K. Rosaiah to ABN Andhra Jyothy, Chandrababu claimed that Rosaiah had spoken about Jagan's conduct as a son and said he had been sent to Bengaluru because his behaviour had become difficult to tolerate. Chandrababu also made a

serious allegation that Jagan had orchestrated the killing of his uncle and caused mental anguish to his cousin Sunitha. He criticised Jagan for refusing to make his residence available for his niece's wedding, describing it as a failure in his role as a brother. The Chief Minister concluded by alleging that Jagan had failed as a son, brother and Chief Minister, and was now failing as a political party leader by continuing what he described as unlawful and disruptive activities.

YSRCP Leaders Clash with Police Over Rejection of Nominations in Eluru

From Our Staff Reporter Eluru District, October 24: YSRCP candidates clashed with police after their nominations for the local body elections were rejected. The incident took place in Dwaraka Tirumala of Eluru district. According to reports, the Election Commission rejected the nominations filed by YSRCP candidates during the scrutiny process in Dwaraka Tirumala. Angered by the rejection, YSRCP Mandal President Pratapaneni Vasu allegedly tore his own shirt and behaved aggressively with police personnel. This led to a scuffle between YSRCP leaders and the police. Subsequently, police arrested Pratapaneni Vasu and YSRCP District Vice-President Bondada Venkanna Babu on allegations of obstructing police officers from discharging their official duties.

59 Petitions Filed to Stall Local Elections... CM Chandrababu Slams YSRCP

From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, October 24: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said that the public's verdict would depend on the government's performance. Speaking to the media on Saturday, he stated that people would never support rowdiness and criminal activities. He said law and order in the state had improved significantly over the past decade. "I controlled Naxalism in the undivided state, even putting my own life at risk," he said. Recalling the situation in Hyderabad, Chandrababu said the city had once faced a month-long curfew during the undivided Andhra Pradesh era. He said that

when he was Chief Minister, he brought the situation under control, and Hyderabad had remained peaceful since then.

Rebuilt Andhra Pradesh and Enhanced Its Brand Image

The Chief Minister said his government had consistently overcome emerging challenges. He alleged that anarchy prevailed in Andhra Pradesh between 2019 and 2024, accusing the previous government of engaging in various forms of misconduct. He also alleged that he had been arrested without being served any notice. According to Chandrababu, public anger over such actions resulted in the YSRCP's defeat in the

2024 elections. He claimed that the YSRCP, which he referred to as the "axe party," was reduced to just 11 seats and denied the status of the principal opposition party. Chandrababu said his government had rebuilt Andhra Pradesh and enhanced its brand image by attracting investments and establishing industries. He cited initiatives such as Rayalaseema Rising and Uttarandhra Kalalaku Rekkalu as part of the state's development agenda.

He further alleged that funds received under 96 Central government schemes had been diverted by the previous administration and that his government had corrected the situation.

The Chief Minister warned that if local body elections were not conducted, the state would lose funds allocated through the 16th Finance Commission. Without these funds, he said, development activities in local bodies would suffer.

'Violence Stems from a Criminal Mindset'

Chandrababu expressed anger over the filing of 59 petitions seeking to stop the local body elections. He said his government had implemented reservations for Backward Classes (BCs), ensuring that seats were allocated to BC candidates wherever applicable. He stated that the government was progressing with



the Polavaram project and effectively addressing drought conditions. However, he accused the YSRCP of obstructing these efforts and alleged that its leaders had created disturbances in various districts over the past two and a half years.

He further accused the party of opposing BC reservations and approaching the courts seeking to postpone elections until after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. Chandrababu alleged that the party's "criminal mindset" was responsible for creating unrest in the state. He also accused an MP of sending vehicles in an attempt to run over TDP workers.

'Violence Was Orchestrated According to a Plan'

The Chief Minister alleged that violence had been deliberately orchestrated in several parts of Andhra Pradesh. Referring to Rayachoti, he accused a former MLA of bringing criminals and lethal weapons from Punjab to create disturbances. He also referred to alleged acts of violence by YSRCP leaders in Darsi and attacks on police personnel, saying the public had witnessed these incidents. Chandrababu Naidu said people should be made aware of the alleged disturbances in several areas, including Pulivendula, Pungunur, Rayachoti and Darsi.

Jana Sena Files Complaint Against Botsa Chaitanya, Objects to ZPTC Nomination

From Our Staff Reporter Vizianagaram, October 24: The Jana Sena Party has lodged a complaint with the election authorities against YSRCP Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC) candidate Botsa Chaitanya from Pusapatirega mandal. Jana Sena ZPTC candidate Kotla Revathi urged the election officer to take action against Botsa Chaitanya, alleging that he was registered as a

voter in Ward No. 41 of the Vizianagaram Municipal Corporation. In her complaint, Revathi stated that Chaitanya held voting rights within the Vizianagaram Municipal Corporation limits under voter ID number UJK1667229. She questioned how a person who was registered as a voter in Ward No. 41 until October 22 could file a nomination as a ZPTC candidate from Pusapatirega



mandal. Revathi requested the election authorities to investigate Chaitanya's nomination, citing his voter registration within the municipal corporation limits. She

urged the election officer to examine her complaint and take appropriate action against Botsa Chaitanya in accordance with election rules and regulations.

Setback for Former Minister Botsa's Family in Vizianagaram ZPTC Elections

From Our Staff Reporter Vizianagaram District, October 24: Former minister and senior YSRCP leader Botsa Satyanarayana's family has suffered an initial setback in the Vizianagaram ZPTC elections. The Election Returning Officer rejected the nomination filed by Botsa Chaitanya as a YSRCP candidate for the Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC) election. Jana Sena candidate Kotla Revathi lodged a complaint over Botsa Chaitanya's transfer of voter registration from Vizianagaram to Pusapatirega mandal. The Returning Officer informed the other candidates that Chaitanya's nomination had been rejected after examining the relevant evidence.



EDITORIAL

Cyber Heist Exploits System Vulnerabilities

Cybercriminals have allegedly exploited vulnerabilities in the computer systems of a non-banking financial company (NBFC) in Hyderabad to illegally transfer approximately ₹3.34 crore, triggering serious concerns. After the incident was reported to the cybercrime helpline, authorities managed to freeze only ₹40 lakh. Investigators suspect that the company's computer systems or application programming interfaces (APIs) may have been connected without authorisation, or that existing vulnerabilities were exploited to carry out unauthorised fund transfers. An API is a technical mechanism that allows two software systems to exchange information and perform specific tasks. If unauthorised access is gained to such a system, security controls may be bypassed, potentially resulting in the misuse of payment facilities and fraudulent transactions. Police are examining the NBFC's computer system logs, API logs, bank statements, transaction records and internal company reports. This incident offers important lessons for finance companies, banks and digital payment service providers about the security measures they need to adopt. Strengthening API security, implementing multi-factor authentication, continuously monitoring unusual transactions and reinforcing control mechanisms are essential.

A warning issued a few days ago by experts from Google's Threat Intelligence Group about the growing threat of cybercrime is particularly relevant in this context. Google warned that cybercriminals were stealing login credentials for AI services used by prominent companies, infiltrating corporate servers and exploiting their computing power. In the Hyderabad incident, too, vulnerabilities in an NBFC's computer systems allegedly provided an opportunity for cybercriminals. Vivifi India Finance Private Limited, an RBI-registered lending institution, is located in the Raidurg area of Hyderabad. After identifying suspicious transactions in its banking systems, the company lodged a complaint with the Telangana Cyber Security Bureau, which has initiated an investigation. Between 10:30 a.m. and noon on Monday, the money was transferred through 183 transactions to 51 suspected mule bank accounts. Investigators suspect that the accused may have withdrawn the cash from ATMs shortly after the transfers. Authorities are now tracing the ultimate destination of the funds. Cybercriminals are increasingly using artificial intelligence (AI) and deepfake technology to deceive people through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook.

Between 2019 and 2025, a total of 67.32 lakh cybercrime cases were registered. Notably, nearly two-thirds of these cases—43.22 lakh—were recorded in just the last two years. Over the past six years, victims have reportedly lost approximately ₹55,000 crore to cyber fraud. Nearly 8 per cent of these losses were linked to so-called digital arrest scams. Trading-related frauds are also on the rise. Apart from the financial losses suffered by individuals, government institutions face serious threats from digital warfare allegedly conducted by hostile countries against India. Critical infrastructure, including airports, major projects and power generation facilities, faces persistent cyberattack threats from neighbouring countries. While artificial intelligence is advancing at an extraordinary pace, cybercrime is growing even faster. Detecting and preventing cyberattacks powered by AI is becoming increasingly difficult. Cybercriminals are developing malware that continuously modifies its code to evade cybersecurity systems. Using currently available AI tools, attackers can identify software vulnerabilities before others discover them and exploit those weaknesses to launch attacks.

The government has introduced several initiatives to counter cyber threats. Along with the IndiaAI Mission, it has strengthened the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In). Measures have also been introduced requiring organisations to address security vulnerabilities within hours to protect data against cyberattacks. India is working to develop its own artificial intelligence technologies rather than depending on other countries. The Union government launched the IndiaAI Mission with a budget of more than ₹10,300 crore. It is also making GPU computing resources and startup funding mechanisms available to support innovation and benefit millions of people. Despite these efforts, the strategic and increasingly sophisticated nature of cyberattacks remains a serious cause for concern.

Are Caste Associations Indifferent to 'SIR'?

There are numerous caste associations in the two Telugu-speaking states. The majority of the millions of votes that are disappearing without a trace due to irregular changes in electoral rolls under the 'SIR' process belong to people from disadvantaged castes. Yet, there is hardly any sign of the leaders of these associations speaking out against the problem. This is truly astonishing.

These associations include those representing BCs, SCs, STs and Muslims. Some claim to represent everyone collectively, while others represent individual castes. Even within a single caste, there are several associations. Taken together, their number could run into hundreds. This is no exaggeration. Caste associations exist not only in wider society but also within government, government institutions and even among writers and intellectuals. Why is this happening, and what are its merits and drawbacks? What are these groups achieving by remaining divided? Are these associations working for the people of their respective castes or for the interests of their leaders? These are questions that continue to arise. Setting these questions aside for a moment, it is difficult to understand why none of them seems concerned about 'SIR'. This problem has not suddenly emerged because of the recent controversy surrounding cockroaches. It had existed for some time before that. Elections to some state assemblies have already been held using allegedly irregular electoral rolls. Elections in another seven states are scheduled for next year, followed by the Lok Sabha elections as well as elections in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. In this way, several crore people could lose their voting rights. Estimates already indicate that 13 crore votes have disappeared. It remains unclear how many more crores of people will lose their right to vote by the time the 'SIR' exercise is completed.

These alarming developments are causing concern not only in India but also across the world. In response, young people, various organisations, intellectuals and political parties are conducting protests and campaigns. The Modi government is resorting to vari-

ous forms of repression against them. News about these developments is making headlines on television, social media and in newspapers every day.

Yet, nothing seems to be stirring the leaders of caste associations in the Telugu states. There is an irony here. These leaders regularly speak about political power for disadvantaged communities. Some go a step further and demand political power specifically for their own caste.

Whether they clearly understand what political power and state power mean, how the two differ, and which form of power they are actually seeking is a separate debate. This is not the place to discuss it. What matters here is that, whatever power they seek, the voting rights of their caste members must remain intact. Apart from making empty slogans for so long, these leaders have done little in practice to achieve the power they claim to seek. More often, they appear to use sections of their own communities as vote banks to serve their personal and political interests. What happens, then, if a significant number of voters belonging to their respective castes lose their votes? Confusion surrounding the 'SIR' process began as soon as it was introduced in the Telugu states. Election Commission officials repeatedly announced that government staff would distribute forms door to door, clarify citizens' doubts and help them fill out the forms, and subsequently collect them from every household. It soon became clear, however, that these were merely grand announcements. The officials failed to do what they had promised.

