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BRIEF NEWS

Bengaluru Man Kills 7 Persons, Including Wife and Her Family, Arrested

Bengaluru: A 45-year-old person has been arrested for killing seven people, including his wife and members of her family, in a case suspected to have stemmed from domestic discord. The accused, identified as Indushekhar alias Shekhar, said to be a cab driver, is suspected of carrying out the murders over the past few days at his house near Bashyam Circle in Rajajinagar and subsequently disposing of the bodies at different locations. The deceased have been identified as Shekhar's wife Sunitha, mother-in-law Roopavathi, Sunitha's brothers Shivakumar and Shankar, sisters-in-law Divya and Nalini, and seven-year-old Puneeth, son of Shankar. The Rajajinagar police have arrested the accused and initiated an investigation. The case came to light after Nalini went missing, following which her mother approached the Srirampura police and filed a missing-person complaint. While it is not yet clear, marital discord is said to be the possible motive behind the killings. Police officials are investigating from all angles, including Shekhar's resentment towards his wife's family, prompting him to allegedly target them. According to sources, the accused is suspected of using a grinding stone to bludgeon the victims to death. It is also suspected that some substance might have been mixed with their food to make them drowsy before the killings.

Fire On 4 Coaches Of Karmabhoomi Express In Punjab, Panic Among Passengers

Rajpura: A fire broke out in four coaches of the Karmabhoomi Express near Sarai Banjara in Punjab's Rajpura on Friday. The fire, which reportedly started in the train's pantry, spread to a few adjoining coaches before being brought under control. No casualties have been reported so far. Patiala Deputy Commissioner Himanshu Aggarwal said the administration received information about the fire around 45 minutes before his statement. He said the initial information suggested that the fire had started in the pantry and subsequently spread to a couple of coaches. According to Aggarwal, a fire alarm went off, alerting passengers and allowing them to evacuate the train. He said there had been no reports of casualties so far and that teams from the district administration had rushed to the spot. The incident took place near Sarai Banjara, close to Rajpura, while the train was travelling towards Bihar. The fire has since been brought under control. Senior railway officials are also reaching the spot to assess the situation. The Railways has ordered a high-level inquiry into the incident to determine the cause of the fire.

CM Announces Rs 1,000 Cr Corpus for Renovation of Old Temples, Hindu Monasteries

AGENCY



Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Friday announced the creation of a Rs 1,000 crore corpus for the renovation of old Hindu temples and monasteries across the state.

The project, named the 'Tirtha Kshetra Circuit' or 'Pilgrimage Circuit', will be implemented over two years, with the allocated amount being utilised to restore ancient religious structures.

"We will spend Rs 1,000 crore in the next two years to renovate all the old Hindu monasteries and temples. I have named it the 'Tirtha Kshetra Circuit'. Apart from private places, we will work to renovate the ancient temples that are run by religious institutions and even by the public. Such kind of work had already been done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kedar Dham, Badrinath Dham, Ayodhya Dham, Benaras, and Ujjain Mahakal," Adhikari said.

He was speaking at the inauguration of a community Kali Puja at Aranghata in Nadia district on Friday afternoon.

The Chief Minister also outlined the state government's preparations for upcoming religious festivals. He said special arrangements had been planned to decorate Chandannagar in Hooghly district and Krishnanagar in Nadia district for the forthcoming Jagaddhatri Puja.

Similarly, Nabadwip and Shantipur in Nadia district, along with Cooch Behar, would be specially decorated for the Ras Purnima festival.

"We have declared this year's Gangasagar Mela an international fair. Preparations have already started for it. I will also go to Chandannagar and Krishnanagar for Jagaddhatri Puja. I will go to Nabadwip on the occasion of Ras Purnima festival and participate in the programme on that auspicious occasion. On that day, I will also participate in religious activities at the abode of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu," he said.

Adhikari also criticised the previous Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government, claiming that Durga idol immersions had earlier faced restrictions and difficulties.

"Earlier, Durga idol immersions often faced problems. This year, there was no restriction or hurdle anywhere," he said.

X Tells Delhi HC Takedown Requests in Delhi Police's Name Were Fraudulent



AGENCY

New Delhi: Social media platform X on Friday told the Delhi High Court that an imposter sent requests asking it to take down the accounts of Internet Freedom Foundation and Software Freedom Law Centre, India, purportedly at the behest of Delhi Police.

X's counsel made the statement before Justice Amit Mahajan, who was hearing petitions filed by the two organisations on the issue.

The counsel said a complaint has been made to the Delhi Police and no action has been taken against the petitioners.

"We did not act on it. Notices are not sent by the Delhi Police. We have filed a complaint with the Delhi Police last night to find the imposter," the lawyer for X submitted.

The senior counsel appearing for the petitioners said that certain notices were purportedly issued by the "Special Commissioner of Police (Crime)" to X, calling upon the platform to "remove/withhold" certain posts from their accounts within three hours and also block their entire accounts.

The authenticity of the notices was, however, doubtful, the senior counsel added.

The court closed the proceedings on the petitions in view of X's stand.

The petitions informed that on October 31 and November 2, the "Special Commissioner (Crime) of Delhi Police" purportedly sent "illegal content reports" to X over certain posts allegedly defaming the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

They said the "reports" were legally unsustainable as they did not disclose due authorisation and were not in accordance with the mandate of law under the Information Technology Act.

Bomb Threat at Amitabh Bachchan's Home, Bombay HC, Stock Exchange

AGENCY



Mumbai: A bomb threat targeting multiple high-profile locations in Mumbai -- Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan's bungalow Jalsa, the Bombay High Court and the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) -- has put the city on alert.

A threat e-mail was received by the court, warning of bomb attacks at the three locations, as well as the Worli Racecourse.

Following the threat, the Mumbai Police have launched a probe and efforts are ongoing to identify the sender. Security agencies havealso been alerted.

This is the second threat targeting Amitabh Bachchan. On October 22, a threat e-mail was sent to a school in the city, which named the veteran actor.

At the time, authorities clarified that Bachchan had not received any direct threat.

In the wake of the incident, Bachchan's customary Sunday appearance outside his Mumbai home took an unusual turn -- he stood behind a protective glass shield, with son Abhishek Bachchan by his side. The sight prompted the All Indian Cine Workers Association to seek Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention, raising concerns over the safety of Bollywood stars and their families. The latest incidents come amid heightened concerns over the safety of celebrities following the October 18 firing at actor Tiger Shroff's car, which was claimed by the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. This week alone, actors Tusshar Kapoor and Ayushmann Khurrana received threats in the name of the Bishnoi gang. Police are still trying to ascertain the authenticity of the threat tapes.

A 30-year-old Bengaluru-based IT engineer was arrested by the Mumbai Crime Branch on Wednesday for sending the threats to Kapoor and Khurrana. Preliminary investigations have found no evidence of his links to the Bishnoi gang.

Status-Driven Diwali Gifting Fuelling Delhi Vehicular Pollution: SC Talks Tough

AGENCY

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday flagged the culture of exchanging Diwali gifts as a contributor to vehicular pollution in Delhi as the national capital continued to breathe toxic air. Underlining that a "cultural shift" was needed to curb the annual pollution menace in Delhi, Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant said the rich had turned the practice of exchanging Diwali gifts into a social and status symbol. "The culture of Diwali gifts adds to vehicular pollution. People need to realise what our original culture is and what should be done," the CJI said. The Supreme Court's sharp remarks came as the overall AQI in Delhi came within touching distance of the severe category on Friday. even though it surged past 400 in several regions.

ECI Opens Fresh Window for Electors Missing From SIR Draft Rolls in 7 States



SP BUREAU

New Delhi: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has directed the Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) of six states - Maharashtra, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Telangana and Nagaland - and the Union Territory of Delhi to provide one more opportunity to electors whose names were excluded from the draft electoral rolls during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise. In a letter dated November 6, the Commission said electors who were issued Enumeration Forms but whose names were excluded after being marked as ASDD – Absent, Shifted, Dead or Duplicate – would be allowed to submit their forms again to seek inclusion in the final electoral rolls.

The Commission said these electors would be allowed to submit their duly filled Enumeration Forms to the concerned Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) or Assistant Electoral Registration Officer (AERO) corresponding to their current ordinary residence.

As part of the directions, booth-wise lists of electors marked under the ASDD categories will be displayed again on the notice boards of the respective polling stations, Panchayat Bhawans and urban local body offices. The lists will also be uploaded in a readable PDF format on the websites of the respective Chief Electoral Officers.

The lists will include the probable reasons for the non-inclusion of the electors' names in the draft rolls.

The ECI has also directed district election officers and electoral registration officers to generate partially filled Enumeration Forms afresh through their ECINET dashboards. Booth Level Officers (BLOs) will be asked to contact the concerned electors and ensure delivery of the forms either physically or through WhatsApp, email or SMS, wherever contact details are available.

Electors will also be able to download and fill their forms through the ECI website or ECINET app using the same EPIC number that existed before their names were deleted.

SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR ELECTORS WHO HAVE SHIFTED

The Commission has prescribed separate procedures for electors who have not shifted residence and those who have moved within the same state. Electors who continue to reside at the same address will have to submit their filled and signed Enumeration Forms along with a statement explaining why they could not submit the form earlier. They can submit these documents physically through themselves or a family member, or use the online facility on ECINET with e-sign. Those who have shifted residence within the same state will not be required to submit Form 8. Instead, they will have to submit an Enumeration Form along with a statement mentioning their new address and Assembly Constituency, along with address proof, to the ERO or AERO concerned.

The ECI has also said that homeless electors who do not have address documents can use a field verification report by the BLO as proof of residence.

Karnataka Finds Up to 31.2% Ethanol in E20 Petrol, Seeks Consumer Compensation

AGENCY

Bengaluru: The Karnataka government on Friday claimed that petrol sold by oil marketing companies contains substantially more than the mandated 20% ethanol blend (E20).

The state government said it had tested petrol samples from different companies and found ethanol concentrations exceeding 20% in several samples, raising concerns that motorists could be suffering financial losses because of excessive blending.

As many as 63 samples were collected from major oil marketing companies, including IOCL, HPCL and Shell, across Karnataka. The samples were initially sent to the oil marketing companies' laboratories along with several queries, including one seeking details of the ethanol content in each of the 63 samples.

However, the companies allegedly failed to provide clear answers on the ethanol content, prompting the state government to suspect that something was amiss. The government subsequently sent the samples to private laboratories for independent testing.

Tests of samples collected from seven districts, including Bengaluru Urban, reportedly found ethanol concentrations exceeding the 20% benchmark.

The samples were tested by the Bengaluru-based Shriram Research Institute, which is accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories and is ISO-certified.

"It's not E20 fuel. It's more than 31.2% ethanol at IOCL, 30.5% at HPCL, 26.5% at BPCL, 26.1% at Nayara and 25.5% at Shell," the Karnataka government said in a press release.



The findings raise serious questions about fuel quality and compliance with the prescribed ethanol-blending limit, as well as the potential impact on consumers in terms of reduced mileage and higher vehicle maintenance costs.

In simple terms, E20 petrol should contain 20% ethanol and 80% petrol. Samples containing 25.5% or 30.5% ethanol, if the findings are confirmed, would represent a substantial deviation from that benchmark. For instance, one grade of HPCL petrol (MS-Power) was found to contain 30.5% ethanol, while another grade (MS) contained 27%.

The results also showed ethanol content of 26.5 per cent in Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited's Speed petrol, 26.1 per cent in Nayara petrol and 25.5 per cent in Shell petrol. Two BPCL samples contained 24.2 per cent and 22.6 per cent ethanol, while another HPCL sample recorded 22.4 per cent and another IOCL sample had 20.8 per cent.

