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BRIEF NEWS

ECI Allows Kerala Voters Missing From SIR Draft Roll to Apply Afresh

Thiruvananthapuram: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has clarified that voters whose names are missing from the draft electoral roll published as part of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) can submit fresh applications in Form 6 to get their names included in the final voters' list. The clarification is significant as many voters had expressed concern over submitting Form 6 when their names had appeared in earlier electoral rolls. They feared that doing so could amount to making a false declaration, as the form requires applicants to state that they are seeking enrolment in the electoral roll for the first time. The Commission has now made it clear that there is no bar on such voters submitting Form 6 merely because they were enrolled in previous electoral rolls.

CISCE Releases Board Exams 2027 Dates

New Delhi: The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) on Tuesday announced the schedule for the 2027 board exams, with Class 10 and 12 exams set to begin on Feb 15 and 9, respectively. A total of 3,79,980 candidates will appear for the two examinations. The ICSE (Class 10) examination will see 2.70 lakh candidates from 3,106 affiliated schools, while more than 1.1 lakh candidates from 1,651 schools will appear for the ISC (Class 12) examination. The ICSE examination will cover 76 subjects or papers, while the ISC examination will feature 60 subjects. "The ICSE year 2027 examination will commence on February 15, 2027, and conclude on March 31, 2027. The examination will be conducted across 2,835 examination centres in India and overseas. "The credibility of an examination system rests on the fairness of its processes, the integrity of its administration and the confidence it inspires among students, parents and institutions," Joseph Emmanuel, chief executive and secretary of CISCE, said.

Pawan Kalyan and Wife Anna Announce Separation After 13 Years

New Delhi: Actor-politician Pawan Kalyan and his wife Anna Konidala have announced their separation, bringing an end to their marriage after 13 years together. The Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and Anna said they had decided to part ways with mutual understanding and respect, adding that they would continue to share the responsibility of raising their children. In a joint statement issued via PR late on Monday night, the couple said their relationship would continue as a friendship despite the end of their marriage.

Late Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee Was a Good Man in a Bad Party: CM

STAFF REPORTER

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Tuesday praised his predecessor, late Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, describing him as "a good man in a bad party" while recalling the events surrounding the Nandigram movement of 2007.

The occasion was in relation to a programme at Gokulnagar in East Midnapore district to observe Martyrs' Day to commemorate those killed or reported missing following clashes between the activists of CPI(M) and the Trinamool Congress- led Land Eviction Prevention Committee on November 10, 2007, when Bhattacharjee was the West Bengal Chief Minister.

The clashes had erupted over the proposed land acquisition in Nandigram for a chemical hub project planned by the then Bhattacharjee-led government. "After November 10, 2007, there was a bloody sunrise. I pay my respects to the then Chief Minister. I will not mention his name. He has passed away. He was very honest in his personal life. He was a very good person. But the party that he belonged to is bad," CM Adhikari said, addressing the Martyrs' Day program on Tuesday afternoon. The Chief Minister also described how cordial his relationship is with Bhattacharjee's widow, Mira Bhattacharjee. "A few days ago, she fell ill. I went to visit her," the CM said.



Notably, Mira Bhattacharjee has in the past expressed appreciation for Adhikari's industrialisation push and said she believed he could realise some of her late husband's unfinished development goals for the state.

Referring to the aftermath of the 2007 violence, Adhikari also mentioned veteran CPI(M) leader Biman Bose, recalling his remarks at the time and reiterating his own commitment to the promises he had made during the Nandigram movement.

"Octogenarian Biman Bose is still alive. I pay my respects to him. But I will remind him that at that time he said that there had been a new sunrise in Nandigram. Nineteen years have passed since then. I am still committed to the promise that I made on that day," CM Adhikari said. Adhikari also predicted that the Trinamool Congress will not be relevant in West Bengal politics in the next 100 years.

NASA Satellite Captures Thick Smog Blanketing India, Pakistan as Pollution Peaks



SP BUREAU

New Delhi: A massive blanket of haze and smoke stretching across northern India and Pakistan has been captured from space by a NASA satellite, offering a stark view of the worsening air pollution crisis as winter sets in across the region.

The satellite image, captured by the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) and made available through NASA's Fire Information for Resource Management System (FIRMS), shows a thick greyish layer of haze spreading across the Indo-Gangetic plains, extending from Pakistan through northern India towards the eastern parts of the country.

The haze is particularly visible across Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and adjoining regions, with the Himalayan mountain range standing out in the northern part of the image.

The contrast between the snow-covered mountains and the pollution-laden plains highlights the vast geographical spread of the atmospheric haze.

The image also shows several red markers indicating detected fire hotspots, including areas across the northwestern agricultural belt. These detections are consistent with ongoing agricultural residue burning, which contributes to seasonal pollution across the region. Every winter, northwestern India and neighbouring Pakistan experience a sharp deterioration in air quality as multiple pollution sources combine with unfavourable meteorological conditions. Stubble burning, vehicular emissions, industrial activity, construction dust and other sources add to the pollution burden.

The situation becomes particularly severe when colder temperatures, calm winds and a shallow atmospheric boundary layer prevent pollutants from dispersing. Instead, emissions accumulate close to the ground, creating persistent layers of smog across densely populated regions. Delhi-NCR has been among the worst affected areas, with air quality deteriorating sharply during the night and early morning hours. However, the satellite image indicates that the pollution problem extends far beyond the national capital, affecting a much larger stretch of the Indo-Gangetic plains.

SC Seeks WhatsApp's Action Plan to Curb Digital Arrest Scams

AGENCY

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has asked WhatsApp and other intermediaries to apprise it about their proposed measures to prevent digital arrest scams and related cybercrimes in the country.

In an order uploaded on the website with regard to the hearing conducted on October 29 in a suo motu case titled In Re: Victims of Digital Arrest Related to Forged Documents, a bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant asked WhatsApp and like intermediaries to simultaneously submit their proposals to the I4C (Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre).

The bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, has listed the plea for further consideration on November 23.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for WhatsApp, had told the bench the platform had taken preventive measures, including action against 9,400 accounts, and would file an affidavit detailing the steps undertaken.

He had said the platform was working on a software to identify suspicious accounts and warn users.



Court Directs Financial Institutions on Accountability

The top court, on October 29, had said financial institutions must be held accountable for digital arrest scams and other cyber frauds, emphasising that banks should be required to compensate victims for losses suffered where an investigation establishes that the fraud occurred due to the institution's failure to exercise due diligence. "We reiterate and emphasize that the regulatory measures proposed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) must mandate and incorporate suitable provisions that require financial institutions to indemnify victims of digital arrest scams and other cyber frauds and pay suitable compensation not less than the amount lost by the customer, where it is established that the fraud or crime occurred due to the failure on the part of the financial institution to exercise due diligence in preventing or reporting the act/incident," the bench said in the order. During the hearing, the CJI had questioned why banks could not intervene when customers suddenly attempted to transfer unusually large sums of money that were inconsistent with their established transaction patterns. "We have also emphasised in the past various preventive safeguards that must be mandated for every financial institution.

RBI's Role in Regulatory Framework

In order to ensure effective implementation of the regulatory measures proposed by the RBI, as well as the directions issued, the bench further directed the RBI to submit a list of all authorised financial institutions before this court on the next date of hearing. Observing that despite the fact that cyber crimes fell by 50 per cent, yet victims lost Rs 800 crore so far this year, the bench had said the proposed RBI regulatory framework must incorporate enforceable provisions for compensation, preventive intervention and institutional accountability. The CJI had said the bench would first examine the proposed RBI Know Your Customer (KYC) Amendment Directions, 2026, before permitting the regulatory process to proceed. The directions are proposed to be notified by November 30 and operationalised by December 31. Describing banks as a "protective umbrella" for vulnerable customers, the CJI had said financial institutions possess information about their account holders, including their transaction histories, and should use that knowledge to prevent fraud before money leaves an account.

Police Issue Security Advisory to Bollywood Stars After Tiger Shroff Firing

AGENCY

Mumbai: In the wake of the firing incident involving Tiger Shroff and revelations of alleged reconnaissance at several celebrities' homes during the investigation, Mumbai Police has advised prominent Bollywood actors to avoid crowded public places and refrain from mingling with fans in public spaces as a precautionary security measure. Mumbai Police has issued a security advisory to prominent Bollywood actors following the firing incident at actor Tiger Shroff's residence and revelations during the investigation that several celebrities' homes had allegedly been recceed. A senior Mumbai Police official said that actors have been advised to avoid visiting public places and mingling with fans in crowded areas. They have also been urged to stay away from large gatherings as a precautionary measure.

Several Bollywood actors have reportedly received threats from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. Sources said the advisory has been issued as a precautionary step, keeping the safety and security of actors in mind.



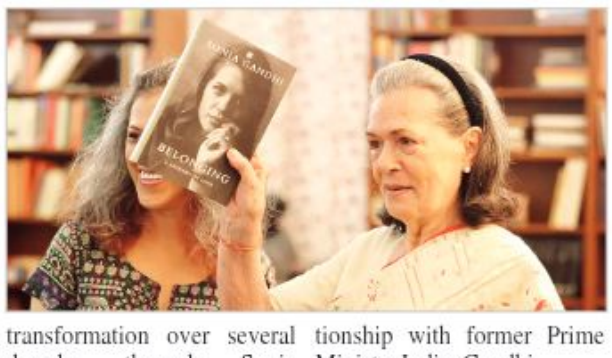
On October 21, it was reported that the accused in the firing case involving actor Tiger Shroff had reportedly conducted reconnaissance of the residences of several Bollywood celebrities, including Amitabh Bachchan and Salman Khan, before the attack, according to sources in the Mumbai Crime Branch.

The shooters were reportedly instructed to target celebrities whose security arrangements were relatively less stringent. During the reconnaissance, different auto-rickshaw drivers had also taken the accused to the residences of several celebrities, including Amitabh Bachchan, Aamir Khan, Akshay Kumar and Salman Khan. It was on October 18 that Tiger escaped after three motorcycle-borne men opened fire at his car in the Juhu area of Mumbai. Within hours of the incident, the Lawrence Bishnoi gang shared a post on social media, taking responsibility for the attack.

Sonia's Book Reveals Why She Turned Down the PM's Post

AGENCY

New Delhi: Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi's much-awaited memoir, Belonging: A Journey of Love, was released on Tuesday, November 10, bringing her personal experiences, family history and political journey into the public domain. The book revisits several defining moments of her life, from meeting former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in England to the Congress victory in 2004 and her decision to decline the prime minister's post. Published in India by HarperCollins, the memoir offers a first-person account of a woman who spent decades largely away from public attention before becoming one of the most influential figures in Indian politics. The book explores themes of love, identity, family, loss, responsibility and belonging. It also looks at India's social and political transformation over several decades through Sonia Gandhi's personal experiences.



One of the important parts of the memoir takes readers back to 1965, when Sonia Maino was a young student in Cambridge, England. It was there that she met Rajiv Gandhi, who was studying in the United Kingdom.

Their relationship eventually led to marriage in 1968 and Sonia's move to India. The memoir describes her adjustment to a new country, culture and family, including her relationship with former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

She also recalls learning Hindi, adapting to Indian traditions and building a family with Rajiv Gandhi. Their children, Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi, were born during this period.

The narrative also revisits the personal tragedies that changed the family's life, including the death of Sanjay Gandhi in a plane crash in 1980, Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984 and Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in 1991.

Why Sonia Gandhi Refused the Prime Minister's Post in 2004

One of the most closely watched sections of the memoir concerns the political developments following the Congress-led alliance's victory in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections. Sonia Gandhi writes about the pressure she faced from alliance leaders and party colleagues to accept the prime minister's position. She also describes discussions with Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra before the election. According to her account, she had already made it clear to her children that she did not intend to become Prime Minister, even if the Congress returned to power. After the election results, however, several alliance leaders continued to urge her to reconsider. She recalls briefly responding with a hesitant "theek hai" before returning to her original decision. Rahul Gandhi reportedly opposed the idea because of concerns about the family's history of political assassinations. After further reflection, Sonia Gandhi decided to decline the post and nominated former Finance Minister Manmohan Singh to lead the government. The Congress-led United Progressive Alliance subsequently formed the government, with Manmohan Singh serving as Prime Minister.