Observers also pointed out that some of the questions in the forms were unnecessary. If even educated people living in urban areas were facing such difficulties, there is little need to explain the problems confronting lower-middle-class families, the poor and rural residents. The point is that these sections constitute a large proportion of the population, and most of them belong to BC, SC and ST communities. When minority communities are also included, the seriousness of the problem becomes even more pronounced. Can we



claim that the leaders of these caste associations are unaware of these issues? Certainly not. So, what have they done, or what are they doing, about them? Have they visited the homes of people from their respective communities to understand their difficulties in obtaining, filling out and submitting the forms? Have they offered any assistance? Even before that, did they notice that Election Commission officials were failing to distribute and collect the forms as promised? Did they ask the officials to fulfil their commitments? Did they exert pressure when necessary? The answer to both questions is no. In fact, there appears to have been no action at all. Apart from the absence of practical initiatives, there is hardly any recollection of these leaders issuing press statements or holding media conferences about the issue. What is the reason for this indifference? Did they assume that political parties would handle the matter because it is the parties that need votes? Or did they think that organisations such as Cockroach would conduct protests and get the job done, so why should they make any effort themselves? Alternatively, do they believe they can continue their politics with the disadvantaged people whose votes remain intact, even if others lose theirs? Their responsibility does not end with protecting existing votes. What are they doing about registering new voters? The process is still underway. A large number of young people in these

communities are reaching voting age. How many of them, or their families, even know that the process of registering new voters has begun? And among those who do know, how many are actually registering? Have the leaders of these caste associations made any effort to inform disadvantaged families about the process and ensure that their young men and women are enrolled as voters? Are they taking action accordingly? Apart from caste leaders, there are youth associations representing different castes as well. It is unclear what they are doing about this issue.

The tragedy is that these leaders speak tirelessly not only about political power but also about Dr B.R. Ambedkar. They raise slogans in his name, put forward demands in his name and praise him as the architect of the Constitution. Yet, just as they fail to act on many of his guiding principles, their attitude towards voting rights—guaranteed by that very Constitution—is equally disappointing. These communities face countless problems. The right to vote can serve as an important instrument for addressing them. It is not merely a right guaranteed to every citizen in a democratic system; it is also a means of exerting pressure on political parties and governments. In such circumstances, when that very right is under threat, how actively should leaders of disadvantaged communities respond? This issue should matter more to them

than to other sections of society. Election after election, voting patterns clearly show that disadvantaged and weaker sections take the right to vote more seriously than other groups. They participate in elections in greater numbers than the upper and middle classes. Women and elderly people also queue up at polling booths. Many believe that if they do not have a vote or fail to cast it, they will not even be counted as living members of society. It is the commitment of these communities that has contributed to the gradual rise in voter turnout.

At a time when democratic consciousness is spreading even among ordinary people, what are the leaders, intellectuals, writers and artists associated with caste organisations, youth associations and Ambedkarite groups doing? If they do not even try to find out what is happening to the votes of their own communities and take steps to protect them, what purpose does their existence serve? Is their only objective to use disadvantaged communities as vote banks to fulfil their own interests? This is not to suggest that none of these leaders has ever fought for the problems faced by disadvantaged communities. Some have certainly led movements and achieved results. Nevertheless, when the 'SIR' process is unfolding in such a dangerous manner, paying attention to it and taking action to protect voting rights is equally essential.

What Was Legitimate Then, How Has It Become Illegal Now?

The allegations being levelled by the Congress and the INDIA alliance against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) are entirely baseless and irrational. Unable to politically take on the BJP or win elections, opposition parties are deliberately misleading the public by claiming that votes are being deleted. They are acting in ways that undermine the credibility of supreme constitutional institutions such as the Election Commission and the judiciary. Even though the Supreme Court has already upheld this revision process, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi and other Congress leaders engaging in unusual theatrics in the name of protests is an insult to democratic institutions. Just as elections are vital to democracy, maintaining clean electoral rolls—the foundation on which elections are conducted—is even more important. If the names of deceased people, those who have changed residences, individuals registered to vote in two places, and fake voters remain on the rolls, the very legitimacy of the people's verdict comes into question. It is to correct these shortcomings that the Election Commission of India has undertaken a Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls across the country.

However, the Congress-led INDIA alliance has launched a disinformation campaign, alleging that genuine voters are being removed through this exercise. So far, its leaders have failed to prove that even a single genuine voter has been

illegally deleted from the rolls. This is an attempt by the opposition to attack the Election Commission and divert public attention from the development and welfare initiatives undertaken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Article 324 of the Constitution and Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, empower the Election Commission to conduct a Special Intensive Revision. This is not an exercise intended to deprive anyone of their rights. It is merely a routine administrative process to update electoral rolls. The Election Commission is conducting the exercise transparently, in accordance with the Supreme Court's guidelines. It publishes draft electoral rolls and allows adequate time for objections and corrections before releasing the final lists. Eligible voters whose names have been inadvertently omitted also have an opportunity to get themselves registered again.

The figures themselves demonstrate the scale of this exercise. Of the country's 95 crore voters, 82 crore participated in the enumeration. More than 11 lakh government officials worked on the ground, while 35 lakh representatives of various political parties monitored every stage of the process. How could votes be secretly deleted when representatives of all parties were watching the proceedings? The verification identified 2.89 crore names of deceased people and 1.01 crore fake entries. Based on objections received through Form 7 applications, only 29 lakh



names across the country were legally removed. Meanwhile, more than two crore new voters were added to the rolls through Form 6 applications. These figures make it clear that the objective of the exercise is to ensure that every eligible citizen is included in the electoral rolls. Since India's independence, this process has been conducted eight times, with most of those exercises taking place under Congress governments. How can a process that was legitimate then be deemed illegal now? Elections in Kerala were held only after the revision was completed. Why were there no objections when the Congress won there, but objections have arisen now? Congress leaders such as Shashi Tharoor, Ramesh Chennithala and Sachin Pilot themselves have supported the need for this process to eliminate fake votes. Forty-two former judges have also signed an open letter sup-

porting the Election Commission and condemning allegations made without evidence.

The fear of defeat lies behind the Congress's protests. Its vote share, which stood at 45 per cent in 1952, had fallen to 21 per cent by 2024. Whenever it loses public confidence, maligning constitutional institutions has become a habit for the Congress. While questioning the impartiality of the Election Commission, the party seems to have forgotten that M.S. Gill, who once headed the Commission, joined the Congress after retirement and became a Union Minister. Similarly, did T.N. Seshan not contest the Lok Sabha election from Gandhinagar on a Congress ticket after retiring? Serious questions were also raised at the time about the impartiality of another Chief Election Commissioner, Navin Chawla. Does the Congress have the moral right to speak about electoral malpractice? The cancellation

of Indira Gandhi's election in 1975, after allegations of misuse of government machinery during her election campaign were upheld, remains a dark chapter in Indian democracy. The 1988 Nellie massacre in Assam, which occurred amid widespread opposition and during a controversial election conducted unilaterally, resulted in a massive loss of life. The primary objective of the Special Intensive Revision is to prevent the recurrence of such irregularities. Electoral rolls must be clean to ensure that every eligible citizen gets the right to vote and that every vote carries equal value. Instead of making baseless allegations against constitutional institutions out of fear of defeat, the Congress should seek ways to regain public confidence. Opposing the removal of fake votes amounts, indirectly, to defending those votes.

Ekalavya Students to Be Encouraged in Sports

- *State-Level Sports Meet to Be Organised Soon at Peddagedda*
- *Tribal Welfare Gurukulam Secretary M. Gowthami*

Rampachodavaram, Pen Power, October 24: Special measures are being taken to develop sports skills among students studying in Ekalavya Model Residential Schools across Andhra Pradesh, along with providing quality education, said M. Gowthami, Secretary of the State Tribal Welfare Gurukulam.

On Saturday, M. Gowthami, Secretary of the State Tribal Welfare Gurukulam, along with Polavaram District Joint Collector Surapati Prashanth Kumar, inspected the Ekalavya Model Residential School at Peddagedda village in Rampachodavaram mandal and the Ekalavya Model Residential School at Mareduilli.

Speaking on the occasion, Gowthami stated that steps were being taken to



organise various sports competitions for students studying in the 28 Ekalavya Model Residential Schools across Andhra Pradesh. She said a sports meet would be organised soon to provide students with an opportunity to showcase their talent and excel in different sporting disciplines. She emphasised that stu-

dents should receive equal encouragement in both academics and sports, and that special attention should be given to identifying and nurturing their abilities. The Secretary instructed the school authorities to strictly implement the prescribed daily menu in accordance with government guidelines. She also di-

rected teachers to explain lessons in a manner that students could easily understand and to repeat explanations wherever necessary to improve learning outcomes. School Principal Devendra Sharma, Gurukulam Cell Officer Nagendra, and other officials participated in the inspection.

Rampachodavaram Student Wins Gold Medal in State-Level Wrestling Championship

- *K. Mahendra Qualifies for National-Level Under-17 Wrestling Competitions*



Rampachodavaram, Pen Power, October 23: K. Mahendra, a student of the G.T.W.A.H. (Boys) School in Rampachodavaram,

brought laurels to his school and region by winning a gold medal at the State-Level Under-17 Wrestling Championship. With

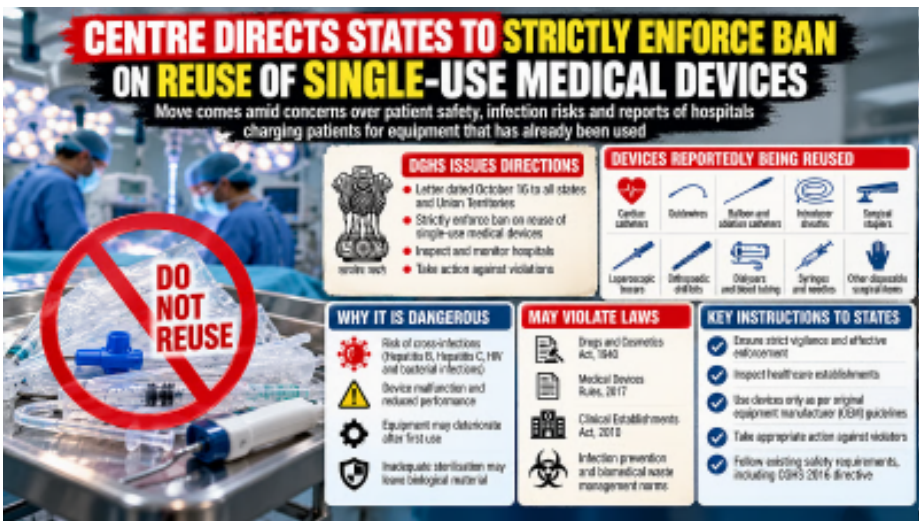
this achievement, he has qualified for the national-level Under-17 wrestling competitions. Mahendra showcased his sporting tal-

ent at the School Games Federation (SGF) State-Level Under-17 Wrestling Championship held in Palnadu district from October 10 to 12, 2026. Demonstrating excellent wrestling skills and determination, he secured the gold medal and earned qualification for the SGF National-Level Under-17 Wrestling Competitions.

Polavaram District District Sports Development Officer (DSDO) V. Satish Kumar, wrestling coach R. Shivaji, and school Headmaster T. Rajababu congratulated Mahendra on his remarkable achievement. They expressed confidence that Mahendra would continue to excel at the national level and bring further recognition to the school and the district through his sporting achievements.