Among the remaining petrol samples, ethanol content was recorded at 20.6 per cent in Nayara petrol, 19.9 per cent in a BPCL sample, 19.2 per cent in a Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited sample and 13.5 per cent in a Shell sample.

Karnataka Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister Rizwan Arshad demanded that the Centre establish a compensation fund to reimburse motorists for losses allegedly caused by excessive ethanol blending in petrol, including reduced fuel efficiency and higher vehicle maintenance costs.

Quantifying the potential economic burden on consumers, the Karnataka government said motorists could suffer annual losses of Rs 62,000 crore if mileage drops by 10%, while excessive ethanol blending could lead to an additional Rs 39,000 crore in vehicle servicing costs.

"The Government of India must publicly clarify the actual ethanol blend being supplied to consumers," the release said.

Kalady University row: ABVP turns heat on protesting SFI

■ AGENCY

Aluva : The ABVP has accused the SFI leadership at Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, of playing the victim after facing disciplinary action, and described its members leading the current protest as campus criminals.

Addressing a press conference here on Friday, ABVP state secretary Yadu Krishnan alleged that students facing disciplinary action were themselves involved in campus clashes and that the indefinite hunger strike by SFI unit president Archana was an attempt to divert attention from the cases against her.



He claimed that Archana was named in a case registered at Kalady police station over an alleged attack on students with deadly weapons.

He also alleged that another SFI activist, Abhijith, had a Non-Bailable Warrant issued against him by a court in Perumbavoor. Krishnan further accused some other SFI activists of being involved in cases at the police station.He also made allegations against Rithusha, who has been described as the university's first transgender PhD scholar, claiming that she abused students and provoked clashes.The ABVP leader said the university's present unrest should be seen against the background of disciplinary action taken against ABVP activist Ujjwal Unni and five others.

They were suspended for nine months by the Left-led syndicate over a campus clash which the ABVP described as non-political.

Five of them had to discontinue their studies, he said.

Ujjwal later left that course and joined another programme at the same university, Krishnan said.He also questioned the silence of academic experts and cultural figures over the suspension of the students, saying no joint statement had been issued in their support. The ABVP alleged that the SFI had remained silent over campus issues during the previous Left government and was now trying to disrupt the academic atmosphere through its protest.

The press conference was attended by Ujjwal Unni and ABVP district committee member Krishnunni.

BJP 'weaponising central agencies', says Punjab minister Cheema

■ AGENCY

Chandigarh : Aaam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Punjab Minister Harpal Singh Cheema on Friday criticised the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), accusing it of "weaponising central agencies and misusing institutions like the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the Income Tax Department and Election Commission to intimidate opposition leaders".

Citing the nearly 48-hour-long ED raids at multiple locations linked to Moga legislator Amandeep Kaur Arora, Cheema said the central agency returned empty handed without recovering even a penny, once again giving AAP leaders a certificate of 'kattar imaandar' (thoroughly honest).

He added that the BJP "is trying to engineer defections by luring AAP MLAs with Ministerial positions and Rajya Sabha membership, but Punjab's leaders have refused to bow to such inducements".

Reaffirming her unwavering loyalty to Arvind Kejriwal and Chief



Minister Bhagwant Mann, Amandeep Kaur declared that no amount of raids, intimidation or political pressure could silence her or AAP's women leaders, and that she would continue fighting for Punjab and its people.

"The BJP has developed a pattern of misusing central agencies whenever elections approach in a state. The ED, CBI, the Income Tax Department and even the Election Commission are being used to intimidate opposition leaders, create allegations and build media narratives to malign political parties. The objective is to weaken democratically elected governments and undermine the democratic process," Cheema said.

Praising Amandeep Kaur for her dedicated work as an MLA over the past five years, the senior AAP leader Cheema said, "The ED conducted raids that continued for nearly 48 hours, but could not recover a single incriminating document or even a penny. This clearly exposes the political nature of the entire exercise. Such prolonged searches, questioning and pressure on an elected representative and her family amount to harassment and violate basic human rights."

He also said, "The BJP is targeting AAP leaders because they stand firmly with Punjab, AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal and Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann. The BJP is also attempting to lure AAP MLAs with offers of Ministerial positions, Rajya Sabha membership and other powerful posts to engineer defections. But our (AAP) leaders are committed to serving the people and cannot be bought through positions or inducements."

Condemning the BJP's politics of intimidation and division, the Punjab Finance Minister said the people of the state would give a fitting response to every attempt to weaken democracy, destabilise opposition parties and undermine the people's mandate.

Meanwhile, Amandeep Kaur, who is party's state Women Wing President said, "The ED conducted raids at multiple locations connected to me and my family. My residence, office, hospital and the homes of my parents, brother and relatives were searched. Officials continued their searches and questioning for nearly 42-48 hours, but ultimately returned without recovering a single document or a penny."

She added that the BJP is using central agencies to frighten opposition leaders and force them into joining its ranks.

Jharsuguda Sets a New Benchmark in Women's Health and Dignity with 'Abhaya' Initiative

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA ■ Jharsuguda:

The Jharsuguda district administration has launched 'Abhaya', an innovative initiative to strengthen menstrual hygiene facilities in government offices and public institutions, making Jharsuguda the first district in Odisha to introduce such coordinated infrastructure on a large scale.

Under the leadership of Collector and District Magistrate Kunal Chavan,automated sanitary napkin vending machines and eco-friendly incinerators are being installed to ensure easy access to sanitary products and safe disposal of used napkins.



The initiative was symbolically inaugurated by two students of Beheramal Ashram School, Yoshada Kujur and Hanshika Pradhan, in the presence of the Collector. The gesture highlighted that women and girls are the primary beneficiaries and stakeholders of the initiative.

Under the scheme, two sanitary pads will be available for just Rs 10 through a token or coin-operated system. The accompanying incinerators will help ensure hygienic disposal, prevent drainage blockages and protect sanitation workers from unsafe handling of menstrual waste.

Collector Chavan said access to menstrual hygiene should never become an obstacle to women's education or professional aspirations. The initiative aims to ensure dignity, convenience and health protection for women in every public space.

Female students preparing for competitive examinations at the District Library have welcomed the initiative. Civil services aspirant Chiki Majhi said the facility would help students who travel long distances and spend several hours studying without worrying about unexpected menstrual emergencies.

The initial rollout covers administrative offices and key public facilities, including the District Library and Sanskruti Bhavan. The administration plans to extend the programme to more libraries and working women's hostels.

The launch programme was attended by Sub-Collector Sabyasachi Panda, Project Director Lalit Soreng, DIPRO Ritakanti Baliarsingh and other district officials, along with ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers and students.

The initiative marks an important step towards creating safer, healthier and more dignified public spaces for women across the district.

INBRIEF

Four stolen motorcycles seized,two arrested

Jharsuguda: Brajrajnagar Police on Friday arrested two persons and recovered four stolen motorcycles. The case began with a complaint by Mahesh Muli about the theft of his Bajaj Discover (OR-23-B-4454). CCTV leads helped police apprehend Rinku Kalet alias Bagira (28) of Raidihi, NTPC Darlipali, and recover the vehicle. Further probes recovered a Bajaj Pulsar (OD-23-F-1735) and two unnumbered Hero HF Deluxe motorcycles; one was seized from receiver Sudhnath Jatwar (22) of Raigarh, Chhattisgarh.

Both accused were forwarded to court. The case is under Sections 303(2)/317(2) BNS. Rinku has multiple prior cases of theft. Investigation continues to identify owners of the unnumbered bikes.

Rajesh Kumar takes charge as new Arunachal Pradesh Police chief

■ AGENCY

Itanagar : Senior IPS officer Rajesh Kumar on Friday took charge as the new Director General of Police (DGP) of Arunachal Pradesh, succeeding 1995-batch IPS officer Shiv Darshan Singh Jamwal, who has been transferred to Delhi, officials said.

A senior official said the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on November 3 appointed 1995-batch IPS officer Rajesh Kumar as the new DGP of Arunachal Pradesh following the transfer of incumbent state police chief Shiv Darshan Singh Jamwal to Delhi.

Rajesh Kumar, who was returning from central deputation, formally assumed charge as the state's new police chief on Friday. Soon after taking charge, Rajesh Kumar met state Home and Inter-State Border Affairs Minister Mama Natung, who welcomed the newly appointed DGP and extended his best wishes for a successful tenure.Taking to his official X account, Mama Natung wrote, "Extended a warm welcome to Shri Rajesh Kumar, IPS (1995 batch).

INBRIEF

Pre-Diwali Raids: Jharsuguda Administration Destroys 15 Kg of Stale Sweets, Collects Fine

Jharsuguda: Ahead of Diwali, the Jharsuguda district administration conducted a special food safety enforcement drive across Belpahar and Gumadera on Friday to ensure the sale of safe and hygienic food items.Acting on Collector Kunal Motiram Chavan's directions, officials inspected 18 establishments, including sweet shops, hotels, restaurants and fruit stalls. During the drive, around 15 kg of stale chhena sweets, khua sweets and paneer were seized and destroyed. A total fine of Rs 6,300 was collected for violations of food safety norms.Four food samples were also collected and sent for laboratory testing. Food Safety Officer Kundan Luhar and office assistant Yadav Dehury conducted the inspection with support from Belpahar police personnel.Traders were directed to maintain hygiene and sell only fresh food items. The administration warned of strict action against future violations.

Odisha: EOW raids 11 locations in Bhubaneswar, Rayagada in truck owners association fraud case

■ AGENCY

Bhubaneswar: The Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of Odisha Police on Friday launched simultaneous searches at 11 locations linked to former Rajya Sabha member Bhaskar Rao Nekkanti and others in Bhubaneswar and Rayagada district.

As many as eight teams of EOW are involved in the search operations at premises, including the residential houses of Bhaskar Rao, B. Manmadha Rao and G. Krishna at Raniguda Farm, Pitala street and Rayat colony in Rayagada, respectively, the office of the Rayagada Truck Owners' Association at the main road in Rayagada, Aditya Industries Pvt Ltd at Forest Park area in Bhubaneswar, etc.



The search operations are being carried out by the EOW in connection with the investigation of Case (15/26) on September 22 under sections 406, 403, 417, 420, 384, 506, and 34 of the Indian Penal Code.

According to the EOW, the case relates to large-scale financial irregularities, criminal misappropriation of funds, extortion and criminal intimidation involving the office-bearers of a Truck Owners' Association in Rayagada.

Congress opposes SIR process, govt cannot take a different stand: Karnataka Dy CM

■ AGENCY

Bengaluru : Deputy Chief Minister and Revenue Minister, G. Parameshwara, on Friday said the Congress party's stand against the alleged irregularities in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls was clear and that the government could not adopt a position contrary to that of the party.



Responding to questions about the debate over the SIR exercise, he said some ministers might have observed that the process had not significantly affected their constituencies, but that did not mean it had been conducted properly across the state.

Had Ajit Pawar been around, NCP factions would have been united today: Sunil Tatkare

■ AGENCY

Mumbai : The Maharashtra Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) Chief and MP Sunil Tatkare said on Friday that if the former party Chief and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar had been around, both Nationalist Congress factions would have been united today.

Tatkare said, "Discussions about the merger definitely took place when Ajit Pawar Dada was alive. He had also outlined how the merger would happen. If Ajit Dada were here, the merger would have happened on February 12. This would have been made possible through Ajit Dada's fierce willpower. I was a close aide of Ajit Dada, which is why I am aware of this matter."

"Ajit Pawar passed away in an accident on January 28, which is why things did not proceed further," he added.

Tatkare said on Friday that the merger was scheduled for February 12, reiterating that if Ajit Pawar were alive, both parties would have been seen unified.

Ajit Pawar's death triggered widespread discussions about the merger of the two Nationalist Congress parties.



However, NCP-SP Working President Supriya Sule had earlier said that since those discussions were held directly with Ajit Pawar and he is no longer with us, the topic is practically closed.