A Personal Account of India's Political Transformation

Sonia Gandhi has described the memoir as a personal story rather than a political book. She has said she wanted to present her family as she knew them, including their motivations, struggles and human shortcomings. The book also reflects on her years in public life, her leadership of the Congress and the challenges she faced after entering politics. Another theme highlighted in the supplied account is the reference to the Rigveda and its message of unity. This reflects the broader discussion around India's traditions, cultural diversity and the idea of collective identity. The memoir also examines the meaning of home and belonging for someone who moved from Italy to India and eventually came to regard India as her own country.

Book's Publication Was Delayed by Publisher Disagreement

The memoir's journey to publication was itself marked by a dispute over its Indian publishing arrangement. Penguin Random House India was initially expected to publish the book, but the arrangement did not proceed. Reports suggested that disagreements over proposed editorial changes contributed to the breakdown. Penguin Random House India, however, denied that the reported account fully reflected the circumstances and said there had been no external pressure. HarperCollins India subsequently secured the Indian publishing rights and announced November 10 as the release date.



Former Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Receives Rousing Welcome at VSS Airport

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA ■ Jharsuguda



Former Union Education Minister and Sambalpur MP Dharmendra Pradhan received a rousing welcome from the Jharsuguda unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at Veer Surendra Sai (VSS) Airport here on Monday morning.

Soon after Pradhan arrived at the airport, hundreds of BJP leaders and workers gathered to welcome him with slogans such as "BJP Zindabad", "Narendra Modi Zindabad" and "Dharmendra Pradhan Swagatam". Their enthusiastic presence created a festive atmosphere on the airport premises.

Several party leaders and workers felicitated the senior BJP leader by presenting him with traditional shawls and extending their greetings. The gathering reflected the enthusiasm of the local party organisation and its support for Pradhan.

Among those present were BJP leaders Santosh Yadav, Sonu Thirani, Bablu Singh and Premasen Ray, along with Jharsuguda Mandal president. A large number of party workers and supporters also joined the reception.

Jharsuguda MLA Tankadhar Tripathy, District Collector Kunal Motiram Chavan and Superintendent of Police Sonali Singh Parmar were also present at the airport to formally welcome Pradhan.

The visit witnessed an impressive turnout of BJP supporters, who assembled in large numbers to greet the Sambalpur MP and former Union Education Minister. The warm reception highlighted the enthusiasm of the party's local cadre and the importance attached to his visit to the region.

Glow Park Losing Its Charm Due to Poor Maintenance

● "Overgrown Weeds and Bushes Mar the Park's Beauty"

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA ■ Jharsubuda

With the growing population of industrially prosperous Jharsuguda, the lifestyle and needs of city residents have also undergone significant changes. Amid their busy daily schedules, people need well-maintained parks where they can spend quality time, enjoy recreational activities with their families and relax in a natural environment.

Keeping this in mind, the Jharsuguda Municipality has developed several parks at different locations across the city. However, due to poor management and a lack of regular maintenance, these parks are gradually losing their attraction.



Glow Park Loses Its Charm Due to Poor Maintenance and Lack of Proper Management.

Earlier, residents had to visit places such as Pahadi Mandir and Jhadeswar Temple for leisure and recreation. However, distance and transportation difficulties often made these places less accessible for people living in different parts of the city. Moreover, the increasing number of vehicles has further aggravated traffic congestion, making nearby recreational spaces more important.

Although the responsibility for the proper management and maintenance of various parks has been handed over to different agencies, the expected results are yet to be seen.

A glaring example is Glow Park, located at Prasanna Panda Chhak. The park is now covered with unwanted weeds and overgrown bushes, severely affecting its beauty and cleanliness. Negligence in basic maintenance activities such as regular cleaning, grass cutting, proper care of plants and trees, and necessary repairs has caused the park to lose much of its earlier charm.

Parks developed to enhance the city's beauty, provide recreational facilities and ensure a healthy environment for residents cannot serve their intended purpose if left neglected.

In view of this, residents have urged the municipal administration to take immediate steps for cleaning and beautification of Glow Park and ensure its regular maintenance to restore its former appeal.

ECI allows Kerala voters missing from SIR draft roll to apply afresh

■ AGENCY

Thiruvananthapura: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has clarified that voters whose names are missing from the draft electoral roll published as part of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) can submit fresh applications in Form 6 to get their names included in the final voters' list.

The clarification is significant as many voters had expressed concern over submitting Form 6 when their names had appeared in earlier electoral rolls.

They feared that doing so could amount to making a false declaration, as the form requires applicants to state that they are seeking enrolment in the electoral roll for the first time.

The Commission has now made it clear that there is no bar on such voters submitting Form 6 merely because they were enrolled in previous electoral rolls.



They can apply afresh by following the prescribed procedure during the ongoing SIR exercise or even after its completion.

The ECI has also addressed concerns over possible legal action against such applicants.

It has clarified that an Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) cannot initiate proceedings under Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, solely because a person who was enrolled in an earlier electoral roll has submitted a fresh Form 6 application.

Section 31 provides for punishment for making false declarations in connection with electoral rolls.

The Commission's clarification is expected to remove the fear of legal action among former voters who may otherwise hesitate to apply for inclusion.

However, the Commission has made it clear that applicants must meet the prescribed conditions.

They must ensure that their names are not already included in the electoral roll of another constituency outside the relevant Parliamentary or Assembly constituency.



Sunil Tatkare invokes Ajit Pawar's legacy in NCP's push to reclaim Maharashtra's Finance Portfolio

■ AGENCY

Baramati : The NCP's Maharashtra unit President and MP, Sunil Tatkare, on Tuesday reiterated his party's claim over the Finance Portfolio which is currently held by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, after the untimely death of Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister, Ajit Pawar, in a plane crash at Baramati on January 28 this year.

Speaking to reporters after visiting Ajit Pawar's memorial to pay tribute at Baramati, Tatkare said, "We must get the Finance Portfolio. Because late Dada (Ajit Pawar) presented record-breaking budgets to this state. It was because of Dada that I got the opportunity to present the budget back in 2010. At that time, I presented the 50th budget."

Tatkare's statement comes days after the NCP core committee meeting, chaired by party President and Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar, held on October 25, decided to request Chief Minister Fadnavis to give back the finance department to the party. Thereafter, NCP leaders met CM Fadnavis on the same day and made their demand.

After the meeting with CM Fadnavis, senior NCP minister Chhagan Bhujbal told reporters that the Finance portfolio originally belonged to the NCP's quota in the Mahayuti alliance. Following the demise of Ajit Pawar, CM Fadnavis temporarily took charge of the department.

"A NCP delegation met the Chief Minister to demand that the Finance Ministry be returned to the NCP. The delegation emphasised that the Chief Minister responded positively and expressed hope that the portfolio reallocation would take place before the Winter Session.



Notification issued for election to 8 new LAHDCs in Ladakh

■ AGENCY

Leh : Notifications were issued on Tuesday for elections to 8 new Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs) in the Union Territory.

The notification was issued by the Revenue Department, UT Secretariat, Leh, and published in the extraordinary issue of The Ladakh Gazette.

According to the notification, 8 new LAHDCs had been created in the UT of Ladakh vide S.O. No. 259 dated September 3, 2026 and S.O. No. 285 dated October 16, 2026.

In exercise of powers under sub-section (2) of section 4 of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils Act, 1997 (Act No. XXXI of 1997), read with Rule 4 of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (Election) Rules, 2026, Ladakh's Lt Governor has called upon all the constituencies of all LAHDCs in the Union Territory to elect members for the purpose of constituting new Councils.

The notification states that the elections will be held in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Act, as amended by the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (Amendment) Regulation, 2026, and the Rules and Orders made thereunder. The notification has come into force from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

The Union Territory administration established eight Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs) - one for each of the UT's eight districts following the promulgation of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (Amendment) Regulation, 2026.

Previously, LAHDCs existed only in Leh and Kargil. The new framework extends autonomous hill councils to all eight districts of Ladakh -- Leh, Kargil, Drass, Sankoo, Sham, Changthang, Nubra, and Zanskar.

Collector Inspects Site for Construction of Large Cowshed at Atabira

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA ■ JHARSUGUDA

Jharsuguda Collector Kunal Chavan visited M. Katapali village under Atabira Gram Panchayat in Lakhanpur block to inspect the proposed site for setting up a large cowshed for the protection, shelter and maintenance of stray cattle.

During the visit, the Collector directed the Lakhanpur Tehsildar to demarcate the boundaries of the identified grazing land. He also held detailed discussions with the BDO and Sarpanch of Atabira regarding the proposed plan for developing a model and large-scale cowshed to ensure safe shelter and proper care of stray cattle. The Lakhanpur BDO, Tehsildar, Atabira Sarpanch, Bhikampali Revenue Inspector and villagers of Katapali were present during the inspection.

The proposed land is located near the Chhattisgarh border, with a perennial stream flowing alongside it. The availability of a continuous water source is expected to provide a permanent solution to the drinking water requirements of the cattle. The Collector said the land would be secured at the earliest and necessary steps would be taken promptly to establish the cowshed.

Later, the Collector visited the under-construction primary school building at Bhundupali village. Emphasising the need to provide better educational facilities to students, he directed officials to complete the remaining construction work at the earliest. He also instructed the BDO to immediately prepare and submit the necessary cost estimate for completing the pending work.

Chennai special court rejects bail plea of ex-DMK Minister Anbil Mahesh in school approval scam case

■ AGENCY

Chennai : A special court in Chennai on Tuesday dismissed the bail petition of former Tamil Nadu School Education Minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi in an alleged corruption case involving the collection of money from private schools in exchange for approvals and regulatory permits during the previous DMK government.

Special Judge L.S. Sathyamoorthy rejected the petition after accepting the prosecution's contention that the investigation was still at a preliminary stage and further questioning of the accused was necessary.

Mahesh, who has been lodged in Puzhal Central Prison for the past 16 days, was arrested by the Chennai Central Crime Branch following allegations of large-scale irregularities in granting recognition and other permissions to private educational institutions.

The investigation initially focused on private schools association administrator P.D. Arakumar and others before the former minister was subsequently named as an accused.

Anticipating arrest, Mahesh approached the Madras High Court seeking anticipatory bail. However, Justice V. Lakshminarayanan declined to grant relief on October 26, following which police arrested him and secured his judicial remand.



Investigators subsequently obtained three days of police custody to question the former minister regarding the alleged financial transactions.

During the bail hearing, senior advocate Abudu Kumar Rajarathnam, representing Mahesh, argued that investigators had failed to produce direct evidence linking his client to the alleged corruption.

He questioned the changing estimates of the alleged collections, claiming that the amount initially cited as Rs 100 crore had subsequently increased to Rs 400 crore, Rs 600 crore and eventually Rs 800 crore.

The defence maintained that Mahesh's mobile phone and electronic devices had already been seized, eliminating any possibility of evidence tampering. It also assured the court that he would cooperate with investigators.

Opposing bail, government counsel R. John Sathyan alleged that Mahesh maintained close connections with co-accused Muthukumar and Arakumar.

Helicopter Service to Resume in Digha, Casuarina Forests to Be Restored

■ SPNN

Kolkata: The West Bengal government has announced a series of initiatives to make the popular coastal tourist destination of Digha more modern and attractive, including the resumption of helicopter services and the restoration of casuarina and mangrove forests along the coastline. Chief Minister Shubhendu Adhikari announced the plans after a meeting with officials at the Digha-Shankarpur Development Authority (DSDA) on Monday night. He said facilities in Digha were being expanded in view of the growing number of tourists visiting the coastal town. Casuarina trees along the beach had once been a major attraction for visitors but were cut down during development work.



The government now plans to restore the casuarina forests and mangrove vegetation. The initiative is expected to bring back the area's natural beauty and help prevent coastal erosion.