Centre Orders Strict Ban On Reuse Of Single-Use Medical Devices In Hospitals

New Delhi: The Centre has directed all states and Union Territories to strictly enforce a ban on the reuse of single-use medical devices and disposable surgical items in government and private hospitals. The move comes amid concerns over patient safety, infection risks and reports of hospitals charging patients for equipment that has already been used. In a letter dated October 16, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said it had come to its notice that some private and corporate hospitals were sterilising and reusing medical devices meant for one-time use. The practice was particularly reported in specialised departments such as cardiology, nephrology, oncology, cardiothoracic and vascular surgery, and neurosurgery. According to the DGHS, certain hospitals were sterilising medical devices after a procedure and using them again, even though the equipment was specifically designed for single use. The directorate said the practice raised serious concerns about patient safety, infection prevention, regulatory compliance and healthcare costs. It also flagged instances in which patients were allegedly charged the full price of reused devices or the expenses were reimbursed by government authorities. Several medical devices have reportedly been reused, including cardiac catheters, guidewires, balloon and ablation catheters,



introducer sheaths, surgical staplers, laparoscopic trocars and orthopaedic drill bits, PTI reports.

Dialysis equipment, including dialysers and blood tubing, was also among the items identified. According to the Association of Indian Medical Device Industry (AiMeD), even syringes and needles have been found among the medical items being reused. The DGHS warned that sterilising a medical device does not necessarily make it safe for another procedure. Equipment designed for one-time use may deteriorate after its first use, while inadequate sterilisation could leave behind biological material. Such practices could expose patients to cross-infections, device malfunction, reduced performance and complications during medical procedures. The directorate warned that infections could include hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV and bacterial infections. The warning highlights a serious patient

safety concern, particularly when people undergoing critical medical procedures may have no way of knowing whether the equipment being used on them is new or has already been used. The DGHS said reusing single-use medical devices could violate provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, the Medical Devices Rules, 2017, and the Clinical Establishments Act, 2010. The practice could also breach applicable infection prevention and biomedical waste management requirements. The directorate made it clear that the reuse of such devices and disposable surgical items must be strictly prohibited in healthcare facilities under the administrative jurisdiction of the Government of India, states and Union Territories. The DGHS has directed chief secretaries, state health department officials, directors of health services, the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) and state and Union Terri-

tory drug controllers to ensure strict vigilance and effective enforcement. Authorities have been asked to inspect and monitor healthcare establishments, ensure compliance with the directive and take appropriate action wherever violations are detected. The directorate also instructed healthcare facilities to use disposable medical devices strictly according to the instructions and recommendations of the original equipment manufacturer (OEM). The letter referred to an office memorandum issued by the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) in December 2016 concerning the reuse of single-use medical devices in hospitals empanelled under the scheme. The latest direction reinforces the need for hospitals to follow existing safety requirements and prevent the reuse of equipment intended for a single procedure.

Election Observer Reviews Poll Preparedness in East Godavari

- *M. Gowthami inspects nomination scrutiny, strong room security and polling arrangements in Korukonda and Gokavaram mandals*

Rajamahendravaram, October 24 | Pen Power Correspondent: District Election General Observer M. Gowthami on Saturday inspected the arrangements for the forthcoming local body elections in East Godavari district, emphasising the need for transparency, impartiality and strict adherence to the State Election Commission's guidelines.

Ms. Gowthami, who is also the Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Tribal Welfare Residential Educational Institutions, visited the Mandal Parishad Development Officer (MPDO) offices at Korukonda and Gokavaram to review election preparedness.

During the visit, she examined arrangements for the security of strong rooms, storage and transportation of election materials, training of polling personnel and facilities at polling stations. She directed Returning Officers to familiarise themselves with the Election Commission's instructions and ensure that every stage of the electoral process was conducted in accordance with the prescribed procedures.

Focus on nomination scrutiny

The Observer personally monitored the scrutiny of nomination papers in both mandals and instructed Returning Officers to ensure a transparent and impartial verification process.

She said nomination forms and supporting documents submitted by candidates should be thoroughly examined in accordance with the election rules. Officials were also directed to maintain accurate records of the scrutiny proceedings.

Emphasising the impor-



tance of procedural compliance, Ms. Gowthami cautioned officials against lapses that could affect the fairness of the elections.

Security and staff training

Reviewing logistical arrangements, she instructed officials to ensure the timely availability of ballot papers, ballot boxes and other polling materials.

She stressed that transportation of election materials from distribution centres to polling stations should be carried out under appropriate security arrangements.

The Observer also reviewed strong room security and directed officials to strictly follow the pre-

scribed safety protocols.

She called for comprehensive training for Presiding Officers (POs), Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) and other polling personnel on ballot box handling, voting procedures and post-poll responsibilities.

Voter facilities to be ensured

Ms. Gowthami directed officials to provide drinking water and other essential amenities at polling stations to prevent inconvenience to voters. Special arrangements should be made to assist senior citizens and persons with disabilities in exercising their franchise, she said. Taking note of possible adverse weather

conditions, she instructed officials to prepare contingency plans to ensure uninterrupted polling in the event of rain or other emergencies. She also emphasised coordination among election officials, police and other departments to maintain law and order and safeguard election materials. The Observer said every official involved in election duties must discharge their responsibilities with diligence and accountability to ensure the smooth conduct of the electoral process. Returning Officers, MPDOs and election staff from Korukonda and Gokavaram mandals were present during the inspections.

Negligence in Election Duties Will Invite Disciplinary Action: General Observer

Rampachodavaram, October 24 (Pen Power): Polavaram District General Observer Chetan TS and District Election Officer and Collector K. Dinesh Kumar warned that negligence or irresponsibility in election duties would invite disciplinary action. They directed election personnel to ensure free, fair, transparent and peaceful conduct of local body elections.

Addressing a training programme for Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, Micro Observers, Static Surveillance Teams and Flying Squad members at the ITDA meeting hall in



Rampachodavaram on Saturday, they stressed the need for a thorough understanding of election rules and procedures. They instructed officials to ensure the safety of ballot boxes and election materials, maintain proper polling records, and provide basic facilities at polling stations.

They also directed officials to coordinate with the Revenue, Police and Panchayat Raj departments and strictly follow Election Commission guidelines. The final list of candidates contesting ZPTC and MPTC elections will be announced on October 27, following the withdrawal pro-

cess. Joint Collector Surapati Prashanth Kumar, Sub-Collectors Pruthviraj Kumar and Narendra Padal, DRO Siva Rao, ZP CEO Purushottam, District Panchayat Officer G. Bhaskara Rao, Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers and other officials attended the meeting.

Jt. Collector Directs Officials to Ensure Transparent Local Body Elections

Rampachodavaram, October 24: Polavaram District Joint Collector S. Prashanth Kumar directed officials to ensure smooth, transparent, and error-free conduct of ZPTC and MPTC elections. A review meeting was held on Saturday at the ITDA office under the leadership of District Collector K. Dinesh Kumar, with Sub-Collector D. Pruthviraj Kumar and other officials participating.

The Joint Collector instructed officials to coordinate effectively, ensure adequate facilities at polling stations, arrange ballot boxes and election materials in advance, and allocate staff efficiently. He stressed strict compliance with State



Election Commission guidelines and timely completion of all preparatory arrangements. DRO R. Siva Rao, DPO G. Bhaskara Rao, DWAMA PD Ram Prasad, DDO Maheswara Rao, and other officials attended the meeting.

'Should Apologise To All': BJP Slam Farooq Abdullah Over Kashmir Remarks, Calls Them 'Condemnable'



Jammu: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders criticised National Conference president Farooq Abdullah over his reported remarks questioning India's intentions towards Kashmir and crediting Pakistan's continued efforts to raise the issue at international forums with protecting Kashmiris. Jammu and Kashmir Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Sat Sharma demanded an apology to the people of the country. The Bharatiya Janata Party leaders also defended the Centre's policies in Jammu and Kashmir and asserted that the region's security and stability were the result of the efforts of its people and the Government of India.

Addressing a workers' convention in Baramulla, Abdullah questioned whether "Kashmiris could expect justice from Delhi" and said, "Pakistan's continued efforts to raise the Kashmir issue internationally were putting pressure on India." "They are completely independent. When I saw those documents, I wondered, what can you expect from Delhi? Do you expect them to deliver justice for you? Have the courage to fight, or you will be wiped out, and your identity will disappear. They are silent today because of pressure from the world. Our

neighbour is constantly pursuing them, going everywhere and saying that the Kashmir issue has not been resolved. He is protecting us; otherwise, their intentions are not good," Abdullah said. Reacting to the remarks, J&K BJP President Sat Sharma said Abdullah was able to express his views freely in India and questioned whether he would have the same freedom in Pakistan. "Farooq Abdullah, you are permitted to say whatever you wish in this country—that is precisely why you are able to speak so freely. Had you said these same things in Pakistan, you wouldn't have been left with anything at all. This is a political party that has never acted in the nation's interest. Article 370 was imposed upon us," Sharma told ANI.

He alleged that Article 370 had deprived several communities in Jammu and Kashmir of their rightful status and rights. "After the imposition of Article 370, we saw what the people actually received. Women were denied their rightful status. Refugees from West Pakistan were denied their rights. The Valmiki community and the Gorkha community were also denied their due. It is because of these very people that Jammu and Kashmir has suffered so much," he said. Sharma further

asserted that Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir were safe under India's protection and criticised Abdullah's remarks about Pakistan. "Today, Muslims across the country—including those in Jammu and Kashmir—know the truth. We live among them. The Muslims there know that they are safe under India's protection. If they harbor such deep affection for Pakistan, then they should go and settle in Pakistan. He is echoing the same rhetoric his father once used," Sharma said. Calling on Abdullah to apologise, Sharma said the National Conference leader's remarks were unacceptable, particularly given his previous tenure as Chief Minister and his oath to uphold the Constitution. "The Bharatiya Janata Party does not tolerate the actions of someone who, despite having repeatedly served as Chief Minister and taken an oath to uphold the Constitution of this country, has instead sought to incite anarchy against the nation itself. He should apologise to all the people of India; otherwise, I would suggest that Pakistan is a more suitable place for him—he ought to go and settle there," Sharma said.

Former Union Minister Arjun Munda also condemned Abdullah's remarks, saying that such a statement, if made by a Chief Minister, was unfortunate and reflected his view of the country. "If this is true, then it is unfortunate. For someone who is the Chief Minister of a part of this country and has been working consistently, if such a statement has come from him, then it becomes self-evident how

he views this country. Today, that is clearly reflected in his statements. I did not expect his statements to take such a form, but since they have, it is not just sadening; it is condemnable," Munda told ANI. BJP General Secretary Amar Kumar Bauri also defended the Centre's policies in Jammu and Kashmir, citing development, improved connectivity and efforts to curb terrorism following the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A.

"If India's intentions were not sincere, we would not be witnessing the path to development that has opened up in Kashmir following the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A. The world is observing how connectivity between Kashmir and the rest of the country has been strengthened—most notably through the construction of India's largest railway bridge—and how, by curbing terrorism, the doors to development have been thrown wide open," Bauri said. He also alleged that Abdullah's criticism stemmed from the withdrawal of special privileges and concessions that he and his family had enjoyed under successive Congress governments. "The source of Farooq Abdullah's distress is that the special privileges and concessions—granted to him and his family by the Congress and its successive governments as part of a policy of appeasement—have now been taken away. Farooq Abdullah, along with other communal-minded and anti-national elements, must understand that by removing Articles 370 and 35A, Modi ji has made it clear that



'Should Apologise To All'
BJP Slam Farooq Abdullah
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Jammu and Kashmir is the crown of India. The 1.4 billion people of India will not tolerate any harm or threat to this crown—the very jewel upon their nation's head," Bauri said.

Former Rajya Sabha MP and BJP leader Deepak Prakash also criticised Abdullah's remarks, asserting that Kashmir had been an integral part of India since ancient times and had contributed to harmony within Indian society. "Kashmir has been an integral part of India since time immemorial. It has not only been an integral part of India since ancient times, but it has also served as a vital element in fostering harmony within our society. As for those who seek to break India into pieces, if Farooq Abdullah expresses loyalty toward such elements, it is highly condemnable,"

Prakash said. Invoking the concept of 'Akhand Bharat', Prakash said Pakistan was also part of the idea of an undivided India and called for the return of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) to India. "Pakistan, too, is an integral part of India. It is a part of 'Akhand Bharat' (undivided India). When we envision an undivided India, we consider Pakistan an integral part of it. Therefore, Pakistan is indeed an integral part of India. Furthermore, the entirety of Kashmir—including the territory currently under illegal occupation (PoK)—must one day return to India. This is the aspiration of 1.4 billion people. By making such statements, anyone who strengthens anti-national forces deserves the strongest possible condemnation," he told ANI. BJP MP Mukesh Dalal told ANI, "Farooq Abdullah and his family are notorious for con-

sistently taking an anti-India stance and pursuing anti-India policies. Whenever the time comes for dialogue, all that ever comes from their mouths is talk of Pakistan. You live on Indian soil, you eat Indian food—yet you find fault with India? What kind of upbringing have you had?"