Sule had also meAntioned that merger discussions had indeed taken place with Ajit Pawar and that the merger would have happened had he been alive.

Tatkare's statement comes a day after NCP Working President Praful Patel's meeting with NCP-SP Chief Sharad Pawar on Thursday night sparked political buzz about merger or reunion between two NCP factions.

Patel inquired Sharad Pawar about his health and also discussed political issues.

He met the NCP-SP Chief at the Mumbai hospital where the latter has been admitted on Wednesday and is currently undergoing treatment.

Patel after the meeting confirmed that he and Sharad Pawar also spoke on the politics though he declined to divulge further details.

He said that he had visited to check on the health of Sharad Pawar.He mentioned that Sharad Pawar's health is very good."He (Sharad Pawar) had some fatigue due to which he went to Ruby Hall Clinic in Pune, and now he has come to Breach Candy for a complete check-up."

Patel also said, "Sharad Pawar Saheb was smiling and asking about what is going on politically. His health is currently very good.

Spoiled Food Found in Durgapur Hotels

■ SPNN

Durgapur : A food safety department raid at several well-known hotels and restaurants in Durgapur ahead of Kali Puja has exposed serious lapses in food quality, storage and kitchen hygiene. Officials found rotten butter, stale chicken, expired bread and gravy that had reportedly been stored for several days in refrigerators, raising concerns about the quality of food being served to customers.



The food safety department conducted a series of inspections at different hotels across the city on Friday. During the operation, officials examined kitchen conditions, food storage arrangements and the quality of ingredients being used for preparing meals. The inspections revealed that several establishments were allegedly failing to follow prescribed food safety and storage standards.

In some hotel kitchens, officials discovered old gravy and stale chicken that had been kept in refrigerators for an extended period. Rotten butter emitting a foul smell was also found, while packets of bread past their expiry dates were reportedly stored in the kitchen. Several other food items were found to be stale or unsuitable for consumption.

The findings have raised serious questions about the hygiene standards maintained by some of the city's prominent hotels and restaurants. Food safety regulations require establishments to ensure that ingredients are stored under appropriate conditions and that expired or spoiled products are not used in food preparation. However, the inspection reportedly found violations at multiple locations.

The condition of the kitchens also failed to satisfy the inspecting officials. In several places, cleanliness was found to be inadequate, while irregularities were noticed in the storage and handling of food products and spices. The department's findings indicated that proper precautions were not being taken to maintain the quality and safety of ingredients.

The presence of spoiled food in refrigerators has also raised concerns about the possible health risks to customers. Food prepared using contaminated, stale or expired ingredients can pose a threat to public health. Customers visiting restaurants generally rely on establishments to maintain basic hygiene and ensure that the food served to them is safe for consumption. The inspection findings have therefore brought the responsibility of hotel managements under scrutiny.Following the inspections, the food safety department imposed fines on several hotels for allegedly violating food safety regulations.

Cooch Behar University Dismisses Professor Kartik Das

■ SPNN

Cooch Behar : Kartik Das, a professor in the Department of Political Science at Cooch Behar's Panchanan Barma University, has been dismissed over alleged irregularities in his appointment. The decision was taken at a meeting of the university's executive committee, Registrar Madhabchandra Adhikari confirmed on Friday.

The registrar said that an official letter communicating the decision would be sent to Das at his residential address as well as through email. The dismissal follows allegations concerning the validity of the caste certificate submitted by Das at the time of his appointment.

Panchanan Barma University has previously faced controversy over alleged irregularities in appointments. In 2018, Das was appointed to the post of professor in the Department of Political Science against a position reserved for candidates belonging to the Scheduled Caste category. However, questions were subsequently raised over the authenticity and validity of his caste certificate.

Several organisations, including the Bharatiya Janata Party's Scheduled Caste Morcha, had raised objections to his appointment and demanded an investigation into the matter. The controversy intensified as questions emerged over the procedure followed in issuing the caste certificate that enabled him to secure the reserved position.



Following an inquiry, Cooch Behar Sadar Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) Govind Nandi cancelled Das's caste certificate. The investigation reportedly found that the procedure adopted for issuing the certificate had not been in accordance with the prescribed rules and regulations.

The cancellation of the certificate subsequently prompted the university administration to initiate action against the professor. The university had issued a show-cause notice to Das, seeking an explanation regarding the allegations and the circumstances surrounding his appointment.According to sources, the university authorities were not satisfied with the response submitted by Das to the notice.

IIT Kharagpur Hosts Youth Dialogue on Viksit Bharat 2047

■ SPNN

Kharagpur : A discussion on India's development journey and the vision of transforming the country into a developed nation by 2047 was held at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur on Friday, with the active participation of young people and



Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders.

West Midnapore district BJP president Somen Tiwari attended the 'Viksit Bharat-2047 Yuva Samvad' programme organised at the Kalidas Auditorium (Takshashila) on the IIT Kharagpur campus. The programme began at 10 am and was attended by several prominent leaders and office-bearers of the organisation.Among those present were West Bengal BJP Yuva Morcha president Amit Samanta and state secretary Sonali Murmu Soren, along with other senior organisational representatives.

The dialogue focused on the goal of making India a developed nation by 2047, with particular emphasis on the participation and contribution of young people. Discussions covered several key areas, including economic growth, social development, education, skill enhancement, employment opportunities, innovation and the role of youth in nation-building.

The primary objective of the programme was to connect young people with the country's long-term development vision and provide them with a platform to express their ideas, opinions and suggestions regarding India's future. The organisers emphasised the importance of involving the younger generation in discussions about the country's development priorities and the challenges that lie ahead.

The year 2047 will mark 100 years of India's Independence. The vision of transforming the country into a developed nation by this historic milestone is known as 'Viksit Bharat-2047'. The initiative envisages comprehensive national progress, combining economic advancement with social development, environmental sustainability and effective governance.

The discussions highlighted that achieving this ambitious objective would require collective efforts across different sectors, with young people playing a central role in driving change. Their contribution is considered essential not only for strengthening the economy but also for promoting innovation, improving public services and addressing emerging social and developmental challenges.

Two Arrested with Over 1 Kg of Brown Sugar in Dalkhola

■ SPNN

Dalkhola : In a major crackdown on drug trafficking in North Bengal ahead of the Diwali festivities, Dalkhola police arrested two alleged smugglers from Malda and seized 1.106 kg of brown sugar during an operation early Friday morning.

The arrested accused have been identified as Nizamul Momin and Jinatun Ferdous, both residents of the Kaliachak police station area in Malda district. Police also seized a Scorpio vehicle allegedly used for transporting the narcotics, along with several mobile phones.

According to police sources, officers received information early Friday that a vehicle was being used to transport a large consignment of narcotic substances. Acting on the tip-off, police immediately launched an operation and established a blockade in the Bastadangi area along National Highway 27.

A thorough vehicle-checking operation was initiated to intercept the suspected consignment. During the drive, police personnel stopped a suspicious Scorpio and conducted a detailed search of the vehicle.



The search led to the recovery of approximately 1.106 kg of brown sugar packed in 11 separate packets. Police subsequently arrested the two occupants of the vehicle on suspicion of their involvement in drug trafficking.

Preliminary investigations suggest that the consignment was being transported for delivery. Police are now investigating the intended destination of the narcotics and whether the arrested individuals were part of a larger drug trafficking network operating in the region.

The operation was led by Dalkhola Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Chaitanya Khemani and Inspector-in-Charge Shankha Chatterjee. The police team acted on specific intelligence inputs and intercepted the vehicle before the alleged consignment could reach its destination.

The seizure is being viewed as a significant success for the police amid intensified efforts to prevent the movement of illegal narcotics during the festive season. With Diwali approaching, law enforcement agencies have stepped up vigilance against drug trafficking and other illegal activities across North Bengal.

Police are completing the necessary formalities to produce the arrested accused before the Raiganj Special Court.

Drone Surveillance Uncovers Illegal Cannabis Cultivation in 50 Homes



■ SPNN

Alipurduar : In a major crackdown on narcotics, Falakata police have turned to modern technology to detect illegal cannabis cultivation in residential premises. Using drone cameras, police identified cannabis plants being secretly grown in the courtyards of several houses and subsequently raided around 50 homes, cutting down and burning the plants on the spot.

The special operation, conducted on Friday, created a stir across the area. According to Falakata police station sources, the drive was launched on the instructions of the Alipurduar district Superintendent of Police as part of an ongoing campaign to monitor and curb illegal narcotics-related activities.

As part of the operation, several police teams equipped with drone cameras were deployed across different areas of Falakata block. The operation covered Mayradanga, Shalkumar, Devgaon, Jateshwar, Guabarnagar and Falakata-II gram panchayat areas.

During aerial surveillance, drone cameras captured images of cannabis plants growing in the courtyards of several residential properties. After identifying the locations, police teams visited the respective houses and took action against the illegal cultivation.

The operation was also led by Falakata police station Inspector-in-Charge Tamal Das. Police personnel systematically inspected the identified premises and removed the cannabis plants found growing there.

According to police sources, an average of eight to ten houses in each gram panchayat area were found to have cannabis plants growing in their courtyards. Across all the locations covered during the drive, plants were removed from approximately 50 houses.

The seized plants were cut down and destroyed by burning them at the respective locations. Police clarified that no instances of cannabis cultivation in open fields were detected during the operation. The illegal cultivation was found primarily within residential premises.Following the drive, police issued stern warnings to the owners of the houses where cannabis plants had been found. They were cautioned against engaging in such activities in the future and informed about the legal consequences of cultivating prohibited narcotic plants.

Industrial Hopes Return to Singur



■ Debasis Ghosh

Hooghly: Hopes of industrial development have revived in Singur after Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari announced preliminary discussions with Ashok Leyland.

Singur was at the centre of the Tata Nano controversy. After Tata withdrew in 2008, the land was returned to farmers in 2011, but much of it has remained neither cultivated nor industrialised.

Local residents welcomed the announcement. Shaktipada Mukhopadhyay, who had given land for the Tata project, said, "Our sons and daughters will get jobs. There can be no better news than this."

Sharecropper Haradhan Bag said neither industry nor proper cultivation had come up. Former land movement activist Mahadev Das said cultivable land should be farmed, while barren land should be used for industry.

People of Singur now hope the announcement will turn into reality and bring jobs for local youth.

Administration Tightens Vigil on Adulterated Oil Trade

■ Debasis Ghosh

Hooghly: The Hooghly district administration has launched a special drive against the sale of adulterated edible oil, substandard food products and violations of food safety norms. Addressing a press conference at the Sarva Shiksha Mission conference hall on Friday, District Magistrate Khurshid Ali Qadri, ADM (General) Vivek Pankaj and Food Safety Officer Biswajit Manna said that inspections had been conducted at 52 units across four zones. A total of 56 food samples were collected and closure notices were issued to 15 establishments.

During the drive, 505 kg of food products were destroyed, while approximately 420 kg of edible oil stored in 28 tins was seized. The estimated market value of the seized oil is Rs. 71,400.

According to the District Magistrate, complaints have been received against certain oil mills in Arambagh, Singur, Chandannagar and Chinsurah for allegedly manufacturing and selling substandard oil. There are allegations that rice bran oil or palm oil is being mixed with mustard oil and sold as pure mustard oil.

Food Safety Officer Biswajit Manna said that instances of locally produced or adulterated oil being sold in tins bearing the labels of reputed brands had also come to light. If the allegations are established through laboratory tests, the offenders could face penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment.

15 Establishments Served Closure Notices



The District Magistrate also cautioned consumers against repeatedly using the same cooking oil for frying, warning that the practice could increase the long-term risk of heart disease, kidney-related complications and cancer.