The government has also decided to allocate Rs 200 crore for measures to check coastal erosion in the Chandpur and Shankarpur areas. In addition, a nearly 27-km stretch of coastline from Talpatty to Udaypur will be developed into a series of tourist destinations. The project aims to generate employment for local residents and provide affordable tourism options for middle- and low-income families. Adhikari said the government was also planning to construct a Marine Drive from Shaula to Petuaghat. Digha, Tajpur and Mandarmani already have a large number of hotels, and the government now intends to promote homestay facilities in these areas. Entrepreneurs setting up new four-bed homestays in designated tourism zones will be eligible for subsidies of up to Rs 5 lakh, he said.

The Chief Minister also announced that the helicopter service, which had operated in Digha earlier, would be restarted. To improve connectivity for tourists arriving by train, bus services will also be introduced from Digha railway station. These buses will enable visitors to travel conveniently and at affordable fares to nearby tourist destinations such as Mandarmani, Tajpur and Chandaneswar. According to the Chief Minister, the Digha - Shankarpur Development Authority will operate the services in coordination with the state's Tourism and Transport departments. The proposed initiatives are aimed at strengthening tourism infrastructure, improving connectivity, protecting the coastline and creating fresh livelihood opportunities for people in the region.

Two Fires in One Night — Panic in Singur and Srirampore

Debasis Ghosh ■



Hooghly: Two separate fire incidents created panic in Hooghly district on Monday night — one in Vidyutpally, Singur, and the other in front of the Srirampore BDO office. No casualty has been reported.

Singur: MLA Spots Fire, Major Mishap Averted - A fire broke out in a godown on the upper portion of a flat in Vidyutpally. Local MLA Dr. Arup Kumar Das, who was talking with party workers on a nearby roof, spotted the flames and immediately informed Singur police station and the fire department.

The flat residents were initially unaware. The MLA, workers, residents and police together doused the flames before the fire brigade arrived.

It is suspected that a firecracker falling into the godown caused the fire, though there is no official confirmation yet.

Srirampore: Fierce Fire in Garbage Vat - At around 10 pm, a fire broke out in the municipal garbage vat in front of the BDO office. Tall flames and thick smoke were visible from far away.

One fire engine reached the spot and brought the fire under control. Police also controlled the crowd. The fire could not spread to the BDO office or nearby buildings.

Here too, fireworks falling into the garbage is suspected to be the cause.

MLA Raises Two Big Questions - After the incident, MLA Dr. Arup Kumar Das targeted former minister Becharam Manna, saying it was unfortunate that even a fire station could not be established in his own assembly constituency.

He also raised concern over lack of fire-fighting arrangements in flats and said fire extinguishing equipment should be mandatory in every flat. He will take up the matter himself.

Kolkata police arrest total 67 for bursting banned firecrackers, disrupting law and order after Kali Puja

■ SPNN

Kolkata: Kolkata Police have arrested 67 people, including 11 for bursting banned firecrackers, and seized about 12 kg of prohibited fireworks by 8.30 p.m. on Monday, a day after



Kali Puja, officials said on Tuesday. Another 56 people were held for indecent behaviour and related law-and-order violations across the state. Despite government regulations, people reported firecrackers being burst in Kolkata and Howrah on Monday, though the intensity was lower than on Kali Puja night. Nevertheless, loud explosions were heard in parts of Kolkata and neighbouring Howrah during the evening. Similar complaints emerged from Siliguri in north Bengal and several areas of Purulia district, where firecrackers reportedly continued till late at night on Monday. In Hooghly district, authorities managed to keep violations relatively under control in Arambagh subdivision. However, complaints of bursting banned firecrackers were received from multiple areas under the Chandannagar Police Commissionerate, including Dankuni, Uttarpara, Rishra, Serampore, Bhadreshwar, Chandannagar and Chinsurah. Similar complaints were reported from rural police station areas such as Chanditala, Haripal, Tarakeswar, Mogra and Singur. Police also received reports of firecracker violations in Nadia, Murshidabad, East Burdwan, West Burdwan and North 24 Parganas districts, with residents alleging that noise norms and time restrictions were flouted.

A similar situation prevailed in Krishnanagar, Kalyani, Ranaghat and Santipur. Residents from Berhampore, Jangipur, Raghunathganj, Beldanga and Domkal complained that the noise did not subside even after 10 p.m. on Monday. Meanwhile, three people were arrested in two separate incidents in Kolkata after allegedly assaulting on-duty police personnel who tried to prevent the bursting of banned firecrackers. The incidents took place in Tiljala in east Kolkata and Netaji Nagar in south Kolkata on the night of Kali Puja.

Bengal police reconstructs techie's murder at Garia flat; mother, girlfriend taken to crime scene

■ SPNN

Kolkata: West Bengal police on Tuesday took the arrested girlfriend of a 25-year-old software engineer and her mother to the rented flat in Kolkata's Garia area where the youth was allegedly murdered, as investigators recreated the sequence of events leading to the crime, officials said. Forensic team officers were also with them. They collected samples from different parts of the flat.



According to investigators, software engineer Sarthak and his girlfriend Sanchalika Basu were living together in a rented flat in Fartabad. Sarthak's body was recovered from the flat last Saturday. According to the police, he had been stabbed in the shoulder with a sharp weapon. The police have already arrested Sanchalika and his mother, Moumita Basu in the incident. According to local residents, there was a fight between the couple that night. Hearing screams, the neighbours rushed to the flat. They found Sarthak lying in a pool of blood in the room.

The deceased was a software engineer by profession. He hailed from Barasat, in the North 24 Parganas district. He worked in a company in Sector V of Salt Lake. The accused girl was studying at Techno India. She is a resident of Fartabad in Garia. According to locals, the two used to travel to the same place every day. After a few meetings, the acquaintance turned into a love affair. Both their families knew about this relationship. Later, Sarthak rented a flat in Fartabad. He lived there with Sanchalika.

The young man used to stay in the flat in Fartabad at least three to four days a week. Local residents knew about their relationship. Police are now attempting to corroborate statements made by the arrested women with evidence gathered during the reconstruction of the crime scene. Officials said the exercise was aimed at obtaining a clearer understanding of the events leading to the murder, the manner in which the victim was attacked, and the alleged role played by each accused.

11 high-end phones, Rs 2 lakh seized from Trinamool MLA during arrest at airport

■ SPNN

Kolkata: The sleuths of the Special Operations Group of Baruipur Police District in South 24 Parganas district in West Bengal seized 11 high-end mobile phones and Rs 2,00,000 in cash from a Trinamool Congress Legislator at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata on Monday evening. Pares Ram Das, the Legislator from Canning (Paschim) Assembly Constituency in the same district, was attempting to escape to Mumbai, at the time of his arrest.

Kolkata police inspector suspended over alleged derogatory social media remark against Bengal CM

■ SPNN

Kolkata: A Kolkata Police Inspector has been suspended pending an inquiry into allegations that he posted derogatory remarks against West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on social media, a senior official said on Tuesday. According to an order issued by Kolkata Police Commissioner Ajay Nand, Inspector Ekhlaque Ahmed, who was serving at the Calcutta Medical College Hospital Out Post under the Central Division and was recently transferred to the 1st Battalion of the Kolkata Armed Police, has been placed under suspension with effect from November 9, 2026. The order said, "Inspector Ekhlaque Ahmed, IVC, Calcutta Medical College Hospital Out Post, Central Division, Kolkata Police (since transferred to 1st Battalion, Kolkata Armed Police), is placed under suspension with effect from 09.11.2026 as his continuance in office pending enquiry into his conduct over the issue of making derogatory remarks indicating the Government Authorities of West Bengal, on a social media platform, is prejudicial in the interest of public service." It further said that the Inspector will draw half of his basic pay and other admissible allowances as subsistence allowance during the period of his suspension. The order also asked him to deposit his government kits with the Reserve Officer, Central Division, Kolkata Police, immediately. According to a police officer, a complaint was lodged against the officer over certain recent social media posts and comments allegedly targeting Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari. Following the complaint, authorities initiated an investigation to examine the nature of the remarks and whether they were inconsistent with the conduct expected from a serving police officer. The officer had earlier been transferred from the Central Division to the Kolkata Armed Police after the controversy surfaced. Officials said the transfer did not affect the ongoing inquiry, which continues independently. Authorities maintained that allowing the officer to remain in active service during the investigation could be contrary to the public interest. Given the seriousness of the allegations, disciplinary action in the form of suspension was deemed necessary until the inquiry reaches its conclusion.



Civic volunteer arrested for 'assisting' Trinamool MLA's attempted escape

■ SPNN

Kolkata: Bikash Sahani, a civic volunteer attached to the Intelligence Branch (IB) of the West Bengal Police, was arrested on Tuesday for allegedly aiding Trinamool Congress (TMC) legislator Paresh Ram Das in his attempted escape to Mumbai. Das, the MLA representing Canning (Paschim) in South 24 Parganas district and an accused in a rape case, was



apprehended by state police at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata on Monday evening while attempting to board a flight to Mumbai after evading arrest for 17 days.

Subsequent investigations conducted by the Baruipur Police District revealed that Sahani not only facilitated Das's escape plans but also leaked confidential police intelligence to the absconding lawmaker. State police sources stated that by virtue of his assignment with the IB, which has state-wide jurisdiction, Sahani had access to sensitive operational information across multiple police stations. Preliminary findings indicate that Sahani routinely shared confidential updates with Das, enabling the legislator to evade tracking units and plan his movements. Sahani is currently undergoing intensive interrogation by the investigating team.

Das is the prime accused in Canning Police Station Case No. 561/2026, registered on September 5, 2026, under Sections 376 (rape), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 420 (cheating), 120B (criminal conspiracy), and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code. Das remains among the few sitting TMC legislators maintaining allegiance to the party's minority faction led by former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her nephew. Commenting on the arrest, Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari labelled Das an identified extortionist in the Canning region. "He had illegally occupied many state government properties in the area to set up his own establishment during the previous Trinamool Congress regime," Adhikari stated.

Shubhendu Pays Tribute to Surendranath Banerjee on Birth Anniversary

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Shubhendu Adhikari on Tuesday morning paid tribute to Rashtraguru Surendranath Banerjee on his birth anniversary, recalling his contribution to India's freedom movement and the growth of national consciousness.

Rain Likely in Parts of West Bengal Today, Cold to Intensify from November 13

■ SPNN

Kolkata: West Bengal is likely to experience mixed weather conditions on Tuesday, with partly cloudy skies and light to moderate rainfall accompanied by thundershowers expected in several districts. According to the forecast issued by the Alipore Meteorological Department, isolated parts of both south and north Bengal may receive rain. However, no severe weather warning has been issued for any district so far.



In south Bengal, Kolkata, Howrah, Hooghly, North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, East Midnapore and West Midnapore may receive light to moderate rainfall or thundershowers at a few places. Other districts in the region may witness light rain at isolated locations. Cloud cover is also expected to bring some changes in daytime weather conditions. In north Bengal, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Kalimpong, Alipurduar and Cooch Behar are likely to receive light to moderate rain and thundershowers at some places. The weather is expected to remain largely dry in the remaining northern districts, although isolated areas may experience light drizzle. Kolkata is likely to remain generally cloudy on Tuesday, with the maximum temperature expected to hover around 30 degrees Celsius and the minimum around 23 degrees Celsius.

Midnapore is likely to record a maximum temperature of 31 degrees Celsius and a minimum of 19.5 degrees Celsius. In Malda, the maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to be around 31.2 and 22.1 degrees Celsius, respectively, while Purulia may record 30.3 degrees Celsius as the maximum and 19 degrees Celsius as the minimum. Partly cloudy skies and isolated light rainfall are also likely in these areas. The Alipore Meteorological Department has forecast no significant change in minimum temperatures across the state over the next two days. However, around November 13, as cloud cover clears, night temperatures may fall by two to three degrees Celsius. The decline in night temperatures is expected to gradually increase the chill across different parts of West Bengal.