Dalal added, "But all of these—the Abdullah family, the Communists—are, in a sense, the 'illegitimate offspring' of Nehru; they are the ones Nehru nurtured and raised, and who, time and again, stand against India." Meanwhile, Rajya Sabha MP Upendra Kushwaha said the views expressed by others were their own affair and attributed Kashmir's stability to its people, the Government of India and the local administration. "As for what they choose to say, that is their own affair. Kashmir re-

mains intact because of the people of Kashmir, the policies of the Government of India, and the policies of the Kashmiri administration. If any external force dares to cast an eye towards Kashmir, they have been receiving a fitting response ever since Narendra Modi became Prime Minister, and they will continue to receive such a response in the future," Kushwaha said. The exchange of remarks comes amid a political row over Abdullah's comments on Pakistan's role in raising the Kashmir issue at international forums. While Abdullah questioned India's intentions towards Kashmir, BJP leaders defended the Centre's approach, citing the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, development initiatives and security measures in the Union Territory.

Jamia Millia Islamia Registrar Blames Congress, AIMIM Leaders For Campus Disruption Amid Students' Protest



New Delhi: Jamia Millia Islamia Registrar Md. Mahtab Alam Rizvi on Saturday said the university would announce students' union elections as soon as the draft constitution was submitted, following his meeting with protesting students as their hunger strike entered its 13th day. The students have been demanding the restoration of the Jamia Millia Islamia Students' Union (JMSU), revocation of disciplinary action against students and removal of the university's Chief Proctor over what they have described as a crackdown on protesters. Speaking to reporters, Jamia Registrar Rizvi said he personally met the students who were staging a hunger strike and discussed their demand for holding students' union elections. "Regarding their demand for holding a union election, I informed them that we have already formed a draft committee tasked

with drafting a constitution. They then asked for a deadline. I told them that the sooner they complete the draft constitution, the sooner we will conduct the elections—a proposal they agreed to," the Registrar said.

He added that the students had asked when the elections would be held, following which he reiterated that the university would announce the schedule after receiving the draft constitution prepared by the committee, which includes student representatives. "Since you yourselves offered to draft the constitution—with your own representatives included in the committee—we will announce the elections as soon as you provide the draft," Rizvi said. On the students' demand for the revocation of disciplinary action, the Registrar said the university would review the cases and refer them to the Disciplinary

Committee (DC). "I assured them that we would review these actions, bring the matter before the Disciplinary Committee (DC), and reinstate those found to be innocent," he said. Jamia Registrar Rizvi also condemned the "Free Kashmir" graffiti reportedly found on the campus and alleged that unauthorised individuals had entered the university premises during the protest. "As for the graffiti written yesterday—the 'Free Kashmir' slogan—we condemn it in the strongest possible terms; we will not support it under any circumstances," he said. Referring to the entry of political leaders into the campus, Rizvi alleged that Congress MP Imran Masood had "broken through a wall to get in", while Imran Pratapgarhi had "broken a lock to enter".

"These are unauthorised individuals... We have filed a complaint with the police and asked them to take action... There were a few oth-

ers from the AIMIM who entered here," he said. Jamia Millia Islamia has decided to conduct classes of all courses online with immediate effect until further notice, citing the ongoing situation and the need to ensure the safety and security of students on campus. Meanwhile, Congress MP Imran Masood, who on Friday visited the campus to meet the protesting students, called on the university administration to address their demands and revoke their expulsions. "The situation at Jamia is a very serious matter. I visited the campus yesterday. Students have been on a hunger strike for 12 days. The university administration should listen to them; their expulsion must be revoked, and their demands addressed. Once the election dates are announced, this protest will end immediately," Masood told ANI. Denying that slogans calling for a "Free Kashmir"

had been raised during the protest, Masood said the slogan had only been written on walls. "No slogans were chanted; they were merely written on the walls. I explicitly stated there that Kashmir is an integral part of India, and all the students present supported this," he said. Masood was briefly detained by Delhi Police on Friday night during his visit to the Jamia campus. He later told ANI, "No slogans calling for a 'free Kashmir' were raised there, not a single one. I stood up in front of everyone and strongly condemned such slogans, stating that Kashmir is an integral part of India." Speaking to ANI, filmmaker Ashoke Pandit also criticised the alleged slogans, claiming that similar incidents had occurred at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and other educational institutions. "This is not the first time such incidents have occurred in the country. We have seen this at JNU and other universities as well. We have seen slogans demanding freedom for Kashmir and the release of those behind bars, including Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam. Who are these people? Who are these forces? They are people hiding behind the identities of students, professors and those associated with educational institutions while engaging in what I consider acts of terrorism. I call them terrorists. It is therefore very important for our government, PM Narendra Modi and Union HM Amit Shah, to treat them like terrorists," Pandit said. "Treating them under ordinary laws is not enough.

Our brave security forces have successfully destroyed terrorist camps in Pakistan, and we are happy about that. But the more important question is whether we are destroying the terrorist camps within our own country. These people are studying in educational institutions. They call themselves students and professors, but they are spreading what I consider terrorism," he added. Pandit also referred to statements allegedly made by a woman professor at JNU, saying, "We have also seen statements by a woman professor at JNU making abusive remarks about India's identity and existence. It is essential to eliminate this poison spreading through our colleges and institutions," he added. The hunger strike began on October 12, with five students continuing their protest on Saturday. They are seeking the restoration of the students' union, which was dissolved in March 2006, and the removal of the Chief Proctor. Jasim Ali Khan, who has been on hunger strike since the beginning of the protest, accused the university administration of launching a "crackdown" and demanded that the suspensions of students be revoked. During the initial days of the protest, Delhi Police attempted to remove the protesters from the designated protest site on the university campus, leading to an escalation of the demonstration. Earlier, Jamia Millia Islamia constituted a seven-member high-level committee to engage with the protesting students, examine their demands and take steps to restore normalcy on campus.

CCTV Footage Shows Shiva Sharma With Shraddha Dubey Before Death; Police To Recreate Fall



Lucknow: A CCTV footage has emerged in the case involving the death of Lucknow businessman Shiva Sharma, showing him with the main accused, model Shraddha Dubey, before the incident. The footage, reportedly recorded at Awadh Green Apartment, also shows Shraddha's sister, Rashmi, walking down a stairwell ahead of the duo. The footage captures three people descending the stairs inside the building, with Rashmi walking first, followed closely by Sharma and Shraddha. The video has surfaced as investigators examine the movements of those present at the apartment and the positioning of CCTV cameras on the day of the incident. Ajay Rai, the owner of a flat in Awadh Green Apartment, has raised questions about the circumstances surrounding Sharma's death and alleged that Shraddha was aware of the cameras installed in the building. According to Rai, Shraddha had an aggressive attitude and frequently used abusive language. He claimed that she had objected to his installation of CCTV cameras and allegedly abused him during a dispute before returning to her flat.

Rai also questioned the movements of people inside the apartment on the day of the incident. He claimed that nobody used the stairs that day and that everyone left through the lift. He further alleged that Shraddha knew the first-floor camera locations, including the camera installed towards the balcony. According to Rai, the rear side of the camera faced the direction from which Sharma reportedly fell, leaving that area outside his view. He added that Shraddha's flat and his own face the same direction. These claims have not been independently established. Meanwhile, police will recreate the crime scene with the assistance of a forensic team to investigate whether Sharma died by suicide or was killed. Before her arrest, Shraddha had posted videos on social media describing Sharma's death as a suicide. However, Sharma's mother lodged a police complaint alleging murder, prompting investigators to examine the circumstances of his fall from the fourth floor. As part of the reconstruction, forensic experts will drop a dummy matching Sharma's weight and physical build from the fourth floor.

Xi Jinping Rolls Into Trump Summit With China's Trade Engine Roaring



Washington:In the four months since the leaders of the two global superpowers last met, Xi Jinping has overseen a surge in China's trade with the world while Donald Trump has struggled with falling approval ratings at home. That shift in fortunes has tempered expectations for their summit in Washington this week, analysts say, with Xi in no rush to make concessions and Trump constrained by a costly war with Iran that has hurt both his popularity and Americans' wallets. While thorny issues like Taiwan may surface, the main focus of the September 24 meeting is whether the leaders will signal an extension to a trade truce struck last year that averted a major shock to the global economy. "Xi is not really looking for anything tangible. He wants to extend the gentleman's agreement with Trump so that China has time to fortify itself," said Jon Czin, a foreign policy expert at the

Brookings Institution who formerly served as China director at the US National Security Council.

'Living In Xi's World'

White House officials have sought to downplay the potential for major breakthroughs. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng helmed preparatory talks in New York on Sunday aimed at teeing up some potential agreements on AI guardrails and trade in non-sensitive products. That is a far cry from Trump's vow when he returned to office in 2025 to use tariffs to address a trade imbalance with China that was "killing" the United States. But since agreeing the truce with Xi in October of that year, his attention has been divided among myriad other foreign policy battles, from the wars in Iran and Ukraine to disputes with Europe over free speech. China has faced its own challenges, such as slowing domestic demand

and a protracted property crisis, but the export juggernaut that Trump sought to tame has kept roaring in what economists are increasingly referring to as China Shock 2.0. China's global trade surplus is on pace to top \$1 trillion for a second straight year. While US efforts to curb the cheap parcels that online retailers such as Shein and Temu rely on have worked, more than half of the roughly 6,500 product categories China sold to the US so far this year have grown compared to 2025. A delegation of Chinese business leaders, potentially including some firms facing US regulatory scrutiny as they seek greater market access, is set to accompany Xi to Washington. The Trump administration "thought they could use massive unilateral pressure to force China to make concessions, and that did not occur," said Scott Kennedy, an expert on the US-China economic relationship at Washington-

based think tank CSIS. "Now this is Xi Jinping's world, and we're all living in it."

Taiwan And Trade Wins

If Xi is in the driver's seat as analysts suggest, that will further unnerve US allies in Asia who expect the Chinese leader to push Trump to soften Washington's support for Taiwan, the democratically governed island claimed by Beijing. Xi repeatedly asked him about Taiwan when they met in Beijing in May, including about arms sales and Washington's resolve to defend the island, Trump told reporters. The US president described a pending \$14 billion arms package for Taiwan as a "negotiating chip" with Beijing. Some officials in Taipei and Tokyo worry he may be tempted to cash in that chip for political wins ahead of November's midterm elections, which could prove challenging for his Republican Party. That could include Chinese purchases of Boeing jets or farm goods, or commitments to curb the flow of fentanyl precursor chemicals that have fuelled the US opioid crisis. "China-US ties have become more transactional," said Wu Xinbo, a professor at Shanghai's Fudan University who advises China's foreign ministry. While Washington may want to prioritise trade talks, for Beijing, the US approach to Taiwan could be key, he said. "If you accommodate our concern on the Taiwan issue, then we would be

willing to accommodate your concerns on other issues, be it law enforcement or on purchases of US agricultural products," Wu said.