Meanwhile, under the VB-G RAM G scheme, Hooghly has generated 8,26,496 person-days of employment, securing the third position in West Bengal. The district has achieved 46 per cent of its target, while Rs. 2.79 crore in wages has been forwarded to the treasury. Over the next three months, the administration plans to prioritise infrastructure projects involving schools, health centres, boundary walls, drainage systems and flood control measures.

Regarding Kali Puja celebrations, the District Magistrate announced that green firecrackers would be permitted only between 6 am and 7 am and from 8 pm to 10 pm on November 7 and 8. Bursting firecrackers will be strictly prohibited within 300 metres of hospitals, nursing homes and notified silence zones.

The administration and police have been instructed to take necessary action against anyone violating the prescribed guidelines.

On India and the Saudi-Houthi Conflict

The killing of an Indian national in a Houthi attack on Saudi Arabia's Dammam airport is a grim reminder of the dangers the kingdom's Indian community faces as the conflict between Riyadh and Yemen's Shia militants escalates. Since the fighting between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis resumed in July, at least two Indians have been killed and 14 others wounded. On Thursday, the Houthis claimed that a yacht with 14 Indians was targeted by Saudi forces near Yemen's Zuqar island in the Red Sea and that rescue operations were under way. As the Houthis, who control parts of Northern Yemen and its entire Red Sea coast, step up attacks on Saudi infrastructure, including oil facilities and airports, Indians, who are the kingdom's largest expat community, risk getting caught in the crossfire. With flights disrupted, thousands of Indian pilgrims are stranded. India has condemned Houthi attacks, saying that it "stands in solidarity" with Saudi Arabia. With no end in sight to the fighting and a high possibility of Israel and the U.S. resuming their Iran strikes, further violence and instability in West Asia could make India's choices increasingly difficult.

The Saudi-Houthi conflict dates back to the Houthi takeover of Sana'a, Yemen's capital, in 2014. A year later, Saudi Arabia began bombing Yemen to drive the Houthis out. But years of Saudi bombing of one of the poorest Arab countries have proved counterproductive; the Houthis consolidated support among the tribes of northern Yemen and built a powerful territorial army and naval force. The Saudi-Houthi ceasefire of 2022 collapsed in July 2026 after Saudi Arabia recklessly bombed Sana'a airport, to prevent an Iranian plane with a Houthi delegation from landing. The Houthis subsequently began attacking Saudi Arabia's critical infrastructure, and launched a ground offensive against the Saudi-backed forces in Yemen. The Houthi attacks pose the biggest security challenge to Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and the main architect of the war on Yemen, in decades. Massive Saudi air strikes have neither defeated the Houthis nor restored the kingdom's deterrence. With its wealth, natural resources, infrastructure and tenuous palace politics, the kingdom remains exposed to Houthi missile and drone attacks, with few good options for a way out. India must prepare a contingency plan for worst-case scenarios. Its immediate priority should be to evacuate stranded Indian pilgrims. It should also articulate a stronger position for stability and work with Arab countries and Tehran to push for a diplomatic settlement to the Iran crisis. For peace to prevail in the Persian Gulf, the guns directed at Iran must first fall silent.

Erupting Europe: Conflicts Of Ideology, Education, Economic And Energy Flaws

LT GEN DEVENDRA PANDEY

Europe's street unrest is not a sudden breakdown of order. It is a warning that unresolved contradictions in education, migration, economic policy, energy security and political ideology are converging.

The eruption was decades in the making.

Europe's recurring street protests reflect more than immediate grievances over wages, education or public services. They raise a deeper question: how has a continent with advanced infrastructure, universities and welfare systems reached a point where many young people doubt their future?

The pressures differ. France grapples with inequality and secularism; Germany with industrial, energy and integration challenges; Sweden with residential segregation and parallel social structures; and the United Kingdom with immigration, identity and religious practices within civil law. These are not identical crises, but different expressions of vulnerabilities accumulated through political choices, economic restructuring and postponed correction.

Education should provide knowledge, practical skills, critical judgement and the ability to earn a livelihood, but in Europe, qualifications have failed to lead to productive employment and thus frustration. The focus of education has been on teaching arts or humanities and not on technology, vocational competence and adapting to a changing economy. Teacher shortages and mismatches between qualifications and jobs add to the problem.

Schools should encourage debate while teaching the consequences of political choices and the responsibilities accompanying rights. However, the education has become a basis of ideological conformity rather than inquiry. Young people can be misdirected, particularly when teachers present contested opinions as unquestionable truths. As ideological moorings are being established at a very young age when the brain has not evolved to discriminate, the orientation, confusion and polarisation is bound to happen. Classrooms in schools have become a debate about gender choice, rights of all types, Gaza and Palestine, a playground of religious and ideological assertions, the conflicts are bound to happen.



Young Europeans are ambitious and digitally connected. They inherited promises of prosperity, inclusion and freedom, yet now face insecure work, unaffordable housing and limited mobility and thus legitimate dissatisfaction has also added fuel to fire.

European politics has rightly emphasised inclusion, equality and minority protection. Problems arise when governments fail to reconcile rights with responsibilities or avoid discussing limits imposed by economic capacity and social cohesion. This is a lesson for India's political and education systems too.

With rise and control of the Left Liberals in the policy implementation for decades, and resulting negative influences on the European cultural values and ethos, the conservative and right-wing political parties are on rise in most of the countries stressing national identity, border control, safety and cultural continuity. This is leading to accentuating a fear of possible marginalisation in migrants, and people of different religious and ideological orientations. Dismissing migration concerns as intolerance or discrimination concerns as ideological activism has deepened polarisation and conflict on streets.

Post-war Europe recruited workers for economic expansion. Ageing populations, labour shortages, conflicts and humanitarian crises sustained migration pressures; the 2015 refugee crisis brought them into sharp focus. Angela Merkel's government defended humanitarian assistance while facing questions about integration and the return of those without grounds to remain. There were also confirmations of electoral reasons as well.

Why 'Gloomination', Bad Planning And Rain Led To The Chorebagan Stampede

RESHMI DASGUPTA

Practically every tragedy happens only because something or someone fails to do what they are meant to. The stampede that killed 19 people and injured 25 in North Kolkata at the most joyous time of the year for Bengalis, reiterated this truism. Huge crowds are inevitable during Durga Puja in Kolkata. So are sudden thunderstorms. Many of the oldest pujas are also held in endemically cramped spaces. Social media driving footfalls merely add to these worry factors.

Narrow access-which impedes crowd control as well as entry of emergency vehicles-inadequate exits for visitors, cramped internal passages, dark interiors, dim lighting and poorly trained volunteers are a recipe for disaster. None of these factors are new, though, so why did the stampede happen at Chorebagan during Durga Puja 2026? Fingers are now pointed in many directions, but the truth is, all of them as well as rainy weather combined to lead to this terrible tragedy.





Prima facie, the sudden cloudburst sent the incoming crowd surging towards the pandal entrance to escape from the rain. At the same time, those inside were also reluctant to exit at first as they did not want to get drenched either. That led to a push from the back which had a ripple effect around the spiral pathway inside, and toppled those in front. The passage was so narrow that there was no way to avoid or resist the momentum. Darkness only increased the public panic.

Worryingly, none of this is specific to Chorebagan's locale and circumstances. Well over 3,000 Durga Pujas are annually held in the city, and many of the public or sarbojanin/ barowari ones are held in very small spaces. In the race to attract footfalls-to make it worth their advertisers' while or to gain brownie points from influencers, or for some other reason-far too many organisers have also opted for spectacular, "thematic" décor many of which feature dimly-lit interiors.

Dim lighting, cavernous interiors and rusted metal props have been a distressing trend in Kolkata's puja pandals ever since "art" has been given precedence over the deity. Celebration of a certain artist's signature dim, quasi-industrial style has led to many of the most visited pandals opting for similar designs, with lights being used less for illumination and more for what may be called "gloomination".

Ma Durga herself becoming an element of a dramatic set visualised by celebrity artists, not the centre of reverential attention, has been repeatedly hailed in recent years as the apogee of Bengali creativity, with social messages, "innovative" and "different" concepts and materials as clinching factors. Often the artists' "vision" of Ma Durga is so removed from the form that can be worshipped as per scriptural norms, actual pujas are conducted on the side with a "ghot" (vessel).

Amid this skewed sense of priorities, it is not surprising that public safety has also become secondary to the ability to attract vast crowds to marvel at the artists' handiwork and praise the organisers rather than just reverentially admire the Goddess. As wowing the public has become a primary goal, the question arises why designs of these pandals entail people moving through such narrow, confined spaces, especially when puja crowds are known to be huge and restive.

Narrow access routes and dark, dramatic pandals are not a recent development in Kolkata. Although the new Chorebagan puja committee has become the target of much public and political opprobrium now, it is not clear yet whether the dimly-lit design of the puja pandal-given the constricted access routes as well as entry and exit protocols-were innovations that were decided and introduced this year by the new team or merely a continuation of the previous "public art" focus.

It was providential, however, that nothing untoward happened in puja pandals in previous decades given the lax attitude towards safety that seem to have become the norm in Kolkata. However, it must be emphasized that dark interiors are only a trend in "public" Durga Pujos; those celebrated in homes still have brightly lit surroundings and classical depictions of Her with enough place for priests to conduct religious rites and for people to perform the rituals of worship.

The accusations that there were no police or other security and safety staff around will be probed thoroughly and any dereliction of duty will surely be punished. The shortcomings of the puja organisers will also be addressed. But was there due diligence by civic authorities, the police and fire department on pandal designs and contingency plans for fire, flood, rain, earthquake, power failure and other adverse eventualities? If yes, why were preventive measures not taken?

Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari has announced all necessary steps to support the bereaved and injured, and has set up an inquiry panel to find out what caused this tragedy. But going forward, there must be clear-cut guidelines for Durga Puja with non-negotiable parameters for public safety including proper access with plenty of alternate exits inside pandals and on approach routes, brightly-lit, broad walkways inside pandals and trained staff inside to handle sudden crises.

Sonia Gandhi's 'Unkindest Cut': An Untold Story From 1986

MANOJ RAGHUVANSHI

Exactly 40 years ago, the date October 22, 1986, triggered a downslide in Rajiv Gandhi's prime ministerial career. This day marked two things. The first, visible. The second, invisible. Both are equally significant.

The first, meaning the visible part, was that Rajiv Gandhi reshuffled his council of ministers and dropped the most powerful man, Arun Nehru. For most people, it was a shock, since Arun Nehru was reputed to be the most influential person after Rajiv Gandhi. After this date, Rajiv Gandhi kept on losing one key man after another, leading to his electoral drubbing in the next elections.

Now, the second, meaning the invisible part. Sonia Gandhi had begun to pull the strings of power from behind the scenes ever since Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister on the 31st of October, 1984, in the immediate aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination. But the first major casualty of Sonia's wrath happened almost two years later, with the axing of Rajiv Gandhi's most trusted lieutenant, Arun Nehru.

The next year, 1987, saw the resignations of Rajiv's Defence Minister, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, and Minister of State for Defence, Arun Singh. Both resigned due to differences with Rajiv on defence deals. These resignations had a cascading effect - an explosive political campaign that Rajiv could not survive. That political storm catapulted Vishvanath Pratap Singh to the top job on the 2nd of December, 1989.

The first spark of that wildfire had been the sacking of Arun Nehru on October 22, 1986. It did not come as a surprise to those who had been observing the visible events with a sharp focus.

On October 13, Rajiv Gandhi's body language had practically revealed that Arun Nehru was severely out of favour. Rajiv and Sonia were about to reach the Air Force Technical Area to leave New Delhi on a four-nation tour. Senior Congressmen, bureaucrats, and journalists had gathered at the designated hall for the customary send-off. Even before the Gandhis arrived, enough confirmatory non-verbal cues were visible, announcing that insiders knew that Arun Nehru was now persona non grata. Whenever Arun Nehru turned towards a PMO insider, the insider turned away sharply. The torque was considerable.