On Rajasthan's River Pollution

The Supreme Court has pulled up, once again, the Rajasthan government over industrial effluents flowing into the Jojari river and the deadly risk it poses for the people depending on it. The problem is decades old - public interest litigation in the Rajasthan High Court alerted State machinery to the problem in 2011 - indicating an oversight by the State bordering on the systematic. The Jojari, the Luni, and the Bandi are seasonal rivers in the State's arid western region, flowing through Jodhpur, Balotra, and Pali districts. This region has also evolved as a textile-dyeing and steel-working hub, and untreated or insufficiently treated effluents from these factories have run directly into the rivers and soil, endangering the health of around 20 lakh local residents. The region also suffers rampant illegal sand mining in riverbeds. The sewage treatment plants have been able to accommodate only around half of the sewage generated in the three urban centres, according to the State's submissions to the Court in 2025, even as the Court recorded substantial underutilisation at common effluent treatment plants. The combination is suggestive of industrial sources bypassing treatment facilities, poor connections between the sources and the facilities, and/or insufficient capacity at particular sites or in specific periods. The Court initiated a suo motu writ petition in 2025 and constituted a High-level Ecosystem Oversight Committee chaired by Justice Sangeet Lodha to audit the plants and draft a plan to restore the rivers. Based on the committee's scathing status reports, Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta banned construction within 100 metres of the rivers' edges and hazardous industries within 500 m of the present path, or of the flood lines where available. The Court has also upbraided local authorities for failing to enforce pollution norms by citing the Court's own stay of a 2022 National Green Tribunal order imposing a compensation on the Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation and the local administration in Jodhpur and Barmer. The State regulatory apparatus has been dysfunctional: officials were aware of illegal mining operations in some areas, yet they regularised leases in those areas. Given the dereliction in play, the Court is correct to treat the possibility of collusion between State officials and industrial mafias seriously. Justice Mehta's observation that the State could be held liable under the 'polluter pays' principle is also a significant indictment of state failure, through negligence. Now, importantly, the State still has to restore the Jojari and attend to its wellbeing, which is relevant to a recent tendency by the Court to substitute itself for regulators rather than disciplining them into discharging their functions.

India's Gen Z Needs A Door

RAKESH KAUL

This autumn, the leaked BPSC paper brought young people onto the streets of Patna; students in Mumbai followed, and water cannons met them. India is not Nepal or Bangladesh, where such protests toppled governments. But the global pattern is the same: a student grievance becomes a national crisis when established political forces attach themselves to it. Those forces seek regime change. Whether that opens any pathway for the young is another question. The answer lies in the labour market, not the street.

Youth unemployment is 9.9 per cent. Among young graduates it is 22.7 per cent, and among graduate women 29.4. Graduates make up 17 per cent of young Indians and 56 per cent of unemployed youth; among unemployed young women, three in four hold a degree. Of unemployed young graduates, 91 per cent have never held a job. The problem is entry. For most, an examination is the only route in, and when a paper leaks, a year goes with it, and so does faith.

Unemployment alone rarely brings a generation into the street. The moment young people conclude the route is rigged, they move from questioning a system's fairness to questioning its legitimacy. A state that still commands trust should spend it before it is tested. The anger is about fairness; the vulnerability underneath is economic, and neither agitation nor policing can reach it.

Young women are the missing half of India's educated workforce, and the unemployment rate hides them: 56 per cent of young graduate women are outside the labour force altogether, against 14 per cent of graduate men. In Gujarat, half of young graduate women are employed; in Bihar, fewer than one in ten. Childcare and work near home have to be part of the answer, not an afterthought.

Workplaces with fewer than ten workers hold 73 per cent of young people's non-farm jobs, and the salaried young there earn a median of Rs 10,000 a month, against Rs 18,000 where twenty or more work. The gap between those firms and their best peers is the economy's largest unexploited resource. Across more than 300 product lines in the Annual Survey of Industries, the ninetieth-percentile factory produces three and a half times as much per worker-day as the median one, even among factories of similar size and capital. It is more method than machine: changeovers, stoppages, scrap, scheduling and record-keeping, which nobody in a five-person workshop has time to count. A randomised trial that gave Indian textile plants management help lifted productivity 17 per cent in a year. India does not lack the knowledge; it lacks a way to put it into the tiny enterprises that employ most of its young. Small firms in trade, health, apparel, and food are distributed geographically to stay close to their end customers and thus within reach of someone who cannot commute across a district. That is where an educated 23-year-old can be placed. With a mentor, a benchmark against firms making the same product, and AI-assisted tools, she can count the firm's defects, manage its inventory, fix its scheduling, and chase its collections - work nobody there has time for. She gains practical skills, the firm gains capability it lacked, and the state's further support depends on the firm hiring and growing. The goal is not just to place an intern but to accelerate the five-going-onto-fifty firm. What is good for women turns out to be good for all.

This is where the ruling dispensation should spend political capital, on top of financial capital, rather than on another scheme. The Prime Minister's Internship pilot shows why: of 52,600 who accepted offers, 16,000 joined, four in ten quit, and by November 2025, just 95 had been offered a job.

The moment calls for a mission on the scale of the Manhattan Project. Call it the Gen Z Corps: one objective, one deadline, one accountable head, and a scoreboard the whole country reads. Some 1.2 crore young people enter the labour market every year, and a demographic dividend is not paid out automatically; it is earned by putting them to productive work, or it compounds the other way, into a generation that is educated, idle and angry. Announce it now, place a first cohort in January under money already voted, and fund the rest on February 1. A mission announced in a Budget speech is a scheme. One announced to a generation in the street, with people already at work when the Budget is read, is a promise.

None of this is untested; only the scale is. Britain has placed supervised graduates in small firms since 1975 and gets EUR 4.20 to EUR 5.50 of output for every pound. Its Kickstart jobs paid for starts rather than jobs, and returns are barely 50p. Europe promised every young person an offer within four months, and no audited country delivered it, for want of plans and data.

Red Road's Lessons For Kolkata's Street Renaming Exercise

RESHMI DASGUPTA

Most Kolkatans, if asked today where Indira Gandhi Sarani is, will look blank. Even though it has been 41 years since the name was officially changed, that boulevard slicing through the central Maidan is still mostly called Red Road.

But then again, if you ask most Kolkatans why that iconic road was christened that in the first place, most of them will look blank again. And no, it was not because a PWD functionary back in the British Raj decided to paint it red.

Some road names in Kolkata simply refuse to fade into oblivion. Like Park Street. Chowringhee. New Market. Camac Street. Loudon Street. Central Avenue. And, of course, Red Road.



On the other hand, only people above a certain age now remember that AJC Bose Road was once Lower Circular Road and APC Road was Upper Circular Road. And the city's denizens seem evenly split over whether Theatre Road is more widely known now as Shakespeare Sarani.

Those who know what the previous name of AJC Bose Road was would also be able to say why Red Road was named thus: because it was originally laid with powdered red brick (surkhi), a surface gentle on horses' iron-clad hooves. Back then, horses and horse-drawn carriages were the mode of transport for lofty notables of British India who lived and worked near this open green space next to Fort William, so roads laid with hoof-friendly material were a given.

Red Road was dug up - apparently for the first time in its 300-year history - in 2021 to repair a pair of 200-year-old, five-foot-high arched masonry culverts that carried excess rainwater from the Maidan to the Hooghly River and also occasionally did the reverse during high tide. The 'red' history of the road then became startlingly visible, as the thickest layer under the 20th-century grey-black tarmacadam and bitumen surfaces was distinctly made up of powdered brick or chips and laterite.

When Red Road was originally planned and laid in the early 1700s, it was meant to be a thoroughfare for the sahibs to make their way to the 'garden houses' in Alipore. When Fort William came up a few decades later, obliterating Gobindapur (one of three original villages that became British Calcutta), Red Road was also broadened. The gracious trees and balustrades that now line the boulevard were introduced by Lord Dalhousie a century later, but the surkhi remained.

Actually, many boulevards in Calcutta up to the early to mid-1800s were surfaced with surkhi. Both the 'Circular' roads - built by filling in the Maratha Ditch that the British had dug to protect their outpost, Calcutta, from the Maratha cavalry - were topped with red brick chips and surkhi before becoming the first fully metalled roads in the city. Chowringhee, Strand Road and Harrison Road were also similarly surfaced in the early decades of the 19th century.

But Red Road is the only one that still retains a link with the surkhi era. As it runs through the greenest part of the city and ends near Government House - later Raj Bhavan and now Lok Bhavan - it has the aura of power. Visually, it is also a precursor to (and perhaps inspiration for) New Delhi's King's Way-Rajpath-Kartavya Path. People may remember that the pavements bordering Kartavya Path in its earlier avatar were also once lined with powdered red brick.

However, doubling up as a wartime runway for military aircraft imbues Red Road with a dashing image that even Kartavya Path cannot rival. Indeed, that World War II link also points to why Red Road was once called 'The Course'. Not only was it where the sahibs would 'course' - ride or perambulate - in good weather, but Allied planes were also parked in an adjacent area named Ellenborough Ground, just next to the Race Course, when it was used as a landing strip.

That West Bengal's then-ruling Communists actually allowed the word Red to be supplanted by Indira Gandhi in 1985 is hard to digest, given the connotations that colour has with Left ideology. The renaming underlines the "special" regard the then Left Front Chief Minister Jyoti Basu had for the assassinated sitting Prime Minister and Congress supremo. After all, he spent 20 years in a bungalow also named after Indira Gandhi, although she had only stayed there briefly.

It would not have been unthinkable for Basu (and his party) to at least have named that bungalow Red House, especially after the Left Front agreed to allow Red Road to become Indira Gandhi Sarani. But inexplicably, Basu and his fellow Reds did not do the obvious. They did not even attempt to recolour the road red (with powdered brick, not paint), though West Bengal had turned the appropriate colour politically. Now, of course, the state has turned emphatically non-Red.

The sections most aggrieved by the political supplanting of red and green (ideologically speaking) by saffron in Bengal may fear Red Road will be renamed something more au courant, like Kesar Path or Orange Road. That is improbable, albeit not impossible. It must be remembered, though, that unlike Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi does not have many roads named after her in India; Kolkata is still the only major metro to have one.

Besides, the Reds may have felt that they had done their duty by renaming the stretch of Old Court House Street next to Lok Bhavan Marx Engels Beethi, turning Garden Reach Circular Road into Karl Marx Sarani and, of course, making Dharmatala Road an atheistic Lenin Sarani.

Omar Abdullah's Cabinet Reshuffle Exposes Cracks Within National Conference

TEJINDER SINGH SODHI

Two years ago, when Jammu and Kashmir held assembly elections for the first time in a decade, the National Conference (NC), led by Omar Abdullah, emerged as the single-largest party and went on to form the government with the support of Congress and several independent MLAs.

However, the first signs of strain in the alliance surfaced even before the government had settled into office. Omar Abdullah reportedly offered Congress one cabinet berth, while the party sought two. The disagreement kept Congress out of the government, bringing the alliance to the brink of a breakdown.

Political sources maintained that the broader Opposition's political calculations, including Rahul Gandhi's emphasis on maintaining unity among alliance partners, helped prevent an immediate rupture. Congress subsequently maintained that it would join the government only after Jammu and Kashmir regained statehood.

Two years later, the tensions between the NC and Congress remain unresolved. But the latest cabinet expansion and reshuffle has exposed another set of faultlines-this time within the National Conference itself.

The cabinet reshuffle comes at a sensitive moment for the ruling party. The NC is already facing an internal challenge involving Srinagar MP Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi, who has been at odds with the party leadership. His reported decision to leave the party on November 3 has added to the uncertainty surrounding the organisation's political future.

The latest exercise has now triggered resentment among several senior leaders and aspirants who were hoping for a place in the council of ministers. The discontent is particularly significant because it comes from within a party that has spent decades building its political base across Jammu and Kashmir.

The reshuffle has also drawn attention to regional representation, with eight of the 10 districts in the Hindu-majority Jammu region left without representation in the cabinet. The imbalance is likely to provide fresh ammunition to the BJP, which has accused Omar Abdullah of disregarding the political aspirations of the Jammu region.

Congenital Heart Disease: An Urgent Child Health Priority In India

DR K GANAPATHY SUBRAMANIAM

Congenital heart disease (CHD) refers to structural abnormalities of the heart or major blood vessels present at birth. It ranges from simple defects that need only observation to complex conditions requiring urgent catheter-based intervention or open-heart surgery.

Advances in paediatric cardiac surgery have transformed CHD from a frequently fatal condition into one in which most children can survive and lead healthy, productive lives. Those outcomes, however, depend on early diagnosis, timely referral, access to specialised cardiac care, and long-term follow-up.