Putting Pressure On Iran

Washington also sees Xi as uniquely able to exert pressure on Iran to bring an end to the war that has dragged Trump's approval rating to the lowest of his political career. However, Xi has shown little inclination to do so. Reuters earlier this month reported that Beijing is selling billions of dollars' worth of goods to Iran through a sanctions-evasion scheme. China's foreign ministry says it is not aware of such a scheme. US threats last month of secondary sanctions on countries doing business with Iran -- which Bessent called an "Economic D-Day" -- appear not to have yet been wielded against Tehran's largest trading partner. That is more evidence, analysts say, that Trump is eager to keep relations with Xi steady as he focuses his energies elsewhere -- an arrangement that also suits the Chinese leader. "Both Xi and Trump feel it's quite helpful to have stability in the relationship so that they can focus on more pressing things," said Ruby Osman, senior geopolitical researcher at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. "For Trump, that is Iran. For Xi, that is building out China's domestic resilience for whatever comes after Trump."

Pakistan Taliban Rejects Islamabad's Afghan Territory Claim, India Links



Islamabad:Terror group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has rejected allegations by Islamabad that the militant group uses Afghan territory to launch attacks against Pakistani security forces, claiming that the organisation's military and administrative structures are based inside Pakistani territory. In a recent interview in Pashto, Mufti Ghafran, a senior member of TTP's leadership, said Pakistan's government and military have failed to provide "concrete evidence" that TTP fighters were crossing from Afghanistan to conduct attacks. He claimed the group maintains organisational structures across at least 39 districts of Pakistan, with only a limited number located close to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

'Areas Of Ops Deep In Pak'

Ghafran argued that many areas where TTP claims to operate -- including parts of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - are hundreds of kilometres from the border. Referring to recent fighting in Hangu, he claimed that TTP operations had inflicted casualties on Pakistani soldiers and asserted that the area was not adjacent to Afghanistan. He also questioned how fighters could routinely cross the heavily fortified border, saying Pakistan had installed fencing, surveillance posts, alarms, lighting systems, and landmines along sections of the frontier. Islamabad has repeatedly accused TTP of maintaining sanctuaries in

Afghanistan and using them to plan or support attacks inside Pakistan.

'No Link To India'

Ghafran further denied allegations that India supports TTP, describing such accusations as part of a longstanding Pakistani narrative against its opponents. He insisted that the group's campaign was independently financed and organised. Asked why TTP activity has historically been concentrated in Pashtun-majority areas rather than Punjab, Ghafran said the organisation's operations had already extended to parts of Punjab, Sindh, Karachi, and Balochistan. He said TTP could expand its activities further if Pakistani military operations intensified. On attacks against economic infrastructure, Ghafran said TTP had so far refrained from systematically targeting gas pipelines and other economic institutions because of what he described as its interpretation of Sharia. However, he suggested that attacks on such targets could be considered in the future if the group concluded that Pakistan was using revenues from natural resources against it.

'Refugees Killed In Pak Strikes'

Ghafran also addressed the possibility of negotiations with Islamabad, accusing Pakistan of repeatedly abandoning talks when they no longer served its interests. He said TTP remained open to what he termed meaningful negotiations conducted according to Islamic principles. Re-

garding Pakistani claims that military strikes in Afghanistan target TTP members, Ghafran denied that members of the organisation had been killed in such strikes. He claimed victims included Afghan-based Pashtun refugees who had fled Pakistan during earlier military operations.

NDTV could not independently verify these claims.

'A Resistance'

On the disputed Durand Line, Ghafran said neither the Pashtun nor Baloch populations had accepted the frontier, describing it as an imposed arrangement. He also accused Pakistan's intelligence services of involvement in targeted killings—an allegation he offered without publicly presented evidence. Ghafran portrayed TTP's armed campaign as resistance against the Pakistani military and said the group would continue fighting. He rejected accusations that TTP members were motivated primarily by financial incentives, while repeating allegations concerning Pakistan's past cooperation with the United States. His remarks come amid continued tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan over cross-border militancy, with Islamabad repeatedly demanding action against TTP elements it says are operating from Afghan soil. Kabul has denied allowing Afghan territory to be used against Pakistan, while the security situation along the border remains a major source of friction between the two countries.

ICE Agent Shoots And Wounds Venezuelan Immigrant In Texas, US Officials Say

Washington:AUS Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer shot and wounded a man Sunday afternoon in Austin, Texas, local authorities said, and anti-ICE protesters quickly gathered at the scene. The man was in serious but stable condition at a hospital after being shot once in the torso on the capital city's north side, Austin officials said at a news conference. The Department of Homeland Security, which oversees ICE, did not participate in the news conference and didn't respond to repeated requests for details. City police officers were not involved in the operation or the shooting, which occurred after a traffic stop, Austin Police Chief Lisa Davis said while briefing reporters along with the city's mayor and other officials. Mayor Kirk Watson, a Democrat, said he wants the city's police department to have a role in the investigation so it can provide "clear, third-party eyes" in the process. Watson said he does not think it would be appropriate for ICE to conduct an investigation on its own. Austin residents have "a right to feel safe in their city," Watson said. A proper investigation will only enhance credibility, he added. The chief said there

were not many facts she could provide so soon after the incident but added that her department's special investigation unit was at the scene. An immigration attorney representing the man's family identified him as Wilber Rafael Garces Perez, a 28-year-old Venezuelan man. Attorney Kate Lincoln Goldfinch said in a video posted to her Instagram account that she believed he had no criminal history and no final order of removal from the U.S., but she later told The Associated Press that she did not know his current immigration status. The man's family has struggled to get any information from the hospital about his status or location, Lincoln-Goldfinch said. Just before 7 p.m., the man's wife was informed by the hospital's attorney that the man had been released into ICE custody a few hours earlier, Lincoln-Goldfinch wrote in a text to AP. "No one bothered to update her," she wrote. It wasn't immediately clear if the man remained hospitalized while in ICE custody or if he had been transferred elsewhere. A dark blue Toyota Corolla was parked under an overpass with damage to its passenger-side door and what appeared to be bullet holes. The car was towed away in



the early evening, and traffic began moving again. A large law enforcement presence was present along with a crowd of about a hundred protesters. Some demonstrators cursed at police officers holding riot shields, while others yelled out as passing cars honked in support of the protest. One man held a sign saying, "Nobody is safe" and, on the other side, "ICE Nazi." Asked if Austin authorities knew where the involved federal agent is, given that agents have left states after previous shootings nationwide, the mayor said: "We do not know that. But my hope would be that, an agent that's involved in an officer-involved shooting would not leave the city. Certainly not leave the state." The

office of Travis County District Attorney José Pompa Garza asked that local police and prosecutors be included in the investigation. "We further request cooperation from the federal government in giving us access to the evidence," the DA's office said in a statement Sunday evening. US Rep. Greg Casar, a Democrat representing parts of Austin, called for transparency as the shooting is investigated. "It is awful that this horror has come to our doorstep," Casar told reporters. "For Austin to be safe, ICE should end its surge here." The shooting comes as ICE surges enforcement across the country this summer, producing more than 50,000 arrests a month for the first

time in its history in July and August. In July, an ICE officer fatally shot 52-year-old Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, of Houston, after federal agents driving unmarked vehicles pursued him while he was taking his construction crew to a job site. Also in July, 25-year-old Johan Sebastián, a Colombian man, was shot by an ICE officer in Maine. The officer is an Army veteran who has struggled with serious mental health issues since early childhood and never should have been given a badge and gun to patrol American streets, several of his close relatives told AP. The administration's enforcement efforts were widely condemned last winter after the killings of Alex Pretti and Renee Good in Minnesota.

Converse Pulls Sneaker Ad That Critics Said Had Racist Ku Klux Klan Imagery

Washington:The sneaker company Converse has removed a social media ad that sparked outrage among critics who viewed it as evoking the Ku Klux Klan and lynching. The Instagram ad photo showed K-pop singer Karina wearing a skirt and holding a pair of Chuck 70 X sneakers. Critics lashed out online, saying that a white triangular image created by lighting on the skirt

resembled a KKK hood and that the way she held the sneakers made them look like the dangling feet of a lynching victim. Converse, owned by Nike, issued a statement apologizing and saying it removed the ad. "We're sorry," said the statement, first released on Friday. "We understand why this image is deeply upsetting and recognize that we got this wrong. We removed it from our chan-

nels and are working to remove it everywhere it appeared. This should not have happened and we will do better." Converse, based in Boston, declined on Sunday to answer questions seeking additional information, including how the company screens ads before they are posted and how the ad was approved. Karina and her management company, SM Entertainment Group, did not imme-

diately respond to messages through their Instagram accounts. Retailers and top fashion brands have issued a string of apologies over the years for products criticized as being racially insensitive. Last month, retailer Target pulled a children's Halloween costume from its shelves after widespread social media backlash, apologizing for selling a garment that critics said evoked racist min-

strel caricatures. The Converse photo sparked swift criticism, including calls for staff involved in the ad to be fired and for a boycott of the company. In a slew of comments on social media, posters questioned how the ad could have cleared the company's advertising vetting process. Other commenters defended Converse, saying they didn't believe it was intentional.

Imran Khan's 3 Sisters Arrested In Pakistan Before PTI's Mega Protest



Islamabad:Authorities in Pakistan have arrested former prime minister Imran Khan's three sisters, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has alleged. Aleema Khan, Dr Uzma Khan, and Noreen Khan, who have been calling for Khan's release, have been sent to Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore, the party said. "Punjab police have raided Aleem Khan's home and have abducted Imran Khan's other two sisters, his nephews, and their children," PTI spokesperson Zulfi Bukhari said on his social media platform X. PTI's information secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram told AFP that 73-year-old Khan's sisters and their children were taken into custody, but the children

were released. "All three sisters have been sent to Kot Lakhpat Jail, Lahore," he added. The law enforcement agencies arrested Khan's sisters in Lahore, the capital city of Punjab province. While Aleena Khan was taken into custody on Sunday, Dr Uzma Khan and Noreen Khan were arrested on Monday. The arrests came after Lahore's deputy commissioner Muhammad Ali Ijaz passed two separate orders for the three sisters' 30-day detention under the Maintenance of Public Order law of Punjab province.

The Protest Call

So far, Pakistani authorities have not released any statement on the matter, but arrests

followed PTI's call for a mega protest on September 27, seeking his release from jail. Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar has termed PTI's protest call illegal. He said, "We will not allow them to block roads and disrupt people's lives." The cricketer-turned-politician has been in jail since 2023 and was sentenced late last year, along with his wife, to 17 years in jail on corruption charges they both deny. Khan, who was also a former Pakistan cricket captain, was prime minister from 2018 to 2022 before being removed in a no-confidence vote during a political crisis over tensions between his government and Pakistan's powerful military establishment.

Critical minerals recycling concerns to be taken up through inter-ministerial meetings: G Kishan Reddy



New Delhi: Union Minister of Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy said the Centre will hold separate meetings with different ministries to address industry concerns linked to critical minerals and recycling. Speaking on the sidelines of the National Seminar on Indian Critical Minerals Recycling Ecosystem and Circular Economy, Reddy said several of the issues raised by industry involve more than one department. He added that the government will therefore follow a coordinated, inter-ministerial approach to examine the concerns and work towards resolving them. "For the first time, a meeting was called to listen to their grievances," Reddy said. "And various well-established organizations attended today in large numbers. They explained their issues. This doesn't pertain to just the Ministry of Mines alone."

"Through a whole-of-government approach, we heard issues involving multiple ministries," he said. "I have held discussions with them. The Commerce Ministry, Finance Ministry, Environment Ministry, Ministry of Electronics, and our own ministry are involved. We will hold separate meetings for different issues to work toward resolving them." On the Pre-Shipment Inspection Certificate (PSIC) issue, Reddy said the matter would be taken up through a separate inter-ministerial meeting rather than being limited to informal discussions. He said the next round of talks would involve the Finance Ministry, Commerce Ministry, and Ministry of Mines and Industry representatives so that specific concerns can be examined and responsibilities can be clearly assigned. Reddy said seminars are useful for raising issues, but actual solutions

require all concerned ministries and stakeholders to sit together and decide what needs to be done. He added that the government would work out the next steps in the coming days. On rising freight costs and global disruptions, Reddy said geopolitical tensions are affecting several sectors, not just minerals. He said the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of External Affairs are also examining these issues through a whole-of-government approach and engaging through diplomatic channels where required.