Sharjeel Imam's Rants To France Riots, How 'Liberalism' Crashes On Islam's Shores

ABHIJIT MAJUMDER

The mere mention of Hindu Rashtra or Bharat as a natural homeland for Hindus rattles them. Israel's robust military response to Hamas's October 7 massacres makes them spill the word "genocide" like diarrhoea even though thousands on both sides have been killed.

But when jailed Sharjeel Imam rejects India's constitutional democracy, wants to replace it with an Islamic state, and calls liberals' darling Nehru's brand of secularism a trap, words of chastisement fail them. When young West Asian or African men wearing the keffiyeh and waving Palestinian flags burn down historic town towers and set city after city on fire, the self-proclaimed "liberals" look the other way.

These are only current instances. History is replete with liberal hypocrisy when it comes to Islam.

In the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Leftist and 'liberal' Iranian intellectuals enthusiastically allied with Ayatollah Khomeini to overthrow the Shah, only to be preyed upon - systematically jailed, executed, exiled - by the Islamic Republic within months of snatching power.

And how did they react to the Charlie Hebdo terror attacks and Samuel Paty murders in France? Western 'liberal' media including The New York Times and The Guardian, instead of defending free expression, ran op-eds questioning French secularism or laïcité and blaming the French state for "provoking" the ultra-religious outburst.

'Liberal' politicians, local councils, law-enforcement, and intelligentsia in the UK sat in denial of the Pakistani-Islamic rape gang scandal for over two decades while thousands of often-underaged white girls were being brutalised in cities like Rotherham and Rochdale. They would rather destroy the lives and dignity of the victims than expose the perpetrators to "Islamophobia".

This persistent silence by Indian and Western liberals regarding radical Islamist manifestos and civil unrest in Europe reveals a crippling crisis within modern liberalism. It is not a random blind spot. It exposes a deep ideological paralysis which would have appalled the founding fathers of modern Western liberalism like John Stuart Mill, John Locke, Henry David Thoreau, or Benjamin Constant.

When forced to choose between defending universal liberal principles of individual rights, secularism, the rule of law,



and free expression and upholding Muslim identity politics, today's Leftists masquerading as liberals unerringly surrender to the latter. Take the case of Sharjeel Imam. In a prison interview, he fantasises about a pre-1947, Allama Iqbal-inspired, Muslim League-style communal power grab in India. He says:

"The secular framework considers us all 'Indians' by default, the end product of all education and political development is to feel that we are only 'Indian' and everything else is secondary. Here, invoking any other identity for rights is regressive, or at least unnecessary, we are all already one, all brothers. Needless to say, it is a completely ahistoric vision, devoid of reality and designed specifically to oppress minorities and other marginalised groups."

Instead of being outraged, some liberal commentators are trying to gaslight the nation's thinking class into seeing it through the lens of human rights, state persecution, and even more funnily, as an original philosophical musing.

The fact remains that Sharjeel Imam's utterances are a garden-variety jihadi rant with a sprinkling of important-sounding academic phrases. No amount of intellectual lipstick applied by liberals can rescue it from its crass bigotry.

The silence does not stop at Sharjeel. The urban violence in Europe, for instance, could not have come at a more inopportune time for the so-called liberals.

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US Governors salute Indian Americans on Diwali

■ AGENCY

Washington : For the first time, Governors across five US states have celebrated Diwali at official venues, recognising Indian Americans' contributions to business, public service and cultural diversity.

The ceremonies took place in Idaho, Nebraska, Montana, North Dakota and Washington. Oregon is scheduled to host a sixth celebration at its state Capitol in Salem on November 10, concluding a programme that began in mid-October.

The Indian Consulate in Seattle, in a release, described the events as the first Governor-hosted Diwali celebrations at the respective official residences and state capitols. US Senators, members of Congress, Mayors and Indian American community leaders attended.

The Consulate said it worked with community leaders to organise and co-host the ceremonies. Events also extended to city council chambers across Washington state, where Mayors presided over lamp-lighting ceremonies with council members present.

At the state Capitol rotunda in Olympia on November 4, Washington Governor Bob Ferguson highlighted the Indian American community's growth and its contribution to the state.

"We are proud to be home to one of the largest shares of Indian Americans in the country. And during the previous decade, we had the



fastest growing Indian American population in the entire country. And we have seen this community contribute so much to our state," Ferguson said.

The Olympia programme included an Indian classical dance performance. Ferguson also spoke about cultural diversity as a source of strength, linking it to Diwali's theme of light overcoming darkness.

In Idaho, Governor Brad Little hosted a celebration at the state Capitol rotunda in Boise on October 16. His remarks focused on service, civic participation and the community's economic contributions.

"Diwali reminds us of the importance of choosing kindness, pursuing knowledge, serving others and finding hope even when there's challenges," Little said.

Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen hosted a ceremony in Lincoln on October 20, urging families to keep their traditions alive. US Rep. Don Bacon also addressed the gathering and praised the Indian American community.

Montana Governor Greg Gianforte welcomed participants to the Governor's mansion in Helena on October 26. He spoke about bringing people from different cultures and backgrounds together to share food and build relationships.

Three days later, North Dakota Governor Kelly Armstrong hosted a celebration at the Governor's residence in Bismarck. Armstrong, first lady Kjersti Armstrong and the Consul General took part in the ceremonial lamp-lighting.

"We should celebrate these relationships. We should celebrate these friendships. Diversity is our strength," Armstrong said.

His remarks covered ties with India through trade, diplomacy and state-level engagement, while stressing the personal relationships behind those connections.

Across Washington state, participating cities included Auburn, Bellevue, Kirkland, Everett, Bothell, Tacoma, Spokane and Kent, according to the Consulate. Further ceremonies were scheduled in Snoqualmie, King County and Seattle, with Seattle's event set for November 10.

Pabitra Margherita meets Spanish FM, discusses bilateral ties



■ AGENCY

Madrid: Union Minister of State (MoS) for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita met Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares on the sidelines of the 30th Summit of the Ibero-American Conference in Madrid, with discussions focused on enhancing bilateral ties.

He underscored India's willingness to further strengthen ties with the wider Ibero-American community as India joined the Ibero-American Conference as an Associate Observer.

The Conference currently consists of 22 member countries - 19 from Latin America and three from Europe - Spain, Portugal and Andorra, 12 Associate Observers and 20 Consultative Observers.

In a post on X on Friday, Margherita said, "Delighted to be welcomed by Foreign Minister of Spain José Manuel Albares as India joins the Ibero-American Conference as Associate Observer. Look forward to strengthening our ties with the Ibero-American community,"O n Thursday, Margherita held a meeting with Colombia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Omar Bula Escobar on the sidelines of the summit, where the two sides discussed strengthening cooperation in trade, education, health, culture and multilateral fora.

"Pleased to interact with H.E. Mr. Omar Bula Escobar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia. The interaction focused on strengthening cooperation in trade, culture, education, health and multilateral fora," MoS Margherita wrote on X following the meeting.

He also met Bolivia's Foreign Minister Hector Francisco Huanca, with discussions centred on strengthening bilateral cooperation. The two sides also spoke about regional and global issues of mutual interest.

"Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Pabitra Margherita, had productive interactions with H.E. Mr. Omar Bula Escobar, Foreign Minister of Colombia, and H.E. Mr. Hector Francisco Huanca, Foreign Minister of Bolivia, on the sidelines of the 30th Ibero-American Summit in Madrid.

In yet another honour killing, man kills niece in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

■ AGENCY

Islamabad: A man allegedly shot dead his 18-year-old niece, injured another individual and his cousin in a honour-related incident in Oghi town of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, local media reported on Friday.

"The suspect first shot dead his niece at home and then went outside and opened fire on her alleged paramour and his cousin. We arrested him when he was fleeing," Pakistan-based daily Dawn quoted District Police Officer Mohammad Waqas Khan as saying.

Khan said police lodged two FIRs in this connection. The incident occurred presumably under the local honour-related chor custom. The body of the deceased girl was taken to the hospital for medico-legal formalities



before being handed over to the family.

In the FIR, Naveed Ahmed (22) said that he and his sister had shifted to his paternal uncle's home, Umarzada in Oghi, after their father passed away eight years ago. He said, "My uncle [Umarzada] shot and killed my sister."

Police have arrested the suspect in the case.

On October 22, a couple who got married of their own choice were killed in a passenger coach on the National Highway near the VIG Gate in Sukkur district of Pakistan's Sindh province, with the police saying the killings were committed under the pretext of honour.

The victims were reportedly heading to Karachi when they were shot dead. According to police, unidentified assailants opened fire on the couple and tried to flee, Dawn reported. After receiving information, Baiji Sharif police reached the site of the incident and arrested two suspects, Abdul Malik Samejo and Abdul Hanan Samejo, along with a repeater shotgun.

Police said that the killings were committed in the name of honour and further investigation is being conducted to determine the circumstances.

A free-will affidavit dated September 28, 2026, identified a woman named Sidra, who mentioned details regarding her previous marriage to a man named Abdul Hanan. In the document, she alleged that her former husband mistreated her and gave her a divorce through triple talaq in 2024.

New Zealand election race tightens as cost of living dominates voter concerns

■ AGENCY

Wellington: New Zealand's ruling National Party and opposition Labour Party are locked in a tight race ahead of Saturday's general election, with the cost of living, healthcare and fuel prices topping voters' concerns, according to recent surveys.

The latest poll by The Post/Freshwater Strategy, released on Friday, put Labour slightly ahead at 30.7 per cent, against National's 26.4 per cent. Support for ACT and New Zealand First, the two governing partners, stood at 9.8 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively.

Among the opposition bloc, the Green Party was at 13 per cent, the Maori Party at 2 per cent, and the Opportunity Party, seen as a potential kingmaker, had 5.1 per cent, Xinhua News Agency reported.

The poll projected a combined 59 seats in a 120-seat parliament for the ruling coalition, two short of the 61 needed to govern on its own, compared with 55 seats for Labour, the Greens and the Maori Party.

A survey of 1,008 New Zealanders aged 18 and older, released by Ipsos, showed that the cost of living and inflation remained the biggest concern for voters, with 64 per cent naming it among their top three issues, followed by healthcare at 45 per cent and fuel prices at 31 per cent. Concern over fuel costs rose sharply from seventh to third place in the latest survey.

More than 2,300 voting places are scheduled to open nationwide on election day on Saturday.

Baloch Activist Urges UN to Hold Pakistan Accountable



■ AGENCY

Geneva: Baloch National Movement (BNM) Chairman Naseem Baloch raised grave concerns over systematic repression and human rights abuses by Pakistani authorities in Balochistan, during his meeting with members of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in Geneva urging the Committee to hold Pakistan accountable for failing to meet its international obligations.

Naseem also called on the UN to establish a dedicated mechanism to investigate and monitor human rights violations in the region. He also sought a formal platform for the Baloch people to present their concerns directly before the international body. "Describing enforced disappearances and collective punishment in detail, he said thousands of Baloch families have lived through this ordeal.

Japanese lawmakers participate in Diwali celebrations hosted by Indian Embassy

■ AGENCY

Tokyo: Japanese Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Hisayuki Fujii, Justice Minister Takashi Yamashita and India's Ambassador to Japan Nagma Mallick inaugurated a Diwali celebrations event hosted by the Indian Embassy in Tokyo which witnessed performances of Indian classical music, dance and a tapestry of Indian food, bringing the best of India to our friends in Japan.

In a post on X, the Indian Embassy in Japan stated, "Celebrating Diwali with friends. Embassy was pleased to host representatives of Govt of Japan, Parliamentarians and friends of India for a wonderful evening celebrating the



Festival of Lights."