The World Health Organisation recognises congenital disorders, including congenital heart defects, as an important contributor to neonatal and under-five mortality, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where specialised care remains limited.

Globally, CHD affects about 8-10 per 1,000 live births, or an estimated 1.3-1.5 million newborns each year. Nearly one-quarter of affected children have critical CHD and need intervention in infancy. In India, with nearly 24-27 million live births a year, an estimated 180,000-240,000 children are born with CHD annually.

That scale makes CHD a major contributor to preventable infant mortality and lifelong childhood disability, and one of the country's most significant paediatric health challenges.



India has made notable progress through tertiary hospitals, dedicated paediatric cardiac centres, public insurance schemes such as Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), state-sponsored programmes, and the work of charitable trusts and non-governmental organisations.

Several centres now offer advanced paediatric cardiac surgery and catheter-based interventions with outcomes comparable to international standards. These advances remain concentrated in metropolitan cities. Children from rural, tribal and economically disadvantaged communities therefore face significant inequities in access.

Children from low-income families encounter multiple barriers to timely diagnosis and treatment. Limited awareness among parents and frontline providers delays diagnosis and referral, a problem compounded by the absence of universal newborn and infant CHD screening.

Referrals between primary, secondary and tertiary facilities are often slow. High out-of-pocket costs for diagnostics, surgery, medicines, travel, accommodation and long-term follow-up place a heavy burden on families.

Inadequate follow-up and transition care weaken outcomes, and the lack of national data and surveillance systems continues to hinder planning, financing and service delivery. Although CHD is present at birth, many private insurance policies exclude congenital conditions or treat them as pre-existing.

That creates a major equity gap, especially for families who discover the condition after birth and need urgent intervention. Inclusive insurance models that cover congenital conditions from birth are essential if life-saving paediatric cardiac care is to be equitable.

CHD should be recognised as a national child health priority within maternal, newborn and child health programmes, supported by universal newborn screening. Regional Centres of Excellence in paediatric cardiac care should be established across underserved states and districts so that access is not limited by geography, while referral networks and neonatal transport systems linking district hospitals with tertiary centres are strengthened.

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Productive and meaningful: Rijiju after wrapping up visit to Saudi Arabia

■ AGENCY

Riyadh: Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Tuesday described his recent visit to Saudi Arabia "productive and meaningful", emphasising that it further strengthened the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two nations.

Rijiju expressed gratitude to the Saudi Arabia leadership for the warm welcome extended to him during his visit.

"I concluded my visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which was productive and meaningful. Grateful for the warm hospitality extended by the leadership & people of the Kingdom. The visit further strengthened the close bonds of friendship and cooperation between India and Saudi Arabia, with a shared commitment to the welfare of pilgrims and the successful conduct of Haj 2027," the minister wrote in a post on X.

On Monday, Rijiju and Saudi Arabia's Minister of Hajj and Umrah Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah signed the Bilateral Haj Agreement for Haj 2027, securing a quota of 175,025 pilgrims for India, the Consulate General of India in Jeddah said.

"Strengthening India-Saudi Arabia cooperation for Haj 2027! Hon'ble Union Minister of Minority Affairs



Shri Kiren Rijiju held bilateral talks with H.E. Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah, Minister of Hajj and Umrah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, signed the Bilateral Haj Agreement for Haj 2027, securing a quota of 175,025 pilgrims for India," the Consulate General posted on X.

The two ministers also reviewed preparations for Haj 2027.

"The meeting provided an opportunity to review preparations for Haj 2027, discuss key operational priorities and strengthen coordination towards ensuring a safe, smooth and well-organised pilgrimage for Indian Haj pilgrims," it said.

Rijiju arrived in Jeddah on Friday to attend the 6th Haj Conference and Exhibition 2027, participate in signing the bilateral Haj agreement with Saudi Arabia, and review preparations to ensure a safe and comfortable Haj journey for Indian pilgrims next year.

During his visit, Rijiju conveyed India's appreciation for Saudi Arabia's continued commitment to the welfare of the Haj pilgrims and reaffirmed the strong India-Saudi partnership and their shared commitment to ensuring a successful Haj 2027.

"Strengthening the India-Saudi Arabia partnership with a shared commitment to the welfare of pilgrims and the successful conduct of Haj 2027. Along with the Consul General of India in Jeddah, Shri Fahad Suri and JS (Haj), Shri Mohd. Afzal, attended the inaugural ceremony of the 6th Haj Conference & Exhibition 2027 in Jeddah, KSA," Rijiju posted on X.

Chinese Vloggers Misrepresent Dhaka as New Delhi



■ AGENCY

Dhaka: Over 150 Chinese nationals have been filming and livestreaming from economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, falsely depicting them as parts of New Delhi, India, according to several reports.

While recording footage from these locations, they made disparaging comments about India's living standards, sanitation, food habits, and poverty.

The misleading portrayal has sparked concerns over the deliberate distortion of geographical locations and the possible use of deceptive online content to create negative perceptions about India among international audiences.

The incident underscored the growing threat posed by misinformation and manipulated content on social media, where sensationalised posts can spread widely before their authenticity is established.

The activities have reportedly been taking place in Dhaka's Tekpara and Uttara areas for several months, with streamers remaining active from early morning until late at night. One Chinese woman identified as 'Mianmian', who claimed to be from China's Sichuan province, livestreamed from beside a canal in Uttara Sector 12 of Dhaka on November 1. She reportedly presented the area to her online audience as New Delhi and described the residential buildings and surrounding areas as dirty, underdeveloped, and unhygienic. "This is New Delhi. Their homes are extremely dirty. There isn't even a fan inside the tin-roofed houses. This place is quite underdeveloped, dirty and unhygienic, and the law-and-order situation is poor," leading Bangladeshi daily 'Prothom Alo' quoted her as saying. In another instance, a Chinese national was seen live streaming from tea stalls in the Tekpara locality of Dhaka, making the offensive remarks that the tea consumed by locals was made using "cow urine".

"Look, they are drinking tea. Do you know what kind of tea this is? This is cow urine tea. They drink cow urine tea," Prothom Alo quoted him as saying. The footage also contained derogatory comments on the residents' lifestyles, with repeated references to poor hygiene, lack of sanitation, and substandard living conditions.

Another Awami League leader dies in Bangladesh jail, a day after being granted bail

■ AGENCY

Dhaka: Amid concerns over growing custodial deaths of Awami League members in Bangladesh, another party leader died in custody at Kishoreganj District Jail, just a day after being granted bail, local media reported.

The deceased, identified as 75-year-old Ranjit Kumar Ghosh, general secretary of the Awami League's Chowddoshata union unit in Kishoreganj Sadar upazila, was taken to Shaheed Syed Nazrul Islam Medical College Hospital in Kishoreganj on Monday after falling ill, where doctors pronounced him dead shortly after his arrival.

Jahanara Begum, superintendent of Kishoreganj District Jail, said that Ranjit's health suddenly deteriorated on Monday morning, following which prison authorities rushed him to the hospital,



where he was declared dead.

The jail superintendent also said that although Ranjit was granted bail on Sunday, he remained behind bars as the prison authorities did not receive the required release clearance by the end of the day, Bangladesh's leading newspaper The Daily Star reported.

According to his relatives, Ranjit was taken into police custody in connection with a case linked to the 2024 July Uprising and was subsequently sent to jail on court orders. He had remained incarcerated at Kishoreganj District Jail since August this year.

His death comes amid a growing number of custodial deaths involving Awami League leaders in Bangladesh since the 2024 political upheaval.

On Tuesday, the Awami League condemned the failure to release Ranjit despite being granted bail, saying the elderly leader's death reflected an increasingly disturbing pattern of fatalities inside Bangladesh's prisons.

"An elderly political leader, suffering from serious medical conditions, spent months behind bars. Even after being granted bail, he was not released. Instead of returning home to his family, he was taken to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead. His death adds to an increasingly disturbing pattern of deaths in Bangladesh's prisons," the party posted on X.

The party claimed that a country where political affiliation can mean prolonged imprisonment, where bail does not necessarily bring freedom, and where deaths in custody continue at such an alarming rate cannot credibly claim to uphold democratic values.

"This is the reality of Bangladesh today: a profound crisis of justice, accountability and the rule of law. Not democracy, but lawlessness. Ranjit Kumar Ghosh deserved dignity, adequate medical care and the protection of the law. His death demands an independent investigation, full accountability for any wrongdoing, and urgent scrutiny of the treatment of political detainees throughout Bangladesh. The right to life is not a political privilege. It is a fundamental human right," the Awami League stated.

One cop killed, 3 abducted after checkpost attack in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

■ AGENCY

Islamabad: One police officer was killed and three others were abducted after armed assailants targeted a police checkpost at Shah Almas Pir Pahari in Hangu district of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, local media reported on Tuesday.

District Police Officer Salahuddin Kundi said that the armed assailants targeted the Shah Almas Pir Pahari post and opened fire, Pakistan-based daily The Express Tribune reported.

Following the attack, a heavy contingent of the law enforcement personnel rushed to the spot. However, the armed assailants fled from the spot. The three abducted police personnel were safely recovered through efforts involving police, tribal elders and the district administration.

The incident took place amid a rise in attacks targeting Pakistani law enforcement personnel, especially in the provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Earlier on September 28, three traffic police personnel were killed after their mobile van was attacked by unidentified assailants in the Wazirabad Bazaar area of Tank district in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to a senior police official. District Police Officer Abdul Samad Khan said that three traffic police personnel died on the spot after their mobile van came under attack by armed men, Pakistan daily Dawn reported. He said that armed men had taken away the police vehicle.

French FM accuses Iran's IRGC for cyberattacks on supermarket fridges

■ AGENCY

Paris: French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot has accused Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) for the cyberattacks on French supermarket fridges on the night of October 11-12, a report has claimed. Speaking after a G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Paris, Barrot said that that Iran's ambassador to France has been summoned. He further said that France would impose sanctions against those responsible and take measures that they deem necessary to respond to these attacks. In a statement shared on X, Barrot said, "On October 11 and 12, nearly 700 distribution sites were hit by a cyber campaign of unprecedented scale and



aggression. Today, thanks to the work of government agencies, we know who is responsible: the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of the Islamic Republic of Iran." "Iran's ambassador has been summoned. We will sanction those responsible and take all measures we deem necessary and proportionate to respond to these attacks and deter anyone who might consider.

Balochistan medical students protest 'unjustified' viva failures, demand accountability

■ AGENCY

Quetta: Students at Makran Medical College in Balochistan's Turbat staged protests over alleged irregularities in viva examinations, alleging that the unjustified failures had resulted in the loss of an academic year and taken a serious toll on their mental well-being, local media reported.

The protest entered its third consecutive day on Monday, with students demanding a transparent and impartial examination system and an end to what they described as unjustified failures. They said repeated demonstrations and class boycotts had failed to bring about a permanent resolution.



"It is unfortunate that every year we hold protests, boycott classes and take other peaceful protest measures for our legitimate demands, yet no lasting solution to students' basic problems has been found," The Balochistan Post quoted the students as saying.

They called on the college authorities and relevant officials to address their grievances and ensure that their academic future was not jeopardised.

"We call on the college administration and the relevant authorities to take students' problems seriously and provide an immediate, practical and lasting solution, so that students do not lose any more valuable time or jeopardise their future," the protesters said.

Expressing concern over the academic future of students at Makran Medical College, the Baloch Students Action Committee (BSAC) questioned the Pakistani authorities' continued inaction over allegations of unfair evaluation in viva-based annual examinations.

Wave of bomb blasts, arson attacks rocks Dhaka amid deteriorating security situation

■ AGENCY

Dhaka: Amid mounting security concerns in Bangladesh, a fresh wave of crude bomb blasts and bus arson attacks rocked Dhaka, as educational institutions, court premises and busy transport hubs were among the locations targeted, local media reported.

The incidents on Monday further heightened concerns over public safety in the capital.

These attacks came a day after a wave of explosions at Dhaka University, police facilities and other locations across the capital, alongside multiple bus arsons in the city and its outskirts.