Referring to reforms under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, Reddy said discussions are underway with state governments. He added that he has personally spoken with ministers and Chief Ministers and that the Centre is collecting their inputs before moving

ahead with implementation. During the seminar, Reddy also stressed the importance of building a stronger critical-minerals recycling ecosystem. He highlighted the role of new technologies, entrepreneurship, e-waste management and environmental sustainability. He also called for wider public participation, urging people to view e-waste and end-of-life products as potential sources of valuable minerals. Companies, researchers and other stakeholders were encouraged to share ideas and proposals for creating a technology-driven recycling framework.

Sitharaman calls India-Canada ties 'wonderful'

Last month, Sitharaman said the relationship between India and Canada had entered a positive phase following renewed engagement between the two countries. Sitharaman identified food security, energy security and critical minerals as key areas where India and Canada could deepen cooperation. She said stronger ties in these areas could help both countries deal with disruptions in global supply chains and reduce concentration risks in the sourcing of important commodities. The Finance Minister also said cooperation in these sectors could support people's purchasing power and strengthen the ability of both economies to respond to supply-chain disruptions.

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India climbs to 8th globally in medicine safety reporting to WHO: Anupriya Patel

New Delhi: Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare and Chemicals and Fertilisers Anupriya Patel on Monday (September 21) launched the 7th edition of the National Formulary of India (NFI), a guidance document for hospitals on monitoring and reporting adverse events linked to medical devices, and the ADR-PvPI 2.0 mobile app for iOS users. The launches took place at the 6th National Pharmacovigilance Week programme organised by the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission at the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre in New Delhi.

According to the official release, the 7th Edition of the NFI has also been made available digitally through NFI Online. The 6th National Pharmacovigilance Week, being observed from 17-23 September, carries the theme "Promoting Rational Use of Medicines through Pharma covigilance: A Step Towards Safer Healthcare." The programme brought together senior government officials, regulators, healthcare professionals, academicians, researchers and other stakeholders working to strengthen medicine safety and patient care.

Patel said the safe and proper use of medicines is an important part of public health and stressed the need for continuous monitoring. She said patients should receive the right medicine, of assured quality, and use it in the safest possible way.



India's progress in pharmacovigilance

She also highlighted India's progress in pharmacovigilance, saying the country has developed a strong domestic system to collect, process and analyse medicine-safety data from across India.

According to Patel, this has helped India build its own scientific evidence on the safe and effective use of medicines and has strengthened the country's healthcare capabilities.

India moves to 8th position from 23rd

She added that India's contribution to the WHO patient safety database has improved significantly, with the country moving from 123rd position during 2009-2014 to 8th globally. The Minister highlighted the role of the Pharmacovigilance Programme of India (PvPI), coordinated by the National Coordination Centre at IPC, in systematically collecting, assessing and analysing adverse drug reaction information. She also acknowledged the contribution of the Materiovigilance Programme of India (MvPI) in monitoring adverse events associated with medical

devices. In a significant expansion of India's patient-safety framework, Patel announced that the Biovigilance Programme of India has been approved by the Government of India.

Referring to the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, Patel said patient safety must remain a key national priority. She called for India to build on its position as the "pharmacy of the world" and aspire to become a global leader in pharmacovigilance sciences and patient safety. V Kalaiselvan, Secretary-cum-Scientific Director, Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission, highlighted the role of the National Formulary of India in promoting rational use of medicines and safer prescribing practices. He also outlined IPC's efforts to expand NFI adoption nationwide and strengthen digitally enabled pharmacovigilance covering medicines, medical devices, blood and blood products and other medical products. Yvan JF Hutin, WHO Representative to India, underscored the importance of sustained collaboration among national and international stake-

holders for strengthening medicine-safety and pharmacovigilance systems. Dr YK Gupta, President, AIIMS Kalyani; VM Katoch, former Director General, ICMR and Secretary, DHR; Senior officers from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission; and other stakeholders were also present. The National Formulary of India, published periodically by IPC since 2009, is a guidance document for healthcare professionals aimed at promoting the rational and safe use of medicines. The NFI 2026 comprises 34 chapters, 20 appendices and 653 drugs, including 42 fixed-dose combinations and 30 immunologicals. Drug monographs have been revised to align with the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) and National Health Programmes. In addition to the print edition, the NFI is available digitally and provides access to important links relating to National Health Programmes, immunisation schedules, Jan Aushadhi, safe disposal of unused or expired pharmaceutical products, and other authoritative regulatory resources.

FD rates in September 2026: SBI, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, PNB, Axis Bank, Bank of Baroda compared; check latest interest rates



New Delhi: FD interest rates in September 2026 vary across banks and deposit tenures. SBI, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, PNB, Axis Bank and Bank of Baroda are offering rates in the 6 per cent range, while some private and small finance banks are offering rates of 7 per cent and above. The rates, sourced from the respective bank websites, are as of September 16, 2026. The applicable interest rate depends on the FD tenure, so depositors should check the rate for their chosen period before booking.

State Bank of India

State Bank of India offers a maximum FD interest rate of 6.45 per cent. The highest rate is available on its 444-day Amrit Vrishti deposit. SBI offers 6.25 per cent for one year, 6.30 per cent for three years and 6.05 per cent for five years.

HDFC Bank

HDFC Bank offers a maximum FD interest rate of 6.50 per cent. The highest rate applies to deposits with a tenure of three years and one day to less than four years and seven months. The one-year rate is 6.25 per cent, while the three-year rate is 6.45 per cent.

ICICI Bank

ICICI Bank offers up to 6.50 per cent interest on FDs. The highest rate is available on deposits with a tenure of three years and one day to 10 years. The one-year rate is 6.25 per cent, while the three-year and five-year rates are 6.45 per cent and 6.50 per cent, respectively.

Punjab National Bank

Punjab National Bank offers a maximum FD interest rate of 6.60 per cent on a 444-day deposit. Its one-year rate is 6.25 per cent, while the three-year rate is 6.30 per cent and the five-year rate is 6 per cent.

Axis Bank

Axis Bank offers a maximum FD interest rate of 6.50

per cent. The rate applies to deposits with tenures ranging from 18 months to 10 years. Its one-year, three-year and five-year rates are all 6.50 per cent.

Bank of Baroda

Bank of Baroda offers up to 6.75 per cent interest on its 555-day BoB Golden Goal Deposit Scheme. Its one-year rate is 6.25 per cent, while the three-year and five-year rates are 6.25 per cent and 6.30 per cent, respectively.

Bank of India

Bank of India offers a maximum FD interest rate of 6.85 per cent on its 999-day deposit. The bank offers 6.50 per cent for one year and 6.70 per cent for three years, while the five-year rate is 6 per cent.

Bandhan Bank

Bandhan Bank offers a maximum FD interest rate of 7.45 per cent on deposits with a tenure of two years to less than three years. Its one-year rate is 7 per cent, while the three-year rate is 7.25 per cent.

DCB Bank

DCB Bank offers up to 7.50 per cent interest on select tenures, including 24 months to less than 25 months, 34 months to less than 35 months, and 60 months to 61 months. Its one-year rate is 6.90 per cent, while the three-year and five-year rates are 7 per cent and 7.50 per cent, respectively.

Equitas Small Finance Bank

Equitas Small Finance Bank offers a maximum FD interest rate of 8 per cent on its three-year-and-one-day Maxima FD.

ESAF Small Finance Bank

ESAF Small Finance Bank offers up to 8 per cent on an 800-day FD. Its one-year and three-year rates are 6 per cent, while the five-year rate is 5.75 per cent.

Suryoday Small Finance Bank

Suryoday Small Finance Bank offers a maximum FD interest rate of 8.25 per cent on a five-year deposit. Its one-year and three-year rates are 7.25 per cent.

How FD rates compare

Among the major banks covered, Bank of India offers up to 6.85 per cent, while Bank of Baroda offers up to 6.75 per cent. SBI's maximum rate is 6.45 per cent, while HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank offer up to 6.50 per cent. Among the private banks covered, DCB Bank offers up to 7.50 per cent, while Bandhan Bank offers up to 7.45 per cent. Small finance banks offer higher peak rates in the supplied data. Equitas and ESAF Small Finance Bank offer up to 8 per cent, while Suryoday Small Finance Bank offers up to 8.25 per cent on the specified tenure.

Check the FD tenure before booking

The highest FD rate does not apply across all tenures. For example, Suryoday Small Finance Bank's 8.25 per cent rate is available for five years, while its one-year and three-year rates are 7.25 per cent. Similarly, Bank of India offers 6.85 per cent on a 999-day deposit, compared with 6.70 per cent for three years and 6 per cent for five years. Depositors should therefore compare the rate applicable to their preferred tenure rather than looking only at a bank's highest advertised rate.

Check premature withdrawal rules

Before booking an FD, depositors should also check premature withdrawal rules, applicable penalties, taxation and other terms. The conditions can vary depending on the bank and deposit product. Disclaimer: This is not investment advice. Do your own due diligence or consult an expert for financial planning.

Cement, electricity drive 4.8% growth in India's core industries in August

New Delhi: India's core industries expanded 4.8 per cent year-on-year in August 2026, supported mainly by strong growth in cement and electricity output, provisional data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed on Monday, September 21. The growth rate was slightly below the 5 per cent recorded in July 2026, according to the provisional Index of Core Industries data for August.

"The Index of Core Industries (ICI) grew by 4.8 per cent in August 2026 (Provisional Estimate) on a year-on-year basis, compared with August 2025. This is slightly less than the growth rate of 5.0 per cent recorded in July 2026 (Final Index)," the Commerce Ministry said in its release.

Cement posts strongest YoY growth

Cement posted the strongest year-on-year growth among the core sectors in August, rising 12.5 per cent. Electricity followed with an 11.6 per cent increase. Iron ore output grew 5.5 per cent, while steel

production rose 3.4 per cent and refinery products increased 2.6 per cent during the month.

On the other hand, coal, natural gas, crude oil and fertilisers recorded negative growth in August. The government said cement, electricity and iron ore have been among the main contributors to core sector growth in recent months.

The overall performance of the core industries also improved during the first five months of the current financial year, indicating stronger cumulative growth compared with the same period last year. "Cumulative growth rate of ICI during April-August 2026 was 4.3 per cent (Provisional Estimate) compared to 2.4 per cent in the corresponding period of the previous year," the ministry said. The August figures are provisional, while the Index of Core Industries for July 2026 has been finalised, according to the Commerce Ministry release. Last week, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said,

India's 7.8 per cent economic growth in the first quarter of the current financial year was driven by the efforts of the country's industry, MSMEs and people. She also pointed to policy certainty as an important factor supporting the economy amid global challenges. Speaking after addressing the International Tax Research and Analysis Foundation's 8th International Tax Conference in Bengaluru, Sitharaman said the strong growth number was not accidental and reflected the contribution of businesses and citizens across the country. "7.8% Q1 growth is not a random number. I don't take the credit for my side or the government's side; I give the entire credit to the people of India—the hardworking industry, small MSMEs, and everyone else. It is their sheer dint of hard work that is working out," Sitharaman said. She added that government policies provide the framework within which businesses and the wider economy operate.

Samsung One UI 9 rollout: Android 17 update reaches Galaxy S26, check new AI features and eligible phones



New Delhi: Samsung One UI 9 update: Samsung has started rolling out One UI 9 based on Android 17, bringing new Galaxy AI features, improved privacy tools and other upgrades to supported Galaxy smartphones and tablets.

Samsung has started the official rollout of One UI 9, its latest software update based on Android 17. The rollout began with the Galaxy S26, Galaxy S26+ and Galaxy S26 Ultra and is now expanding to more Galaxy devices in phases. Availability can vary depending on the market, device and carrier.

One UI 9 focuses on Galaxy AI, personalisation, camera features, translation, device care, privacy and security. Samsung has also introduced new tools designed to make everyday tasks easier across supported Galaxy devices.