"Ambassador Mallick, along with Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Hisayuki Fujii and Justice Minister Takashi Yamashita inaugurated the celebrations. The evening witnessed captivating performances of Indian classical music and dance and a tapestry of Indian food, bringing the best of India to our friends in Japan," it added.

On Thursday, the US Embassy in India also celebrated Diwali and extended wishes to the people celebrating the festival of lights.

"Great to celebrate Diwali at our Embassy in New Delhi. Wishing all who are observing the holiday a very Happy Diwali!," US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor posted on X.

The United States provides a prominent example of Diwali receiving recognition at the highest levels of government. The festival is observed by Hindu, Jain and Sikh communities, as well as some Buddhist communities.

At the municipal level, New York City began observing Diwali as a holiday for public schools in 2023, with the first school closure taking place in 2024.

New York, New Jersey and the San Francisco Bay Area have substantial Indian-origin populations and host temple celebrations, cultural performances and community gatherings.

India, Myanmar Join Exercise Rahat Mitra

■ AGENCY

Naypyidaw: The integrated India-Myanmar Joint Exercise for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Exercise Rahat Mitra, is being conducted at Chennai.

The two nations are preparing and working together to enhance interoperability in disaster response to save lives and restore hope for the affected people, according to the statement released by the Indian Embassy in Myanmar.

"Standing with Myanmar in disaster response and relief. Preparing together and working together to enhance interoperability in disaster response, for saving lives, and restoring hope, of the affected people. Exercise Rahat Mitra, the integrated India-Myanmar Joint Exercise for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief is underway at Chennai from 5-7 November 2026. Exercise Rahat Mitra. MAHASAGAR - Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions," the Indian Embassy in Myanmar posted on X.

The Indian Army showcased HADR capabilities during the Exercise Rahat Mitra. Army personnel, alongside the Indian Navy and Indian Air Force, demonstrated the capabilities of Flood Relief Columns.

"Together in Disaster Response - Saving Lives & Restoring Hope. Indian Army showcased its Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief HADR capabilities during Exercise Rahat Mitra, an India-Myanmar jt exercise in Chennai, Public Relations Officer, Directorate of Public Relations, Ministry of Defence, Chennai posted on X."During India-Myanmar Jt HADR Exercise Rahat Mitra in Chennai, Army personnel alongside #IndianNavy &amp.

Global rights groups condemn crackdown on protesting garment workers in Bangladesh

■ AGENCY

New York: Several leading international human rights organisations strongly condemned the violence against garment workers in Bangladesh, who have been protesting for fair wages and basic labour rights.

The condemnation came amid escalating unrest in the garment industry, with several people, including law enforcement personnel, injured and more than 200 factories in Savar and Ashulia forced to declare holidays as protests by garment workers turned violent.

The protests reportedly spread across several industrial areas in the country over the past few days, with workers demanding a minimum monthly wage of Tk 30,000.

Expressing grave concern, the US-based advocacy group Human Rights Watch (HRW) said that Bangladesh police had used batons and tear gas to disperse thousands of garment workers protesting for higher wages.

It also flagged reports of violence by thugs allegedly linked to factory owners and political parties, arson, vandalism of factories and attacks on police, highlighting the escalating violence surrounding the workers' agitation.

"Consistent with international standards, Bangladesh authorities should ensure that



police use force only when necessary and proportionate, and that those responsible for violence are held accountable," the HRW stated.

Reports suggest that a garment worker, Toufiq Hossain, who was critically injured during a clash amid protests in Gazipur district's Joydebpur, died while undergoing treatment at a hospital in Dhaka on November 3.

Speaking to HRW, a co-worker of Toufiq said: "We were returning to the factory (after lunch) when Toufiq got caught between protesting workers and men hired to tackle the protest by another garment factory. When I looked back, I saw Toufiq lying on the ground. The hired men had beaten him brutally."

The rights body alleged that instead of addressing legitimate demands for living wages, Bangladeshi authorities are blaming the political opposition for instigating protests.

It cited Dhaka police, who said they had arrested 33 supporters of the Awami League on November 3, for sabotage. However, several others alleged that members of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) youth wing had targeted protesting workers.

Meanwhile, Justice Makers Bangladesh in France (JMBF) sharply criticised the recent brutal repression of protesting garment workers in the South Asian nation.

The rights body raised grave concern over the reported killing of a garment worker, widespread police violence, arbitrary arrests, attacks allegedly carried out by members of the BNP, and the mass filing of criminal cases against thousands of people.

Citing Bangladeshi media and information obtained from its sources, the JMBF said that at least one garment worker has been killed.

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India's Dhanteras business hits record Rs 1.25 lakh crore: CAIT

■ SP BUREAU



New Delhi : Dhanteras generated an estimated Rs 1.25 lakh crore in business across India, setting a new record for the country's retail sector as consumers flocked to markets to purchase gold, silver, automobiles, electronics, utensils and other auspicious items ahead of Diwali, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said on Friday.

The traders' body said the festive buying momentum reflected strong consumer confidence, rising purchasing power and growing preference for purchases from traditional markets and domestic brands.

CAIT Secretary General and Chandni Chowk MP Praveen Khandelwal said Dhanteras once again demonstrated the strength of India's retail economy, with heavy footfall reported across jewellery markets, automobile showrooms, electronics hubs and neighbourhood stores.

Apart from that, gold and silver sales alone crossed Rs 66,000 crore, accounting for nearly 53 per cent of total Dhanteras trade, as per estimates of the All India Jewellers and Goldsmith Federation (AIJGF).

Delhi's bullion market is estimated to have contributed over Rs 10,000 crore in business.

Despite record-high precious metal prices, demand remained robust, particularly for lightweight jewellery, traditional ornaments, silver coins and investment-led purchases.

Traders reported strong interest in 14-carat and 18-carat gold jewellery along with silver articles considered auspicious during the festival.

Apart from bullion, consumers spent heavily on automobiles, smartphones, laptops, televisions, home appliances, electrical goods, kitchenware and religious items, helping drive broad-based festive demand.

Khandelwal said the strong performance was supported by rising preference for Indian-made products and increased consumer support for local manufacturers, artisans, traders and MSMEs. The record Dhanteras sales come amid CAIT's earlier estimate that business during the Navratri-to-Diwali festive period could exceed Rs 7 lakh crore, an increase of 15-18 per cent over last year's festive trade of about Rs 6.05 lakh crore.

Govt approves 12 new electronics manufacturing projects worth over Rs 7,500 crore under ECMS

■ AGENCY

New Delhi : The Centre has approved 12 new applications with proposed investments exceeding Rs 7,500 crore under the Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS), expanding support for domestic electronics manufacturing and enhancing India's component ecosystem, IT Secretary S Krishnan said on Friday.

The latest approvals include projects related not only to electronic components but also to materials and capital goods, broadening the scope of the scheme across key segments of the electronics value chain. The fresh round of clearances adds momentum to the government's efforts to build a robust domestic ecosystem for electronics manufacturing and reduce reliance on imported components. Policymakers are increasingly focusing on strengthening upstream segments, including raw materials and manufacturing equipment, alongside component production, to deepen local value addition. The ECMS forms part of India's wider push to establish itself as a global electronics manufacturing hub by encouraging investments across the supply chain and improving self-reliance in critical inputs.



Separately, the government on Friday launched the Semicon 2.0 web application portal under the Semicon India Programme. Meanwhile, earlier this year, an official fact-sheet said India is targeting a $500 billion domestic electronics manufacturing ecosystem and $150 billion in electronics exports by 2030.

Diwali boom: Markets log longest winning streak in 3 years, Nifty ends above 25,000

■ SPNN

Mumbai : Indian equity benchmarks extended their winning streak to seven straight trading sessions on Friday, marking the first such run in three years, as heavy buying in banking heavyweights and select earnings-driven stocks lifted market sentiment. The Sensex jumped 1,718.01 points, or 2.17 per cent, to close at 81,028.02, while the Nifty



advanced 493.75 points, or 2.01 per cent, to settle at 25,030.35.

The rally helped the Nifty reclaim the psychologically important 25,000 level for the first time since February 27, 2026, while also recording its strongest closing level in nine months. Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that the index is now approaching an immediate resistance zone of 25,150-25,200.

"A decisive and sustained move above this range could reinforce the bullish momentum and open the door for further upside," analysts stated.

"On the downside, 24,800 is expected to provide immediate support. The index's ability to sustain above this level will be crucial in maintaining the current upward trajectory, while a decisive breach could trigger near-term profit-booking," market watchers noted.

Market participants attributed the gains to continued strength in banking and financial services stocks and the ongoing unwinding of the global artificial intelligence trade, which has prompted investors to rotate into other sectors.

Among the Nifty constituents, Mahindra & Mahindra, ICICI Bank and HDFC Life Insurance Company emerged as the top gainers, supporting the benchmark's sharp advance.

Tesla To wind down cybertruck production at Texas gigafactory to boost cybercab output: Musk

■ AGENCY

New Delhi : Tesla will begin scaling back Cybertruck production at its Texas Gigafactory around the middle of 2027 to make room for expanded manufacturing of its autonomous Cybercab vehicle, CEO Elon Musk said.

Musk said Tesla would wind down Cybertruck production at Gigafactory Texas around the middle of next year to accommodate increased Cybercab manufacturing capacity. The move signals the electric vehicle maker's accelerating push into autonomous transportation and its long-term robotaxi ambitions.



However, Musk did not specify whether Cybertruck production would be transferred to another facility or phased out altogether, leaving uncertainty over the future of the vehicle's manufacturing operations.

The Cybertruck, launched in 2023, was initially positioned as a disruptive entrant in the electric pick-up segment and a challenger to traditional truck makers such as Ford.

The vehicle generated significant attention due to its unconventional design and futuristic features.

Despite the strong initial interest, the Cybertruck has faced a series of hurdles, including recalls, quality-control concerns and multiple price adjustments.

These challenges, coupled with softer consumer demand, have weighed on the vehicle's commercial performance and limited its ability to sustain early momentum.

Tesla has repeatedly revised the Cybertruck's pricing in an effort to stimulate demand amid intensifying competition in the electric vehicle market.

At the same time, the company is increasingly prioritising the Cybercab, a fully autonomous vehicle envisioned as the backbone of Tesla's future robotaxi network. By allocating more factory capacity to Cybercab production, Tesla aims to strengthen its position in the rapidly evolving autonomous vehicle industry and expand its presence in self-driving transportation services. Meanwhile, last month, Tesla India said it launched a new software update for Model Y and Model Y L vehicles that adds a range of Halloween-themed features.

3M India Q2 profit falls 17.2 pc to Rs 158 crore

■ SP BUREAU

New Delhi : 3M India Limited on Friday reported a 17.2 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 158 crore for the quarter ended September 30, 2026, compared to Rs 191 crore in the year-ago period. The company's sales and other operating income rose 14.7 per cent to Rs 1,452 crore in Q2 FY27, against Rs 1,266 crore in Q2 FY26.



On a sequential basis, sales rose 2.1 per cent from Rs 1,423 crore in Q1 FY27, while PAT fell 32 per cent from Rs 233 crore. EBITDA fell 12.7 per cent to Rs 234 crore, from Rs 268 crore in the corresponding quarter last year, while profit before tax (PBT) declined 15.3 per cent to Rs 212 crore, from Rs 251 crore.

Among segments, Transportation & Electronics grew 23.4 per cent, Consumer by 19.5 per cent, Safety & Industrial by 11.8 per cent and Healthcare by 4.1 per cent.

Commenting on the results, Managing Director Aseem Joshi said the company delivered broad-based growth driven by continued focus on commercial and innovation excellence. The company also announced the resignation of Non-Executive Director Kong Sau Wai Elizabeth from its Board, effective from the close of business hours on Friday, as she will be moving on to another professional opportunity outside the 3M Group. "I am writing to inform you of my decision to resign from the position of Non-Executive Director of 3M India Limited from the close of India business hours on November 6, 2026, as I will soon be moving on to another professional opportunity outside the 3M Group," she wrote. Consequently, she will also step down from all Committees of the Board of which she is a member.