In the latest incident, unidentified assailants set a bus ablaze beneath the Farmgate metro rail station on Monday evening, leading to heightened security in the area.

Tejgaon Police Station Officer-in-Charge Moniruzzaman said that police rushed to the spot after receiving information about the incident and were taking steps to identify and apprehend those involved, Bangladeshi daily Dhaka Tribune reported,

The violence spread to several more parts of Dhaka, with crude bombs exploding near Dhaka University's Teacher-Student Centre and outside the District Judge Court, where suspects were detained in connection with the attacks.

Government Bangla College in Mirpur was also targeted, with a crude bomb exploding at its main gate on Monday evening as several adjoining shops were set ablaze.

In further arson attacks, a bus was torched in the Pallabi area of the capital, while a van carrying gas cylinders was set on fire on Postogola Bridge in South Keraniganj.

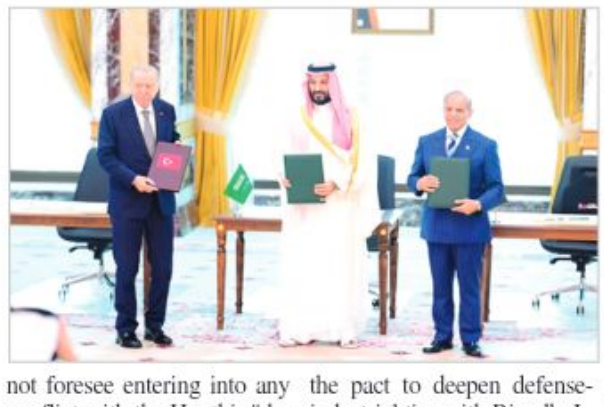
Defence without combat: Why Turkey and Pakistan will guard Saudi Arabia, but not fight its war

■ AGENCY

Islamabad: Saudi Arabia believed it had purchased the loyalty of two of the Islamic world's largest armies. What it acquired instead were extraordinarily expensive security guards, contracted to stand watch, but never to leave their barracks. When Riyadh assembled the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement in August 2026, the arrangement was marketed as a NATO-style collective security architecture. An attack on one would be treated as an attack on all. Three Sunni-majority powers, including a nuclear-armed state and NATO's second-largest military had bound themselves together in the birthplace of Islam. The symbolism was potent. The substance has proven far more modest. The first genuine test of the alliance has revealed that neither Ankara nor Islamabad has any intention of fighting Riyadh's war.

The distinction that matters is between defence and combat. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan has been explicit: the Mecca agreement is "defensive, not offensive," and Turkey "will not send forces to the territory of another state to launch an attack from there," he told the media in Ankara on October 8.

Defence Minister Yasar Guler was blunter still when asked a few days later whether Turkish soldiers would engage the Houthis: "We absolutely do



not foresee entering into any conflict with the Houthis," he told Turkey's Star TV in an interview.

Turkey's contribution will consist of military technology, air-defence systems, drone operators, and intelligence-sharing rather than combat brigades. Ankara is leveraging the pact to deepen defense-industrial ties with Riyadh. In 2023, Turkey signed its largest-ever defense export contract with Saudi Arabia, centred on Akinci combat drones. The Mecca agreement extends that commercial and strategic logic. It is not a blank cheque for Saudi military adventures.

Pakistan's position is even more constrained. Islamabad has deployed roughly 8,000 troops to the Kingdom, including a squadron of JF-17 fighter jets and a Chinese HQ-9 air-defence system, but these forces are officially characterised as serving an advisory and training role. Pakistan has drawn a firm line at putting boots on the ground for offensive operations. It declined to join the Saudi war in Yemen in 2015, and it has ruled out sending troops to help Riyadh retake territory from the Houthis. The reason is not wanted of will but want of capacity and the sheer weight of competing interests. Pakistan's economy remains acutely dependent on Saudi financial support. Islamabad cannot afford a rupture with Riyadh, but neither can it afford to be dragged into a war that would inflame domestic pressures, strain its military across multiple fronts, and damage its delicate relationship with Iran, with which it shares a long and volatile border.

For Islamabad, an offensive strike against the Houthis would be an existential threat at home. Geography is the first constraint. Pakistan shares a porous 900-kilometre border with Iran. In early 2024, cross-border missile strikes between the two nations demonstrated just how fragile that frontier is.

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Round 2 of Rs 37,500 crore scheme ends with 2 NTPC applications, Round 3 now open: Coal Ministry

■ SP BUREAU



New Delhi: The Coal Ministry on Tuesday announced the conclusion of Round 2 of Rs 37,500 crore 'Scheme for Promotion of Surface Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects', with two applications received from NTPC Limited.

The applications envisage the production of Urea, Methanol and Dimethyl Ether (DME), highlighting the potential of coal gasification in supporting domestic production of critical industrial products and diversifying the utilisation of India's indigenous resources, which is a significant step towards advancing the objectives of the Scheme.

Building on the progress achieved under the first two rounds, the Ministry of Coal has launched Round 3 of the Scheme with effect from November 10, 2026, providing another opportunity for eligible entities to submit proposals for setting up coal/lignite gasification projects in the country.

The last date for submission of applications under Round 3 is January 11, 2027.

Through successive rounds, the Ministry of Coal aims to encourage wider industry participation, attract investments and accelerate the adoption of coal gasification technologies, contributing towards the national target of achieving 100 million tonnes of coal gasification capacity by 2030, said the ministry.

The Cabinet approved the Scheme on May 13, 2026, with a total financial outlay of Rs 37,500 crore to accelerate the development of Surface coal and lignite gasification projects in the country.

In September, the Ministry of Coal refuted reports as "premature and incorrect", which claimed that the Rs 37,500 crore Scheme for Promotion of Surface Coal or Lignite Gasification Projects has attracted no applications.

The ministry said that Talcher Fertilisers Limited and NTPC Limited have already submitted their respective applications through the online portal. The ministry was also in communication with other prospective applicants who are at various stages of project preparation and application finalisation, an official statement said. Further, more applicants were at various stages of project preparation. Large scale and complexity of the projects envisaged under the Scheme requires applicants to undertake substantial preparatory work, including preparation of Pre-Feasibility Reports, assessment of technology options, identification of coal/lignite and other feedstock arrangements, evaluation of project economics and preparation of detailed project proposals.

SoftBank reports $7.1 billion quarterly loss as AI investment concerns weigh

■ AGENCY

New Delhi: Japanese investment giant SoftBank Group has reported its first quarterly net loss in nearly two years as falling valuations of key technology holdings and growing concerns over artificial intelligence (AI) investments weighed on its financial performance.



The company posted a net loss of 1.12 trillion yen ($7.1 billion) in the second quarter of its financial year, reversing a profit recorded in the corresponding period a year earlier.

The performance was significantly below market expectations with analysts polled by the company estimating an average profit of 129 billion yen.

Declines in the share prices of semiconductor companies Arm Holdings and Intel, along with South Korean e-commerce major Coupang, contributed to the deterioration in SoftBank's financial performance.

Its Vision Fund division -- which manages investments in hundreds of technology start-ups -- also reported a loss of 81.6 billion yen. SoftBank has increasingly emerged as an indicator of investor sentiment towards OpenAI and the broader AI industry, given its substantial exposure to the sector. Moreover, the company's shares have fallen more than 50 per cent from their record high in June amid concerns over the debt burden associated with its aggressive AI investments and uncertainty surrounding the future returns from these commitments. The changing valuation expectations have heightened concerns about the sustainability of investments in the AI sector and the potential risks associated with assets that are not publicly traded. "The market is pricing the chance that the next mark -- or the next headline about OpenAI's revenue -- changes the value of an asset that cannot be sold at a screen price.

GIFT Nifty jumps over 1 pc on easing oil prices, signals strong start for Indian markets



■ SPNN

New Delhi: GIFT Nifty climbed nearly 1.19 per cent on Tuesday as of 12.45 pm, indicating a positive opening for Indian equities when trading resumes, supported by easing crude oil prices and improving global sentiment. Indian stock markets remained closed on Tuesday for Diwali Balipratipada, following a session on Monday in which benchmark indices recovered from early losses to finish at their highest levels in over eight months. At around 10:30 am, GIFT Nifty was trading 141 points, or 0.57 per cent, higher at 25,257. Brent crude futures remained below $100 per barrel and hovered near their lowest levels since early September amid hopes of possible dialogue between the United States and Iran. Nifty gained 0.23 per cent to close at 25,044 in the previous trading session, while the Sensex rose 0.13 per cent to 81,106. Both benchmarks ended at their highest levels since February 27, 2026. The benchmark indices had surged about 10.5 per cent over seven consecutive sessions through Friday, marking their longest winning streak of the year. The gains were supported by strong foreign fund inflows, falling crude oil prices and an unwinding of the global artificial intelligence trade. Many major Asian markets advanced after a decline in crude oil prices. The fall in oil prices followed US President Donald Trump's announcement about plans to hold off fresh military strikes against Iran. South Korea's KOSPI surged over 4.39 percent, while Japan's Nikkei gained around 2.87 percent in early trade. Brokerage firm Citi Research in a recent report said that India's benchmark index Nifty 50 will reach 28,000 points by the end of 2027, implying an upside of about 12 per cent from its last close of 24,986, supported by a strong earnings outlook, lower oil prices and the prospect of slower global artificial intelligence-related capital expenditure.

Scindia holds meet to speed up expansion of telecom infrastructure

■ AGENCY



New Delhi: Union Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia met the Internet Service Providers Stakeholder Advisory Committee on Tuesday to deliberate on key policy issues concerning right of way (RoW) and energy-related challenges impacting telecom infrastructure expansion.

"We remain committed to address industry concerns through coordinated policy action and strengthen the telecom infrastructure for a digitally connected India," the minister said after the meeting.

According to GSMA, the association that represents mobile network operators and companies, the overall data consumption in India has reached a massive 700 crore GB per month fuelling the backhaul requirement for a mobile BTS site from 4 Mbps (earlier) to 300 Mbps. To sustain such a level of traffic India needs fiberisation and fiber densification.

This requires laying fiber and installing towers at speed across the length and breadth of India. Installing fiber, often underground, and majorly on public lands and areas which many a times may already be paved or developed, is an essential part in deploying broadband infrastructure and a significant part of this digging and trenching work requires access to public Rights of Way (RoW) in cities, towns.

In the 5G era, the network densification will make RoW a critical enabler in accelerating important government visions such as Industry 4.0, Smart Cities. As per a recent GSMA study investments in the 5G era will be driven by the need for a large number of small and macro cells.

Despite the Centre's Department of Telecommunications (DoT) RoW Rules, many state and union territory administrations retain non-uniform, high fee structures and misaligned local bylaws.

Laying underground optical fiber cables (OFC) requires coordinating across a diverse mosaic of land-owning authorities-including municipal bodies, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), the Ministry of Railways, and forest departments. This leads to project delays and cost escalation of projects.

While the GatiShakti Sanchar Portal has improved digital processing timelines, several regional and municipal bodies still lack single-window clearances, leading to repeated re-applications and unauthorized-construction notices even after statutory deemed-approval windows expire.

On the power front, rural and remote telecom towers frequently suffer from erratic electricity board grid supply, often lasting 6 to 12 hours a day, forcing heavy reliance on backup power.

Cochin Shipyard's Q2 profit halves as shipbuilding segment slips into loss

■ SP BUREAU



Mumbai: State-run shipbuilder Cochin Shipyard Limited on Tuesday reported 50 per cent decline in profitability for the quarter ended September 2026 (Q2 FY27) as weakness in its shipbuilding business weighed on earnings despite higher revenue and a strong performance from the ship repair segment.

The company posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 53.8 crore in the second quarter of FY27, down 50 per cent from Rs 107.5 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal (Q2 FY26), according to its stock exchange filing.

However, revenue from operations rose 11.7 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1,249 crore, compared with Rs 1,119 crore in the year-ago period.

Operating performance remained under pressure during the quarter. EBITDA declined 30.8 per cent to Rs 50.95 crore from Rs 73.66 crore a year earlier, while EBITDA margin contracted to 4.1 per cent from 6.6 per cent in the same quarter last financial year.