Which Samsung phones are getting One UI 9?

Samsung has confirmed that One UI 9 will expand to additional Galaxy smartphones and tablets following its initial rollout on the Galaxy S26 series. The company has not published one complete worldwide release schedule for every eligible device.

The update is also available on the Galaxy Z Fold8 Ultra, Galaxy Z Fold8 and Galaxy Z Flip8, which debuted with One UI 9. The Galaxy S26 FE launched in India with One UI 9 pre-installed.

Samsung's Thailand newsroom has provided a regional rollout schedule for some older models. According to the schedule, the Galaxy S25 series and Galaxy Z7 series are due to receive One UI 9 from September 28, while the Galaxy S23 FE is scheduled to receive the update by October. These dates apply to Thailand and should not be treated as fixed worldwide release dates.

My FanCam gets AI-powered video tracking

One of the key new features in One UI 9 is My FanCam, which uses AI to track a selected person in a recorded video.

The feature automatically keeps the selected person centred and intelligently reframes the footage as the scene changes. This can be useful when recording performances, sporting events and other situations where the subject moves around the frame.

Now Brief and Now Nudge get new AI features

Samsung is also adding new AI capabilities to Now Brief and Now Nudge.

Now Brief gets new generative and editable cards, allowing users to customise the information shown in their daily summaries. The cards can provide information based on users' needs and preferences. Now Nudge provides contextual suggestions while users interact with supported apps. For example, it can help users save reservation details or locations shared in conversations without requiring them to leave the current screen.

Stripped And 'Purified': Bengal Christian Woman Alleges Conversion Threat By Bajrang Dal

Kolkata: A Christian woman in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district has alleged that a group of people associated with the Bajrang Dal assaulted and stripped her, and forcibly bathed her in front of others as part of a so-called "purification" ritual, as they sought to force her family and two other families into Hinduism during the annual festival Durga Puja. The complainant said that the three families were threatened that they would be "burnt alive" if they went to the police on October 18. She said she called the cops, but the families were terrorised by the group over the next two days as well, and some of the family members were taken to a Durga Puja pandal in nearby village Dingal, "where we were forced to perform specific religious rituals against our will". Police in Chandrakona finally booked at least 13 persons under sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for attempt to murder and related crimes, as per the FIR, registered on the night of October 20 on the complaint by the woman, a resident of Patlapur. No arrests were made as of 6:30 pm, October 24. Superintendent of Police Papiya Sultana for a response, but she did not reply. Opposition parties TMC (Mamata) and the Congress have demanded immediate action, though the ruling BJP was yet to respond to allegations of intentional inaction.

'Girls Were Threatened With Rape'



The victim has alleged that a group of people associated with Bajrang Dal came to her house on October 18. "They created pressure on us to give up our faith in Lord Jesus Christ," read her complaint. She said she lost consciousness after Ranjit Dolui, one of the accused, struck her on the head and below the ear. "When I was partially conscious, I realised that my clothes had been torn off and that Ranjit Dolui, Pacha Patra and Bapi Mondal had removed my saree," the complaint, in Bengali, further read. Others named in the FIR are Dilip Mishra, Bappaditya Chatterjee, Tarun Mondal, Arun Mondal, Madan Manna, Ajit Dolui, Purnima Das, Suchitra Patar, Monimoy Mukherjee, and Mithu Dolui. Madan Manna allegedly used sexual slurs for her 16-year-old daughter too. According to the complaint, the group said they would "get her married to a Muslim boy" and threatened to rape her. Another

girl, 15, was "held by the throat...with the intention of killing her". One of the accused hit two women from the other families with a bamboo stick and took away Rs 20,000 in cash from one of the homes, as per the FIR. The complainant called the police after the group left on October 18, and some personnel came to the spot and heard her oral complaint, she said. The next day, two of the men forcibly took the woman, her husband, and three others to a Durga Puja pandal in Dingal village, about a 10-minute walk from her house. "There, we were forced to perform specific religious rituals against our will," she said. Then on the morning of October 20, Madan Manna and others allegedly came to her house and forcibly took away her husband and another man. "They threatened that if we did not give up our faith in Jesus Christ, all of us would be killed," the complaint read. She sought police protection for the families,

which has since been provided.

Congress, Mamata Banerjee's TMC Demand Action

Congress leader KC Venugopal on Saturday wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah urging him to immediately arrest those accused of assaulting the three Christian families and allegedly forcing them to renounce their faith in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district. Trinamool Congress (Mamata) MP Sagarika Ghose said the party's "fact-finding team" had travelled across Bengal and found that "Christians are being threatened and attacked if they don't return to Hinduism". She further alleged that Christians are being denied burial rights and civic rights. "Christian congregations are being intimidated by loud music just outside mass or prayer meetings, and churches are being vandalised by mobs," she further said in a post on X.

"Sedition": BJP Slams Farooq Abdullah For Remarks On Kashmiris, Pakistan

Jammu/New Delhi: The BJP has torn into veteran politician Farooq Abdullah and described the former chief minister's controversial remarks on Kashmiris as "seditious" and "pro-Pakistan." Abdullah, who heads the ruling National Conference (NC) party in Jammu and Kashmir, had said that the Indian government's intentions towards Kashmiris are not right and credited Pakistan's diplomatic efforts for helping their voices to be heard globally. The BJP quickly jumped into action and labelled his remarks as being in favour of Pakistan and unfortunate. Some leaders even demanded a case of sedition to be registered against Abdullah. The Congress, an ally backing his party's government in J&K, said Abdullah could have expressed his personal view and that India would not tolerate any interference into its internal affairs. India maintains that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral and indivisible part of the country and accuses Pakistan of trying to push terrorism and cause unrest in the Union territory. Speaking at a workers' convention in Baramullah earlier in the day, Farooq Abdullah claimed that the people of Jammu and Kashmir still have an identity because Pakistan is raising the Kashmiris' issue at various international forums. "They (the Indian state) are silent today due to pressure from the world. Our neighbour (Pakistan) goes everywhere and says that the Kashmir issue has not been resolved. They are protecting us. Otherwise, their (India's) intentions are not right," the octogenarian leader said in Hindi.

Several BJP leaders criticised Abdullah's remarks as seditious and ignorant of Pakistan's terror activities. Describing it as



unfortunate, the BJP's national executive member and former state chief Ravinder Raina accused him of "dancing to the tunes of anti-nationals". "His statement is highly condemnable, very unfortunate and comes under sedition charges. How can Pakistan, an enemy country, be the protector of the people of Kashmir? Pakistan is a murderer of the people of Kashmir. Pakistan kills innocent Kashmiris, children and women," Raina told. The BJP's national spokesperson RP Singh suggested that the veteran Kashmiri politician "look across the border" and see the plight of Kashmiris on the other side. "Kashmir is doing well here because Article 370 was abrogated and Kashmir was fully integrated with India. That's why two crore tourists visit Kashmir (every year). That's why Kashmir is doing economically well," Singh told news agency IANS.

The BJP's national council member Yamini Sharma also accused Abdullah of echoing Pakistan's narrative. "Farooq Abdullah's statement on Jammu and Kashmir deeply insults the Indian Constitution and the patriotic people of Jammu and Kashmir. Everyone knows that thousands of

people lost their lives in the valley due to cross-border terrorism. The National Conference has become a mouthpiece for Pakistan," she said. Condemning Abdullah's remarks as anti-India and pro-Pakistan, BJP MLA Yudhvir Sethi said it amounts to sedition. "Those speaking against the nation must face the sedition case. The world knows that Pakistan is behind the spread of terrorism and bloodshed in Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, such remarks made in favour of Pakistan are condemnable. Farooq Abdullah must apologise for it," he

added. Kapil Singh, chief of J&K Pradesh Congress Committee, said that Farooq Abdullah's statement could be his personal stand and also maintained that Pakistan has no right to interfere in India's internal affairs. "India's unity and integrity are not dependent on Pakistan or any other foreign country because we don't tolerate any interference in our internal matters," he said. The Congress leader added that the people of J&K have been angry over the statehood issue and requested the government to grant statehood to the Union territory.

SAP Learning Hub opens free access for final-year students in India

Hyderabad: For final-year students, the placement season brings a familiar pressure. Employers are looking for more than a degree, as they want practical skills. SAP skills can open career opportunities beyond IT, across finance, HR, sales, and procurement. Eligible final-year students in India can register for the SAP Learning Hub, student edition at no cost, using their university email address to create an SAP Universal ID, followed by student ID verification. SAP Learning Hub student edition program manager David Chaviano said they want students to be able to explore and find what works for them. "Students can join expert-led sessions, use real SAP practice systems, and be part of a learner community," he said. Register for the free SAP Learning Hub, student edition, via the link <https://learning.sap.com/free-student-edition>.

Cyberabad plans 7-km counterflow BRT pilot to ease congestion on IT corridor

From Our Staff Reporter

Hyderabad: In a bid to reduce peak-hour congestion and make public transport faster, the Cyberabad Traffic Police along with civic authorities are gearing up to test a counterflow Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) arrangement for TGSRTC buses along the busy JNTU-Hitec City-Raidurgam-Financial District corridor. The proposed 7-km pilot aims to provide buses with a dedicated path through congested stretches by allowing them to travel opposite to the normal direction of general traffic. The objective is to reduce delays caused by traffic queues and improve journey-time reliability for commuters travelling to the IT hub.

How will the system work?

Unlike conventional bus lanes, which follow the direction of other vehicles, a counterflow lane allows buses to move against the regular traffic flow. The designated section would be reserved exclusively for buses, with appropriate traffic controls, lane markings and safety measures to prevent conflicts with other vehicles. The arrangement requires careful planning of bus entry and exit points. Buses would eventually



have to merge with regular traffic, making the design of these transition points crucial to the system's success. The Raidurgam Metro Station junction is expected to be a key focus of the trial. Officials are examining traffic movement, merging conditions and potential conflict points to ensure that the dedicated lane does not create fresh bottlenecks.

Can it improve bus services?

Around 15 buses currently operate along the corridor every hour, according to TGSRTC officials. RTC authorities are assessing whether additional services can be introduced and accommodated within the proposed arrangement.

The proposal follows a traffic assessment conducted by the Foundation for Resources and Innovations Policy (FRIP), in coordination with the Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC). It identified roadside parking, encroachments, poor lane discipline, unauthorised stoppages and junction conflicts as major causes of congestion. Inadequate bus bays, shelters, footpaths and pedestrian facilities were also highlighted.

Lessons from global BRT systems:

Mexico City's Metrobús demonstrates how dedicated bus corridors can improve public transport in a densely populated urban

area. Its established network uses exclusive bus lanes and designated stations to move large numbers of passengers. Cyberabad's proposed counterflow model follows the broader principle of prioritising buses, though its operating arrangements differ. Authorities are also examining conventional kerb-side bus lanes and improvements to bus stops and pedestrian facilities. The counterflow proposal remains at the assessment and trial-planning stage. The physical trial and subsequent traffic studies will determine whether the system can improve bus movement safely without disrupting regular traffic flow.

Nilgiris red alert: Tourists urged to avoid travel to Ooty

Chennai: Authorities have urged tourists and residents to avoid unnecessary journeys to Ooty as extremely heavy rain threatens the Nilgiris, where landslides and fallen trees have disrupted traffic on several roads. The Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC), Chennai, has placed the district under a red alert for Saturday, prompting an appeal for caution along vulnerable mountain routes. The warning comes amid continuing rain and concerns over the safety of people travelling through the hills.

District Collector Lakshmi Bhavya has advised motorists heading to Ooty from Mettupalayam to avoid the routes through Coonoor and Kotagiri. With weather conditions affecting road access, she urged tourists and the public to reconsider journeys through these stretches and follow official advisories. The disruption has made travel difficult in parts of the district, with fallen trees blocking roads and landslides affecting traffic movement.