Govt launches 20 critical mineral blocks, unveils ANVESH and EKAM portals

■ SPNN

New Delhi : The fourth conference of mining ministers saw launch of the 9th tranche of auctions for critical and strategic mineral blocks, offering 20 mineral blocks across eight states, and unveiling of two digital platforms aimed at strengthening data-driven governance, an official statement said on Friday.

The event also saw the launch of a third tranche of exploration licence auctions, comprising 11 exploration blocks across 6 states, unlocking the country's untapped mineral potential, the statement from the Ministry of Mines said. The critical and strategic mineral block auction covered strategically important minerals such as rare earth elements, graphite and vanadium.



The dignitaries also launched ANVESH and EKAM, two digital portals developed by the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM), to strengthen informed decision-making. ANVESH (Analytics and Navigation for Valuation, Evaluation and Strategic Headway in Mining) will facilitate access to and analysis of important mining-related data, including mineral production, despatch, sale quantities, average sale prices and imports and exports. These initiatives mark important steps towards strengthening India's mineral security and modernising the mining ecosystem.

Minister of State for Coal and Mines Satish Chandra Dubey highlighted the importance of effective coordination between the Centre and states, strengthening exploration activities and addressing challenges in the mining sector. Chief Minister of Goa, Dr. Pramod Sawant, highlighted the importance of the mining sector in Goa's economic development and emphasised sustainable mining practices, responsible resource utilisation and cooperation between the Centre and States. Union Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy underscored the strategic importance of the mining and coal sectors in achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047. He emphasised strengthening domestic mineral production, accelerating exploration, promoting processing, refining and recycling of critical minerals, adopting modern technologies and enhancing Centre-State cooperation.

Indian interest rates likely to move higher in short-medium term: Report

■ AGENCY

New Delhi : Indian interest rates are likely to continue moving higher over the short-medium term despite a recent pullback in yields following US midterm election results and softer global market conditions, a report said on Friday.

The report from Axis Bank said developments such as potentially lower oil prices, reduced funding demand linked to artificial intelligence investments and lower US Treasury yields have weakened some of the near-term catalysts that had been pushing Indian rates higher. However, longer-term structural factors remain firmly in place.



"India yields peak in October, before AI selloff and US midterms India rates were boosted in the first three weeks of October with global benchmarks and crude oil added to by signs of broadening and generalising of India inflation and open market operations sales," the report said.

Slow-moving fundamental drivers remain in place in terms of convergence of India rates with global benchmarks and MIFOR, as well as risks on the inflation side, it said, mentioning reasons for end in fiscal consolidation with the pay commission in the coming year.

Other reasons include slowing deposit growth following the impact of FCNR inflows and limited foreign portfolio investor interest in Indian debt.

zEven though the configuration of the domestic economy might call for a lower nominal neutral rate, rational expectations on the INR and tight global financial markets are imposing much higher levels," the report added.

It forecasted that global conditions are unlikely to change markedly and the direction of travel on Indian rates to be higher, towards 8 per cent levels that have not been seen in years. However, it maintained that the process will be slow going forward.

"We continue to expect the repo rate to be raised to at least 6 per cent neutral. This follows from normalisation of inflation from very low levels, and is not so much a hike as a normalisation cycle," the report said.

The 25-Minute Formula: How Brief Daily Practice Changes Everything



For Class 11th and 12th students, time is the scarcest resource. Between board exam preparation, coaching classes, and assignments, the idea of adding a lengthy yoga routine feels impossible. But research from India suggests that just 25 minutes a day can produce measurable changes in concentration, sleep, and even internet addiction. A controlled pilot trial conducted on school students examined the effects of a concise yogic module combining Super Brain Yoga, Yoga Nidra, Nadi Shodhan Pranayama, and Surya Namaskar. After three months of practice, the results were striking: the number of students reporting poor concentration dropped by more than one-fourth, with statistical significance ($p < 0.0001$). Insomnia symptoms also decreased significantly, with all students in the yoga group falling below the subthreshold level for sleep problems. Perhaps most surprising was the effect on internet addiction. The 25-minute module produced a fourfold increase in students falling within the "normal use" range and a fivefold reduction in those spending two to three hours or more online daily. The researchers attributed this to the combined effects of Yoga Nidra, Super Brain Yoga, and controlled breathing, which promote calmness, mental awareness, and emotional stability. Physical health complaints also improved. Headaches, stomach aches, back and neck pain, dizziness, and sleeplessness all showed significant reductions after the intervention. For senior students, the message is pragmatic. You don't need an hour-long practice or a retreat. A short, consistent routine embedded in your morning or between study sessions can deliver real benefits. The research suggests that brevity, when combined with regularity, is enough.

The Exam Anxiety Antidote: Evidence from Board Exam Candidates

Exam anxiety is not a minor inconvenience. It impairs concentration, disrupts sleep, and can undo months of preparation in a single morning. For Class 11th and 12th students facing board exams, finding an effective way to manage this anxiety is not optional-it is essential. Research specifically targeting board examination candidates offers promising evidence. A study examining Simplified Kundalini Yoga (SKY) as an intervention for exam anxiety found significant reductions in anxiety levels following structured practice. The intervention included breathing exercises, meditation, and relaxation techniques. Beyond anxiety reduction, students showed improvements in emotional stability, attention span, stress management, and self-confidence. A separate six-week yoga training program conducted in a Punjab school produced similar results. Thirty students aged twelve to sixteen completed 45-minute sessions five days a week, including asana, pranayama, meditation, and relaxation. The mean stress score dropped from 31.47 to 25.10, and the mean anxiety score fell from 13.97 to 10.53-both statistically significant changes ($p < 0.05$). What makes these findings particularly relevant is their practicality. The interventions were delivered in school settings, not clinics. They required no special equipment. They were led by trained teachers or counselors, not yoga gurus. This means the benefits are accessible to any school willing to allocate a few minutes each day. The mechanism is physiological as well as psychological. Slow, controlled breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, counteracting the fight-or-flight response that exam anxiety triggers. Meditation practices train attention to return to the present moment rather than spiraling into catastrophic thoughts about results. For students who feel helpless against anxiety, this research offers agency. The antidote is not a pill or a pep talk. It is a practice-one that can be started today, in your own room, with nothing more than a mat and a few minutes.





The Emotional Intelligence Edge - Beyond Marks and Ranks

Academic success is only one dimension of a fulfilling life. Emotional intelligence-the capacity to recognize, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and others-is increasingly recognized as equally important. For adolescents navigating the turbulence of Class 11th and 12th, developing this capacity may be the most valuable investment they can make. Research suggests Raja Yoga meditation offers a structured pathway. A study investigating Raja Yoga meditation among adolescents found that the practice nurtures self-awareness, empathy, motivation, self-regulation, character building, and cognitive thinking. The researchers described adolescence as a period of "significant emotional volatility" and "massive neurobiological remodeling," making emotional competence particularly critical. Raja Yoga meditation was positioned as a holistic intervention that addresses not just symptom reduction but the cultivation of emotional maturity. The yogic framework for emotional intelligence identifies three progressive levels: emotional sensitivity (recognizing and interpreting emotional inputs), emotional competency (learned skills to process and handle emotions tactfully), and emotional maturity (the psychological flexibility to respond appropriately without losing balance). Yoga transforms automatic emotional reactions into deliberate, balanced responses. The benefits extend beyond the individual. When students develop emotional regulation, they navigate social dynamics more skillfully, handle conflict with greater equanimity, and build healthier relationships. These capacities serve them not only in school but in every future endeavor-university, career, family, and community. For senior students, the message is that yoga and meditation are not merely stress-relief techniques. They are practices for becoming a more complete human being. The student who learns to observe their emotions without being controlled by them has gained something no exam score can measure.

The Whole-Body Benefit - Beyond the Mind



Discussions of yoga often focus on mental health and stress relief, but the physical benefits for adolescents are equally significant. For Class 11th and 12th students whose bodies are still growing and whose lifestyles are increasingly sedentary, yoga offers a comprehensive approach to physical wellbeing. The 25-minute yogic module study documented significant reductions in general health complaints among school students. Headaches, stomach aches, back and neck pain, dizziness, and sleeplessness all decreased after three months of practice ($p < 0.05$ to $p < 0.001$). The researchers attributed these improvements to asanas that promote body flexibility, endurance, and balance, along with enhanced immune function.

The Concentration Connection - What Yoga Does to the Studying Brain

Every student knows the frustration of reading the same paragraph three times without absorbing a word. Concentration is the bottleneck of academic performance, and for Class 11th and 12th students, it is under constant assault from phones, notifications, and mental fatigue. Research suggests that yoga and meditation directly address this bottleneck. A study examining meditation and pranayama interventions among secondary school students found statistically significant improvements in multiple cognitive dimensions. The experimental group, which received structured daily meditation and pranayama practices over six to eight weeks, demonstrated gains in attention, concentration, memory, and reasoning. The control group, following regular school routines, showed no such improvements. The 25-minute yogic module study reinforced these findings. The number of students reporting poor concentration dropped by more than one-fourth after three months of practice, with improvements attributed to Super Brain Yoga's ability to synchronize brain hemispheres, complemented by the mental clarity induced by Yoga Nidra and breath control. Neuroscience offers an explanation. Meditation and pranayama practices have been linked to altered connectivity in the default mode network (DMN), a brain system associated with attention, memory, task-switching, and planning. Changes in DMN connectivity have been connected to improved self-control and sustained attention, while disruptions in this network are linked to psychiatric conditions including anxiety and ADHD. For students, the practical implication is direct. The ability to concentrate is not a fixed trait-it is a trainable capacity.



The Sleep Solution - Why Yoga May Be the Missing Link in Teen Sleep Hygiene



Sleep deprivation is epidemic among senior students. Late-night study sessions, early morning classes, and screens that never turn off create a chronic sleep debt that undermines mood, memory, and academic performance. What many students don't realize is that yoga and meditation may be the most accessible sleep aid available. The 25-minute yogic module study provided compelling evidence. After three months of practice, insomnia symptoms decreased significantly ($p < 0.0001$), with all students in the yoga group falling below the subthreshold level for sleep problems. The researchers attributed this to the combined effects of Yoga Nidra, Super Brain Yoga, and controlled breathing, which promote relaxation and mental calm. A review of yoga interventions for children and adolescents reinforced this connection, noting that yoga helps individuals "relax and manage stress more effectively," creating a cascading effect on sleep. Improved sleep quality, in turn, contributes to enhanced mental and physical health, greater self-esteem, resilience, and overall life satisfaction. The mechanism is well understood. Sleep disturbance is often driven by a nervous system stuck in overdrive-the sympathetic branch that governs fight-or-flight remains activated long after the exam or argument is over. Yoga practices, particularly those involving slow breathing and deep relaxation, activate the parasympathetic branch, signaling to the body that it is safe to rest. This is not merely a feeling of calmness. It is a physiological shift that makes sleep possible. For students who lie awake replaying the day's anxieties or worrying about tomorrow's tests, the solution may not be more screen time or counting sheep. It may be ten minutes of Yoga Nidra before bed-a practice that guides attention systematically through the body, releasing tension and quieting the mind.