The company's segment-wise performance reflected a mixed trend. Revenue from the shipbuilding business increased marginally to Rs 783.1 crore from Rs 759 crore in the corresponding quarter last year.

However, the segment reported an operating loss of Rs 6.1 crore, compared with an operating profit of Rs 149.7 crore in the year-ago period, as per its regulatory filing.

In contrast, the ship repair division delivered a strong performance. Revenue from the segment climbed to Rs 466.05 crore from Rs 359.6 crore a year ago, while operating profit more than doubled to Rs 143.3 crore from Rs 67.2 crore.

Alongside the quarterly results, the board of directors approved an interim dividend of Rs 3 per equity share of face value Rs 5 for the 2026-27 financial year, translating into a payout of 60 per cent of the face value.

Hind Rectifiers clocks 54 pc drop in its Q2 profit



■ SPNN

Mumbai: Hind Rectifiers Limited on Tuesday reported nearly 54 per cent decline in profitability for the quarter ended September (Q2 FY27) despite registering strong revenue growth, as rising costs weighed on operating performance.

The company posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 6.8 crore in the second quarter, down 53.7 per cent from Rs 14.7 crore in the corresponding period last financial year (Q2 FY26), according to its stock exchange filing.

Revenue, however, rose 39 per cent year-on-year (YoY) to Rs 316 crore from Rs 227 crore, it added in its regulatory filing.

At the operating level, EBITDA fell 47.5 per cent to Rs 13.6 crore from Rs 25.9 crore a year ago. The EBITDA margin contracted sharply to 4.3 per cent from 11.4 per cent in the year-ago quarter. Following the earnings announcement, shares of the company were trading at Rs 913.10, up Rs 0.70, or 0.08 per cent. Separately, the board approved the issuance of a corporate guarantee of up to 2 million euros in favour of its wholly-owned subsidiary, Elventive France, providing financial support for the French unit's operations. Founded in 1958 in collaboration with Westinghouse Brake & Signal Co. UK, Hind Rectifiers is engaged in the manufacture of power semiconductors, power electronic equipment and railway transportation systems. The company supplies a wide range of products for the rail sector, including traction motors, traction transformers, propulsion systems, safety electronics, battery chargers and HVAC solutions for locomotives and modern trainsets such as Vande Metro and Namo Bharat. The company also caters to industrial customers through its portfolio of power semiconductors, high-current rectifiers, electrostatic precipitator power supplies and power quality improvement systems used in sectors including aviation, defence, power generation and metals. Hind Rectifiers operates manufacturing facilities in Mumbai, Nashik and Dehradun, with its registered office located in Mumbai. Investors will be closely monitoring whether the company can improve margins in the coming quarters while sustaining its strong revenue growth trajectory.

US FDA adds vision loss warning to weigh loss drugs; Ozempic, Wegovy on the list

■ AGENCY



New Delhi: US health regulators have ordered a new safety warning for widely used weight-loss and diabetes medicines, including Ozempic and Wegovy, after identifying a rare eye condition that can lead to severe and potentially permanent vision loss. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said the warning will be added to the labels of all glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonist drugs, a class of medicines used to treat obesity, type 2 diabetes and other health conditions. The warning relates to non-arteritic anterior ischemic optic neuropathy (NAION), a condition caused by reduced blood flow to the optic nerve. The disorder can result in sudden vision impairment and, in some cases, permanent loss of sight. Moreover, the drug category includes some of the world's best-selling medicines such as Novo Nordisk's Ozempic and Wegovy, as well as Eli Lilly's Mounjaro and Zepbound. The FDA said it began examining the issue after a medical study published in 2024 suggested a possible link between semaglutide, the active ingredient in Ozempic and Wegovy, and the eye disorder. A review of more than 125 clinical trials found that NAION occurred in roughly six out of every 100,000 patients who used a GLP-1 medicine for at least a year. By comparison, the incidence rate among patients receiving a placebo or other glucose-lowering treatments was fewer than four cases per 100,000 people. It was also identified that reports of the condition through its adverse event reporting system, which monitors side effects and drug-related injuries. The FDA described the condition as rare and said patients and healthcare providers should be aware of potential symptoms, including blurred vision, blind spots, colour distortions and other visual disturbances. In addition, patients experiencing sudden changes in vision should seek medical attention immediately, according to the regulator.

BHAI DOOJ 2026

A TILAK OF LOVE, A LIFETIME OF TOGETHERNESS

From traditional rituals and mythological stories to heartfelt reunions and digital greetings, Bhai Dooj celebrates a relationship built on childhood memories, affection, trust and lifelong support. There are relationships that need no elaborate promises, no grand ceremonies and no daily reminders to remain close. A brother and sister may argue over the smallest things, compete for attention, share secrets, tease each other relentlessly and occasionally disagree over matters that seem insignificant to everyone else. Yet, beneath these everyday moments lies a bond that often survives distance, changing circumstances and the passage of time. Bhai Dooj celebrates this special relationship.As the festive season of Diwali draws towards its conclusion, homes across India prepare for another occasion of affection and family togetherness. Sisters arrange decorated thalis, prepare sweets, light lamps and apply a ceremonial tilak on their brothers' foreheads. Brothers offer gifts, blessings and expressions of affection, while families gather around meals that bring back memories of childhood and home. In 2026, Bhai Dooj will be celebrated on Wednesday, November 11. Also known by names such as Bhaiya Dooj, Bhau Beej, Bhai Bij and Bhai Phonta, the festival is observed in different parts of India through regional customs that share a common emphasis on sibling affection and well-being. Although the rituals are simple, the emotions they represent are profound. A small mark of vermilion on the forehead becomes a prayer for a brother's happiness and long life. A carefully prepared meal becomes an expression of care. A gift, whether expensive or modest, becomes a way of acknowledging a relationship that has accompanied both siblings through different stages of life. In an age when education, employment and migration increasingly separate families, Bhai Dooj also offers a reminder that relationships need attention and affection to remain strong. The festival is not merely the final chapter of Diwali celebrations. It is a celebration of family ties, shared memories and the promise that, despite life's changes, the bond between siblings can continue to offer comfort and belonging.

A Sister's Prayer and a Brother's Promise

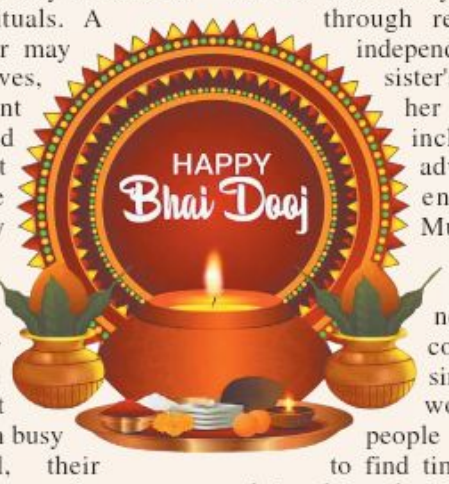
The most recognisable part of Bhai Dooj is the tilak ceremony. On the festival day, the sister prepares a thali containing items such as roli or vermilion, rice grains, a diya, sweets and other offerings according to family custom. She invites her brother to sit for the ceremony, applies the tilak to his forehead and performs an aarti. The ritual is accompanied by prayers for his happiness, good health and long life. In many families, the sister then offers him sweets or a festive meal. The brother, in turn, gives her a gift and expresses his affection or blessings. The ceremony varies across communities. Some families include a sacred thread, coconut, flowers or additional offerings. Others keep the ritual simple, focusing on the tilak, prayer and shared meal. The value of the ceremony does not depend on the number of objects arranged on the thali. Its significance lies in the intention behind the gesture. A sister may pray for her brother's success in education, a new job, good health or happiness in his personal life. She may also wish for strength during difficult periods, confidence when facing challenges and the wisdom to make good decisions. Likewise, a brother may use the occasion to acknowledge the support his sister has given him throughout the years. The exchange is a reminder that affection should not be limited to words. Relationships grow stronger when care is expressed through attention, practical support and a willingness to remain present in each other's lives. For siblings who have grown older and developed different respon-sibilities, Bhai Dooj can become a moment to pause and reconnect.



The True Meaning of Bhai Dooj

As the festivities of Diwali come to an end, Bhai Dooj brings attention to a relationship that is both ordinary and extraordinary. It does not require grand public celebrations or elaborate ceremonies. A tilak, a prayer, a shared meal and a thoughtful gift may be enough to express the occasion's central message. Yet the significance of the day extends far beyond these rituals. A brother and sister may lead different lives, pursue different ambitions and develop different views of the world. They may live in separate cities or countries, meet only occasionally or communicate through short messages between busy schedules. Still, their shared history can remain a source of connection. The relationship is sustained not simply by birth or family tradition, but by the ways siblings treat one another. Listening, respecting boundaries, celebrating achievements and offering help during difficult moments can all strengthen the bond. Bhai Dooj reminds people that family relationships deserve care even when life becomes demanding.

The festival also invites a broader understanding of protection and affection. A brother's support for his sister may be expressed through respect for her independence, while a sister's affection for her brother may include honest advice and encouragement. Mutual support can take many forms, and it need not be confined to a single day. In a world where people often struggle to find time for personal relationships, the festival creates a reason to pause. It asks siblings to remember the experiences they share, acknowledge the role they play in each other's lives and make space for connection.



Bhai Dooj in Modern Families

Indian family life has changed considerably over recent decades. Education and employment take young people away from their hometowns, urban living can leave relatives geographically separated, and international migration has created families spread across different countries. These changes have influenced how Bhai Dooj is celebrated. In some households, siblings continue to meet in their ancestral homes and follow traditional rituals closely. In others, the festival is organised around work schedules, travel arrangements and the practical demands of modern life. A brother working in another city may travel home for the ceremony. A sister living abroad may arrange a video call with her family. Siblings who cannot meet may exchange gifts through delivery services and share greetings online. Technology has made it easier to remain connected, but it has not removed the emotional importance of physical presence. For many people, seeing a sibling on a screen is a welcome substitute when travel is impossible. Yet the opportunity to sit together, share a meal and talk without watching the clock can carry a different kind of comfort. The festival also reflects changing expectations within families. Sisters increasingly pursue independent careers, manage their own finances and make decisions about their personal lives.

Childhood Memories That Never Fade

For many people, the emotional significance of Bhai Dooj begins long before they understand the religious meaning of the festival. Childhood memories often include sharing toys, competing for the television remote, borrowing clothes without permission, arguing over sweets and blaming one another for small household mishaps. Siblings may fight over seemingly trivial matters, yet they also become witnesses to each other's earliest experiences. They see one another grow from childhood into adulthood. They remember school examinations, family holidays, embarrassing mistakes, important achievements and moments of uncertainty that parents or friends may never fully understand. As the years pass, these shared experiences become part of a private family history. Bhai Dooj offers a chance to revisit that history. A familiar joke can revive an old memory, a favourite sweet can recall a childhood celebration, and a simple conversation can recreate the comfort of sitting together at home. For siblings who now live in different cities, the festival may bring back memories of a time when meeting required no planning. They may remember walking to school together, playing in the courtyard or waiting impatiently for a festival meal. Such memories can become especially precious as family responsibilities increase and opportunities to meet become less frequent. The festival does not erase old disagreements, nor does every sibling relationship remain uncomplicated. Families experience differences in temperament, expectations and life choices.



The Legend of Yama and Yamuna

One of the best-known stories associated with Bhai Dooj concerns Yama and his sister Yamuna. According to Hindu tradition, Yamuna repeatedly invited her brother Yama to visit her home. Yama, occupied with his responsibilities, did not visit her for a long time. Eventually, he accepted her invitation and arrived at her home on the auspicious day associated with the festival. Yamuna welcomed him warmly. She performed the ceremonial welcome, applied a tilak to his forehead and served him food prepared with affection. Moved by her hospitality, Yama offered to grant her a wish. Yamuna asked that brothers who visited their sisters on this day, accepted their welcome and received their blessings should enjoy happiness and protection from untimely death. In the popular telling of the story, Yama granted her wish. The story is remembered as a foundation of the festival's association with sibling affection, prayers and well-being. At its heart is a simple but powerful idea: the relationship between siblings deserves to be nurtured through care, respect and the willingness to make time for one another. The story also explains why the traditional meal is so important in many households. The sister's hospitality is not merely an act of serving food; it represents affection expressed through personal effort.