Continuing rainfall has heightened concerns about



further obstructions along the hill roads used by residents, visitors and motorists. Authorities have appealed to people to restrict travel through vulnerable areas to essential journeys. The advisory is particularly relevant to tourists planning to reach Ooty through the mountain roads from Mettupalayam, as both the Coonoor and Kotagiri routes face the risk of disruption. Heavy rainfall can weaken slopes and increase the likelihood of trees falling onto roads, adding to the dangers faced by motorists. In the Nilgiris, where

several stretches have been affected, the continuing rain has made caution essential for anyone considering a journey through the hills. The Collector's appeal places emphasis on avoiding the affected approaches to Ooty while the adverse weather persists. Travellers have been asked to take the rainfall warning and the condition of mountain roads into account before setting out. The red alert reflects the forecast of extremely heavy rainfall in the district. Alongside the immediate traffic disruption, the possibility of further

landslides and falling trees remains a concern for people using exposed or vulnerable stretches. Residents and tourists have also been urged to remain alert to official instructions as the district deals with the impact of the rain. Authorities have reiterated that unnecessary travel should be avoided, particularly along the mountain routes where access has been affected. The public has been asked to exercise caution and follow official advisories while rainfall continues to affect movement across parts of the Nilgiris.

Attackers Barge Into House, Kill Man, Leave Severed Hand At Grocery Store

Ludhiana : A man was killed, and his severed hand was left in a plastic bag at a grocery store in Punjab's Ludhiana this morning. The victim has been identified as Shakti Singh alias Bhura, with the police suspecting that personal enmity could have led to his murder. The main accused, Gurmit Singh CD, has been arrested, said Ludhiana ACP Roop Deep Kaur. Around five to six men had barged into a house near Redu Sahib gurdwara and attacked Singh with swords and other sharp-edged weapons, officials said, adding that they also assaulted the house owner when he tried to intervene.

They chopped Singh's hand from the wrist, placed it in a polythene bag, and handed it over to a shopkeeper at a grocery shop in



Satguru Nagar. Before fleeing, they even told the shopkeeper to deliver the bag with the severed hand to the victim's family. Singh, a resident of Basant Nagar in Ludhiana, was rushed to a hospital but died during treatment. On receiving information, a police team arrived at the scene and launched an investigation. Citing preliminary findings, an official said that the murder could be the fallout of a long-standing feud. According to officials, Singh had

been facing 12 criminal cases. Even the attackers have criminal records, with about 12 cases registered against each of them, they added. CCTV footage in the area is now being scanned to identify other attackers.

Prabhas-starrer ‘Salaar Part 2’ to go on floors in 2027: Prashanth Neel

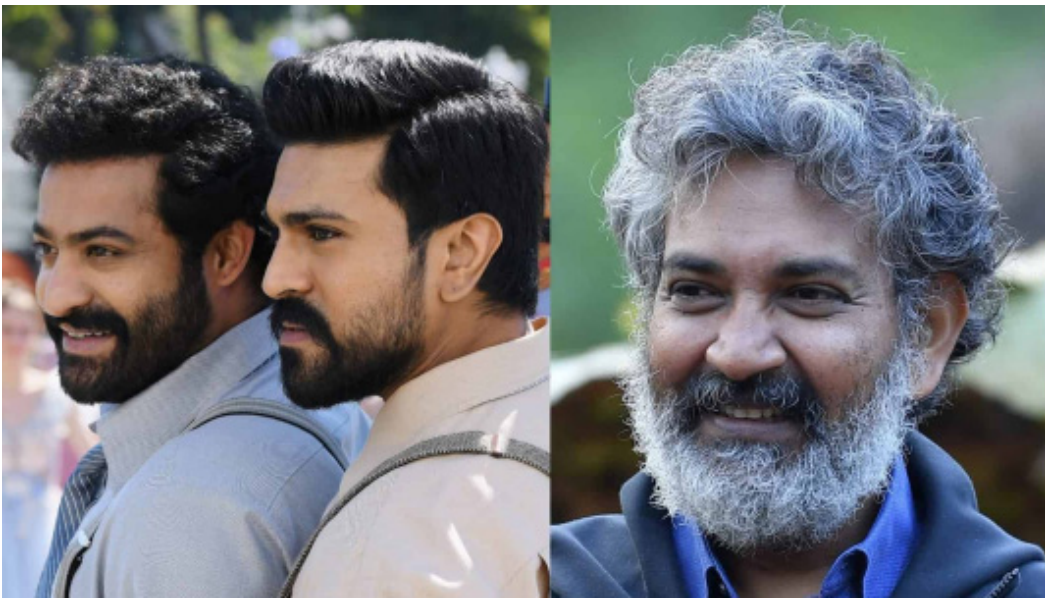


Filmmaker Prashanth Neel has confirmed Prabhas-starrer “Salaar Part 2” will go on floors in 2027. The film is a sequel to the 2023 action blockbuster “Salaar: Part 1 – Ceasefire”. It will be directed by Neel, who helmed the first installment. The film is produced by Vijay Kiragandur under Hombale Films. As Prabhas celebrated his 47th birthday, Neel visited the actor.

In the videos circulating online. In the banter, Prabhas is heard jokingly asking the director for his birthday gift, to which Neel smiles and replies the film is set to officially go on floors by June next year. “Salaar: Part 1 – Ceasefire” emerged as a commercial success. The film went on to become the highest-grossing Telugu film of 2023, the third-highest-grossing Telugu film of

all time, the highest-grossing A-rated Telugu film of all time, and the nineteenth-highest-grossing Indian film. The film revolved around a friendship between Deva (essayed by Prabhas), an exiled and seemingly quiet boy, and Vardharaja Mannar (Prithviraj Sukumaran), the prince of Khansaar. It earned over Rs 600 crore at the global box office.

‘RRR Goes Global On Netflix, There’s Nothing Wrong With That’



Renowned filmmaker SS Rajamouli, who has been expanding the base with each passing film, is all set to go the extra mile with his upcoming Varanasi. Rajamouli wants Varanasi to go a top notch. Jakkanna stated that many audiences, outside India, have discovered RRR on Netflix. Admitting that there is nothing wrong with that, Rajamouli stated that he wants his next Varanasi to have a massive worldwide theatrical release. Jakkanna is planning to release Varanasi in maximum theatres and in maximum number of languages. He wants to achieve his vision of Global Cinema with Varanasi. Speaking in Brazil, Rajamouli said, “As a filmmaker I want my audience to experience my film on the big screen. My biggest ambition for Varanasi is to have a grand theatrical release worldwide.” It can be noted that Rajamouli achieved no less feat with RRR and the film even bagged an Oscar for the Best Original Song. The film bagged several international awards including Best Director Award at the New York Film Critics Circle. Yet, Rajamouli is of the opinion that Varanasi could still do much bigger and better if it gets wider release. This is certainly great news for Superstar Mahesh Babu’s fans who have been waiting for Varanasi with a bated breath. The film, also starring Priyanka Chopra, Prithviraj Sukumaran, is slated for April 7, 2027.

Varanasi Is Five Times Bigger Than RRR In Every Aspect



Director SS Rajamouli has revealed that his upcoming film Varanasi is much bigger in scale than his global blockbuster RRR. Speaking at the 50th São Paulo International Film Festival in Brazil, the filmmaker said the globetrotter is around five to six times bigger than RRR in every aspect. Starring Mahesh Babu, Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Prithviraj Sukumaran, Varanasi is being made as a global adventure featuring Indian mythology, historical elements and modern technology. The story travels across different locations, including Varanasi, Africa and Antarctica. Rajamouli also explained that better planning helped the team save time during production. While RRR took around 315 shooting days to complete, Varanasi is expected to finish its shoot in approximately 275 days, Rajamouli revealed. The director credited the experience gained from RRR as useful while shooting for Varanasi. Rajamouli revealed that he did a lot of paperwork before going to the sets, and this helped him be very clear while canning even the most difficult scenes in Varanasi. The action drama is expected to offer a massive visual experience, with the makers releasing the film in an extensive IMAX presentation. Varanasi is scheduled to release worldwide on April 7, 2027. Given the success of RRR and Rajamouli’s reputation for delivering grand cinematic spectacles, expectations are super high. The director’s latest comments have further raised curiosity about the scale and ambition of the Mahesh Babu-starrer.

Raashii Khanna wraps up Mauja Hi Mauja shoot with Akshay Kumar and Vidya Balan

Actress Raashii Khanna has concluded the shoot for Anees Bazmee’s ‘Mauja Hi Mauja’ with Akshay Kumar, Vidya Balan as the lead. Raashii took to her official handle on Saturday and posted a string of exciting behind-the-scenes glimpses from the sets of ‘Mauja Hi Mauja’. The glimpses show her having a blast with the co-stars, Akshay and Vidya, and the rest of the team on the set.

Raashii admitted that the shoot felt more like a vacation to her than work. Some of the fun activities the team enjoyed were playing Ludo, dumb charades, and carrom. She wrote on the photo-sharing app, “Every film has a story on screen, but sometimes the real fun happens when the cameras aren’t rolling! (Laughing with tears and red heart emojis) (sic).” “#maujahimauja was one of those shoots that felt more like a vacation than work. From the unstoppable laughter to the



Ludo games, dumb charades, carrom matches and all the madness in between, there was never a dull moment. And clearly, not every memory is meant to be a dignified one! (Laughing with tears),” the ‘Sardar’ actress added. Raashii went on to express her gratitude to Akshay, Vidya, and

director Anees Bazmee for making this journey so much fun. “The film may be wrapped, but I have a feeling the stories from this set will keep us laughing for a long time! (Red heart, clapperboard and heart hands emoticons),” concluded the post. Over and above ‘Mauja Hi Mauja’, Raashii’s promising

lineup also includes ‘Dharmam’ with superstar ‘Rajinikanth’. She will also be seen reprising her role as Megha in the second season of the popular crime drama, ‘Farzi’. Created by Raj & DK, the show will also have Shahid Kapoor and Vijay Sethupathi returning to the screen as Sunny and Michael respectively.

Prashanth Neel Took 418 Personal

Ace production house Mythri Movie Makers produced 418, in the direction of Kirtan Nadagouda and Prashanth Neel presented the film. The movie released to a highly positive reception and the makers have interacted with the media. They have stated that the movie achieved breakeven in just two days, with premieres on Thursday. The movie collections have been picking up tremendously with each show in cities with horror lovers, flocking to theatres. Chaitra Achar, Surya Raj, Charan Lakkaraju, Preeti Pagadala starred in the leading roles in the film. The movie team interacted with media for the first time and they thanked audiences for giving such a huge positive reception. Director Kirtan stated that he developed the idea post Salaar and had the script for over a year. He revealed that he meticulously planned every aspect and wanted actors, music, sound design and production design



to fit it. He thanked Mythri Movie Makers for providing him with everything to give a cinematic experience to the audiences as he always intended. Mythri Naveen thanked audiences for giving them a big hit in horror genre also. Mythri Ravi shared that Prashanth

Neel took 418 very personally and he designed promotions with his wife Likitha. He revealed it is the director’s idea to have premiere in Mumbai and take feedback. He further revealed that audiences have been loving the film thoroughly and praising the

sound design. He stated that Kirtan took care of every aspect and kept working on the final copy, till he is satisfied, hence they got such a big hit. He asked audiences to experience the film only in theatres and expected long run at the box office.

Krithi Shetty’s Natural Charm Wins Hearts

Krithi, who is coming up with the Telugu film January 12 Vidudala, the Tamil film Genie and Hindi debut Hum Tere Pyaar Mein, has built her fan base with natural acting and an easy, friendly presence. In this sunlit picture, Krithi wears a bright pink ribbed knit cardigan over a black top. She adds dainty hoop earrings with pearl and turquoise stones and lets her long wavy hair fall loose, smiling with her eyes closed. Her last couple of years have brought a few flops, so every release now matters a lot for her career. With January 12 Vidudala, Genie and Hum Tere Pyaar Mein lined up, the big question is whether any of them will actually turn into a hit. Will have to see how audiences respond when each film arrives.