The School's Role - How Institutions Can Make Yoga Work



Individual practice is valuable, but research suggests that school-based programs can amplify the benefits by making yoga and meditation a normal part of the school day. For Class 11th and 12th students, whose schedules are structured by institutional timetables, the question is not just "Should I practice?" but "How can my school support this?" A study developing a school-based mindful yoga and meditation module in Karnataka, India, offers a model. The researchers followed the Collaborative Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework, focusing on self-awareness and self-management. The module was developed with input from yoga professionals, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, and education experts, ensuring it was both evidence-based and practical for school settings. The research emphasized that programs must be acceptable to diverse student populations. Teaching yoga and meditation as "secular, health-building practices" rather than religious or spiritual activities enhances acceptability. Using neutral language focused on benefits like stress reduction and mental fitness, and offering participation as a choice rather than an obligation, addresses potential resistance. Orientation sessions with parents help establish support. Practical implementation matters. The research suggests short, frequent sessions embedded within the existing framework rather than longer discrete classes. A 15-20 minute morning session on specific days, including simple postures, breath awareness, and guided meditation. Short "pause and breathe" breaks before demanding classes or during exam periods. An after-school class for students identified as having high stress or anxiety. For students who want to advocate for such programs in their schools, the evidence is strong.

'There have to be sufficient games'

: Nayar on Kohli's chances of reaching 100 centuries



■SP BUREAU

New Delhi: Former India assistant coach Abhishek Nayar believes Virat Kohli may not have enough matches left before the 2027 ODI World Cup to reach the landmark of 100 international centuries, despite expressing his wish to see the batting great achieve the milestone.

Nayar and former India batter Cheteshwar Pujara discussed Kohli's chances of reaching the century mark, India's search for an all-rounder beyond Hardik Pandya in ODIs and the need to revive the 50-over format through multi-nation tournaments.

Kohli holds the record for the most centuries in men's ODI cricket, with 55 hundreds to his name, having surpassed Sachin Tendulkar's previous mark of 49. He reached his 50th ODI century during the 2023 World Cup semi-final against New Zealand at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium, becoming the first batter to achieve the milestone in the format.

"I don't think there are enough games for him to reach that milestone. As much as I want him to, there have to be sufficient games for you to scale also. It's possible that he may continue to play after the World Cup as well, but I am considering the period till the World Cup. After the World Cup, his motivation might not be the same either. So I don't think there's enough time till the World Cup for him to get to that," Nayar told JioStar.

The discussion also turned to India's plans to build depth in the ODI all-rounder department, with Nayar suggesting that the team should groom another option alongside Hardik Pandya.

"India should look at the future, where alongside Hardik Pandya, another all-rounder could play. When you go to New Zealand, it's possible that you have two such all-round options because Gautam Gambhir likes batters. If you groom another all-rounder, they can play together. And if India can play with two proper fast bowlers and two seam-bowling all-rounders.

Manolo Marquez mutually part ways after poor start to ISL season



■SP BUREAU

New Delhi: Mumbai City FC and head coach Manolo Marquez have mutually agreed to part ways for the remainder of the 2026-27 Indian Super League (ISL) season following the team's disappointing start to the campaign, the club announced on Friday.

The Islanders are yet to register a victory in their first four matches of the season, having suffered defeats against Churchill Brothers and Sporting Club Delhi, while settling for draws against Kerala Blasters and Punjab FC.

Marquez, who was appointed ahead of the ongoing season on a one-year contract, will now end his association with the Mumbai-based club, with the management expressing confidence in the current squad and reiterating its focus on improving performances in the coming matches.In a statement, Mumbai City FC confirmed that both parties had agreed to part ways, adding that the club would continue competing with its existing squad while looking to strengthen the team in the coming days."As with every ISL club this season, we are navigating a new era for Indian football. In many ways, this marks a fresh start for the top tier of the Indian game. We brought Manolo to the club for his experience and track record in Indian football.



Keene, Lister, Sheat ruled out of NZ A's final red-ball game against India A

■AGENCY

Lincoln: New Zealand A will be without three frontline pacers in Simon Keene, Ben Lister and Fraser Sheat for the third and final red-ball match against India A, as the trio have been ruled out due to their respective injuries.

The final match starts on Saturday at the Bert Sutcliffe Oval in Lincoln University, after the first two games ended in draws. In a statement on Friday, New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said Keene has a grade two tear in his left hamstring, while Sheat hurt his left side during the earlier fixtures against the visitors.

The two are expected to be back in action for their domestic sides in three to four weeks. Meanwhile, Lister has been following a return-to-play programme after straining his right side during a training session with Auckland, and has not recovered in time for the series finale.

As a result, Central Stags pacer Brett Randell and Zak Gibson of the Northern Districts have been retained in the squad, while Otago Volts seamer Danru Ferns has been called up as well. Tim Robinson will also stay on with the A side, as Henry Nicholls has moved to the main ODI squad.

Gavin Larsen, the former Black Caps player currently with the A team, said he felt sad for the injured pacers. "It's always disappointing to see any player out injured, but unfortunately it's part and parcel of any sport.

"Simon and Fraser were impressive with the ball against a very good Indian side with a Test quality batting lineup. Ben worked hard to be available for this third match but unfortunately requires more time. We hope they all recover well and are back on the park soon."

Sehwag, Raichandani fifties help India thrash Nepal by ten wickets in U-19 Asia Cup opener



■AGENCY

Muscat: Aaryavir Sehwag and skipper Lakshya Raichandani struck unbeaten half-centuries as India thrashed Nepal by 10 wickets in their first Men's Under-19 Asia Cup match at the Al Amerat Cricket Ground here on Friday.

Chasing a modest 129, Aaryavir and Raichandani finished off the runs in only 19.1 overs. Earlier, fast bowler Ishan Sood's three-wicket burst with the new ball ensured Nepal were bowled out for 128 in 42.3 overs.

After electing to bowl first on a pitch that carried a thin layer of grass, Sood moved the ball both ways and beat the bat repeatedly in an opening spell of six overs. That effort led to Sood picking three wickets as the Nepal batters struggled to get going. Sood finished with figures of 3-18 from his 10 overs bowled on the trot, including four maidens.

Darsh Sonar (43 off 93 balls) steadied the innings after the early collapse by adding partnerships of 24 and 43 respectively with Niraj Yadav and Aashish Luhar to push Nepal past 100. Once Sonar's partnership with Luhar was broken, Nepal's lower order fell apart. Left-arm spinner Arjun Rajput took three wickets and Yashveer Goud had two scalps as Nepal were all out for 128.

By the time India's chase began, the new ball did not swing much. Aaryavir and Raichandani played out the first few overs carefully before they began hitting boundaries at regular intervals. Aaryavir, son of former India opener Virender Sehwag, went after the Nepal spinners.

He often stepped out of the crease to loft the ball down the ground and reached his half-century off just 34 balls. Raichandani was content in rotating the strike while Aaryavir took the attacking route.

Daughter of a coconut farmer, IS Bridney pedals towards a brighter future

■SPNN

Kolkata: Every champion has a story behind a medal. For 16-year-old I. S. Bridney from Car Nicobar, that story is one of determination, family sacrifices, a coach's belief and an institutional support system that refused to let geographical barriers limit her dreams.

At the 78th senior, 55th junior and 41st sub-junior nationals track cycling championships, held at Khelgaon, Ranchi, Jharkhand, on November 3, 2026, Bridney achieved a remarkable milestone. Competing in the sub-junior girls' 500m Individual Time Trial, she clocked 37.479 seconds, breaking the previous record of 38.700 seconds, held by Trisha Paul, who has medalled at the Asian Cup and Asian Track Cycling Championships.

For a teenager who began her sporting journey without access to a cycling velodrome or competition-standard facilities, the gold-winning effort with a national record represents much more than a medal. It is the culmination of years of hard work and perseverance.

"I was in good shape during my training under coach Vishwajit Balkrishna Sutar at SAI, Car Nicobar. I was expecting to perform well, but I never thought of the national record. I just tried to



perform at my best," Bridney told SAI Media.

Bridney hails from Kinyuka village in Car Nicobar and belongs to a modest family. Her mother, Junia, is a homemaker, while her father, Ruther, earns a livelihood through coconut farming and the sale of copra. For a family dependent on traditional farming and limited means, supporting a child's sporting ambitions has not always been easy.

Yet, her parents stood behind her dream. Initially interested in football and the 100-metre sprint, Bridney discovered her potential in cycling during selection trials in November 2022. Coach Sutar recognised her promise and introduced her to the sport. She was subsequently inducted into the SAI Training Centre in Car Nicobar in 2023, where she received foundational training and developed her cycling skills.

The journey was far from straightforward. STC Car Nicobar did not have a cycling velodrome or all the competition-standard equipment required to prepare an athlete for national-level events. Recognising Bridney's potential, Sutar took personal initiative to bridge these gaps.

The coach arranged competition-grade equipment through his former trainees in Thiruvananthapuram and Kolhapur, Maharashtra, ensuring that the lack of local facilities would not prevent Bridney from competing at the highest level.

Her successive national performances, including gold medals at the National Track Cycling Championship in Chennai in 2024-25 and the Team Sprint event at the School National Championships in Ranchi, further strengthened the belief in Bridney's potential.

Sutar's contribution went beyond coaching. His efforts to identify talent, arrange essential equipment and find solutions to infrastructural limitations ensured that Bridney received opportunities to develop despite the challenges of training on a remote island.

'I try to play with smile on my face': Tickner on perspective after wife's battle with cancer

■AGENCY

Wellington: New Zealand fast bowler Blair Tickner opened up on his perspective on life and cricket after having seen his wife, Sarah, battle cancer treatment following a leukaemia diagnosis in April 2024.

Tickner, who starred with the bat during New Zealand's first ODI against India in Auckland, spoke about how his life and career have panned out, opening up about his wife coming through eight months of cancer treatment.

"My life, I guess it's been up and down," Tickner said on the eve of New Zealand's 2nd ODI against India at Hnry Stadium in Wellington. "It's amazing to have Sarah and my family (get) through it all, and I guess now I'm just trying to enjoy my cricket, and I've probably been a bit more myself.

"I've had different parts of my career. I guess (at the) start of my career, I felt a lot of pressure. Then we had Sarah's cancer treatment; it was hard, and now I'm sort of at the back end, and I'm looking forward to just having fun, really, and it's what I'm



trying to do, to (be) myself really."

He added that the period taught him that cricket is an important part of his career, but not the only thing he has in his life. "I try to play with a smile on my face, and it's a lot more than cricket, obviously," he said. "It's done a lot for me, but I know that at the end of the day I'm going to go home to my daughter and my wife and I'm pretty happy and pretty lucky to do that. So yeah, cricket's a little bit less than that."

The speedster made a strong 34-ball 23 from No. 11 in the series opener against India, with his four sixes being a highlight of New Zealand's 185. Reflecting on the knock, he joked that he would like to move up the order and maybe even to No. 3."Yeah, there were a few conversations before I went out.

Shadman Islam stretchered off after twisting ankle during second West Indies Test

■AGENCY

Sylhet: Bangladesh opener Shadman Islam was stretchered off the ground after twisting his ankle during the second Test match against the West Indies at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium here on Friday.

Shadman twisted his ankle and fell while fielding on Day 2 of the contest as he grimaced in pain for a few minutes. The opener was then taken on a stretcher off the field and will be sent for scans."Shadman suffered a left ankle twist. He



is under observation. We will send him for an MRI scan," Bangladesh physio Bayjedul Islam Khan said, as quoted by Cricinfo.The incident took place during the 78th over of the West Indies batting innings. Amir Jangoo had nudged one through to fine leg off Mehidy Hasan Miraz as Shadman ran from slips to chase the ball.

Senthilkumar enters London Open squash quarters

■AGENCY

London: Velavan Senthilkumar has advanced to the quarterfinals of the London Open squash, a USD 18,000 PSA Challenger event, where he is second seed.

The Indian world No. 42 defeated Paraguay's world No 124 Francesco Marcantonio 11-5, 11-7, 14-12 in the second round on Thursday following a first-round bye.



Senthilkumar, who has won two PSA Copper-level tournaments this year.