The Meaning Behind Bhai Dooj

Bhai Dooj is observed on the Dwitiya, or second lunar day, of the bright fortnight of the Hindu month of Kartik. It follows Diwali and is associated with the celebration of the relationship between brothers and sisters. The name itself expresses the occasion's central idea. "Bhai" means brother, while "Dooj" refers to the second lunar day. The festival is also known as Yama Dwitiya in connection with a traditional Hindu story involving Yama, the god of death, and his sister Yamuna. Different regions have developed their own names and customs for the celebration. In Maharashtra and Goa, it is widely known as Bhau Beej. In West Bengal, the occasion is called Bhai Phonta, while related traditions are observed in other parts of India and neighbouring countries. Despite differences in ritual details, the emotional foundation remains similar. Sisters offer prayers for their brothers' well-being, while brothers express affection, appreciation and support for their sisters. In many households, the occasion includes a ceremonial tilak, an aarti, sweets, gifts and a family meal. The precise order of the rituals varies according to regional and family traditions. Unlike celebrations centred primarily on elaborate public events, Bhai Dooj is often observed in the intimate setting of the home.



'Hardik's trade key in MI's decision-making for retention': Aakash Chopra

■ SP BUREAU

New Delhi: Former India cricketer Aakash Chopra emphasised that Mumbai Indians' retention and release decisions ahead of the IPL 2027 auction will revolve around the potential trade of Hardik Pandya.

Hardik is most likely to be traded to Punjab Kings for Arshdeep Singh, as the all-rounder has failed to inspire Mumbai Indians to the final in his second stint with the franchise from 2024 onwards. IANS had earlier reported that the paperwork for the deal was completed and that a formal nod was awaited.

Speaking to JioStar, Chopra stressed MI's retention decisions and the possible trade of Hardik. "If everything had gone well last season, looking at their team, you feel like, 'Why change anything at all?' They have the balance, they have the experience, and they have the explosiveness. So why change?

"Maybe they need an Indian spinner or an Indian fast bowler, which they will find. But that's all that they needed to do. But then the major talk of the town is the trade of Hardik Pandya. That is where it is going to start for MI in terms of their decision-making on retentions and releases because you don't usually find a player like that. But what if, in his place, you get two?" he told JioStar.

Meanwhile, Chopra felt that MI must also release New Zealand fast bowler Trent Boult, who had a below-par 2026 season with the franchise. Boult took only two wickets in five matches in 2026 at an average of 94.

"Five matches, two wickets, 11 and a half runs per over. That tells me that Trent Boult has to be released. 12.5 crore is a lot of money, and in exchange, you can get quite a few players, and many people won't even need to be released.

3rd Unofficial Test

Rain-hit draw leaves Bumrah, Prasidh short of match practice ahead of NZ games



■ AGENCY

Lincoln: Persistent rain brought an early end to the third unofficial Test between India A and New Zealand A at Bert Sutcliffe Oval on Tuesday, leaving the four-day contest drawn and denying India's returning fast bowlers Jasprit Bumrah and Prasidh Krishna valuable match practice ahead of the senior team's upcoming Test series.

After the entire third day was lost, conditions offered little respite on the final morning. Although the covers were briefly removed, another spell of rain forced the abandonment of play at 1 pm local time, without a single delivery being bowled. The three-match unofficial Test series consequently finished without a winner, with all three games ending in draws.

India had put themselves in a commanding position before the weather intervened. Yashasvi Jaiswal's 102 laid the foundation for a first-innings total of 464/5 declared, with Sai Sudharsan contributing 88 and Tilak Varma remaining unbeaten on 81. Dhruv Jurel (71) and Washington Sundar (50 not out) also made half-centuries as the visitors dominated the batting effort.

Sports programme for Brisbane 2032 Paralympic Games to be decided in 2027



■ AGENCY

Berlin: With the International Olympic Committee (IOC) set to finalise the sports programme for the 2032 Games in April 2027, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Governing Board has decided to fix the sports programme for the Brisbane 2032 Paralympic Games in 2027, and not late 2026 as originally anticipated.

The decision-making process for the sports programme of the Paralympic Games is separate from the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) Sports Programme process.

Though the Olympic sport programme and associated venue masterplan may impact factors the IPC Governing Board may consider in its decision-making on the Paralympic sport programme -- such as cost and complexity, and impact on the Organising Committee, the IPC Governing Board will make its decision during 2027.

This follows the recent International Olympic Committee (IOC) announcement of a revised timeline, approved by the IOC Executive Board to confirm the Brisbane 2032 Olympic sport programme in April 2027.

The IPC initiated the Brisbane 2032 Paralympic sport programme process in late 2025, inviting International Federations and Recognised International Federations to apply.

Colleen Wrenn, the IPC's Executive Director, Paralympic Games, said: "For each edition of the Paralympic Games, we start with a blank canvas when building the sport programme and Brisbane 2032 is no different. No sport is guaranteed a place on the programme, and the goal is to shape a competitive and compelling Games.

"Since we received the applications from International Federations and Recognised Federations.



No bilateral or tri-series, face-offs only in ICC events

insight into Cricket Scotland's new engagement with Afghanistan

■ AGENCY

Edinburgh: Cricket Scotland has announced its future engagement with the Afghanistan Cricket Board, confirming that its men's team's ties with Afghanistan men will be limited to ICC events only, owing to Taliban government's treatment of women.

In a statement, Cricket Scotland confirmed that it "will not proactively schedule bilateral series or participate in tri-series involving Afghanistan Men" due to the Taliban government's treatment of women and girls. It added that their men's team "will continue to participate" against the Afghanistan men's team in only ICC events.

The Scottish board said it will also "not host or participate in pre-tour training camps, practice matches, or warm-up fixtures involving Afghanistan men outside ICC events."

"Cricket Scotland will continue to participate in any fixtures against Afghanistan Men at ICC events which are determined by ICC competition regulations," Cricket Scotland said in a statement.

"Participation in these fixtures should not be interpreted as an endorsement of the current Afghan regime or its policies," it added.

The Board also stated that it will not play Afghanistan in bilateral and tri-series "unless there is a material change in the circumstances surrounding Afghanistan women's cricket and wider human rights considerations."

Moreover, the board opened up on its players' participation in the Afghanistan Premier League. George Munsey was the only Scottish player signed in last week's APL draft. The board highlighted that, pending the league being granted an ICC sanction, they would hand him an NOC.

"Cricket Scotland will comply with its obligations as set out in its contracts with its players. If an NOC is issued, participation by that player/s must not be interpreted as an endorsement by Cricket Scotland of the current Afghan regime or its policies," the statement further said.

I feel slightly conflicted: Healy on Khawaja's explosive sandpaper claims



■ SP BUREAU

New Delhi: Reflecting on her husband Mitchell Starc being dragged back into the sandpaper saga, former Australia women's cricket captain Alyssa Healy stated that she is feeling "slightly conflicted" and it is hard to make a comment on it.

In his new book Sabr, which detailed the events of 2018 Sandpapergate, former batter Usman Khawaja claimed that the entire Australian Test team was aware of the use of sandpaper during the 2018 Cape Town Test in South Africa.

As revealed in Khawaja's autobiography, the third Test against South Africa in 2018 wasn't the only match in which the Aussies tampered with the ball, also admitting to the use of sandpaper in the second Test.Mitchell Starc, however, rejected Khawaja's explosive claims and stated that he stood by the joint statement released in 2021 with fellow bowlers Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Lyon denying that the bowlers knew anything about Sandpapergate being taken on the field and the ball being tampered with during the Cape Town Test.

Speaking to media at Kayo Sports and Fox Cricket's launch event, Healy said, "It's a hard one to comment on. At the moment, I feel slightly conflicted, and I'm in the middle of it. It's hard to make a comment on it, we'll see where it goes and if CA do take it forward or how it rolls throughout the media, and I'll make a comment from there. For now, I'm just gonna sit and wait and watch it unfold."

However, Cricket Australia chief executive Todd Greenberg said there is "absolutely no benefit" in revisiting the investigation more than eight years after the infamous incident.

'What a wonderful achievement': PM Modi hails Anuj Shrivatri on becoming India's 100th Chess Grandmaster

■ SPNN

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday congratulated Anuj Shrivatri on becoming India's 100th chess Grandmaster, describing the achievement as a remarkable milestone that reflects the country's growing talent, dedication and rising popularity of the sport among youngsters.

"India has hit a century in chess! Exceptional, isn't it? India is now home to a hundred chess Grandmasters!" the Prime Minister wrote in a post on X.

PM Modi highlighted Shrivatri's achievement and said India's reaching the 100-Grandmaster mark reflected the immense talent, dedication and hard work of its players.



The Prime Minister also expressed happiness over young chess talents emerging from different parts of the country and making their mark on the global stage, hoping that the milestone would encourage more youngsters to take up the sport.

"Congratulations to Anuj Shrivatri on becoming India's 100th Chess Grandmaster! What a wonderful achievement it is. India reaching 100 Grandmasters is a remarkable milestone that reflects the immense talent, dedication, and hard work of our players as well as the growing popularity of chess among our youth.

It is particularly heartening to see young chess talents emerging from different parts of the country and making their mark on the global stage. May this achievement inspire many more youngsters to take up chess and pursue excellence," PM Modi added.

Shrivatri, 22, from Madhya Pradesh, achieved the Grandmaster title after winning the 7th ASEAN Plus Individual Open Chess Championship in the Philippines on November 8. He also became the first player from Madhya Pradesh to earn the prestigious distinction.

'I would release QDK': Abhinav Mukund wants MI to bring in Indian wicketkeeper



■ SPNN

New Delhi: Former India cricketer Abhinav Mukund has pitched for the Mumbai Indians to bring in an Indian wicketkeeping option and also to release Quinton de Kock from the team as the November 17 retention deadline approaches.

MI are reportedly set to trade Hardik Pandya to Punjab Kings in exchange for Arshdeep Singh as the teams head towards the retentions and the IPL 2027 auction, which is set to take place on December 16.

While bringing Arshdeep from PBKS would bolster the fast-bowling line-up, which already includes Jasprit Bumrah, Deepak Chahar, Shardul Thakur and Trent Boult, MI don't have an experienced Indian wicketkeeper in their ranks since Ishan Kishan was released ahead of the IPL 2025 mega auction.

Chris Gayle joins Venice Livewires in Italia T10 League

■ AGENCY

Venice: The West Indies legend and former cricketer Chris Gayle has joined Venice Livewires in the Italia T10 League, giving the franchise a major shot in the arm.

Gayle, also known as 'Universe boss', is excited to have joined the franchise for the inaugural Italia T10 League. "I'm excited to be part of Venice Livewires for the Italia T10 League. It's always great to be involved in new cricketing opportunities and connect with fans around the world.

"T10 cricket is exciting, fast-paced and full of entertainment, and I'm looking forward to being part of this journey with Venice Livewires. Let's bring some entertainment and big energy to Italy!" Gayle said.

Former Indian cricketer and ex-chief selector MSK Prasad is the Team Director of the franchise. He was pleased to have Gayle with the franchise. "Chris Gayle's



arrival is a massive boost for Venice Livewires. His experience of playing at the highest level and across some of the biggest franchise leagues in the world brings tremendous value to our setup.

"Beyond his explosive batting, he brings an understanding of high-pressure situations and the ability to inspire teammates. His presence will strengthen our cricketing environment, and we are delighted to welcome a player of his stature to the franchise," Prasad said.

Chairman of Venice Livewires, Mohit, stated that bringing Gayle into the team was a proud moment. "Bringing Chris Gayle on board is a proud moment for Venice Livewires. Chris is a global cricketing icon whose contribution to the game goes far beyond statistics and records. His personality, experience and ability to entertain millions make him a tremendous addition to our franchise," he said.

The chairman added that the franchise is working towards building the identity and mindset of a winning team. "We are building a team with a strong international identity and a winning mindset, and Chris's association reflects our ambition to make Venice Livewires a major force in the Italia T10 League," Mohit added.