Samay Paribartan

Daily English Newspaper

www.samayparibartan.com

8 Pages, Vol-9, Issue 50 | KOLKATA, 8 NOVEMBER 2026, SUNDAY | Rs. 4/-

CM Flags Shortcomings in Police Force, Promises Recruitment, Training

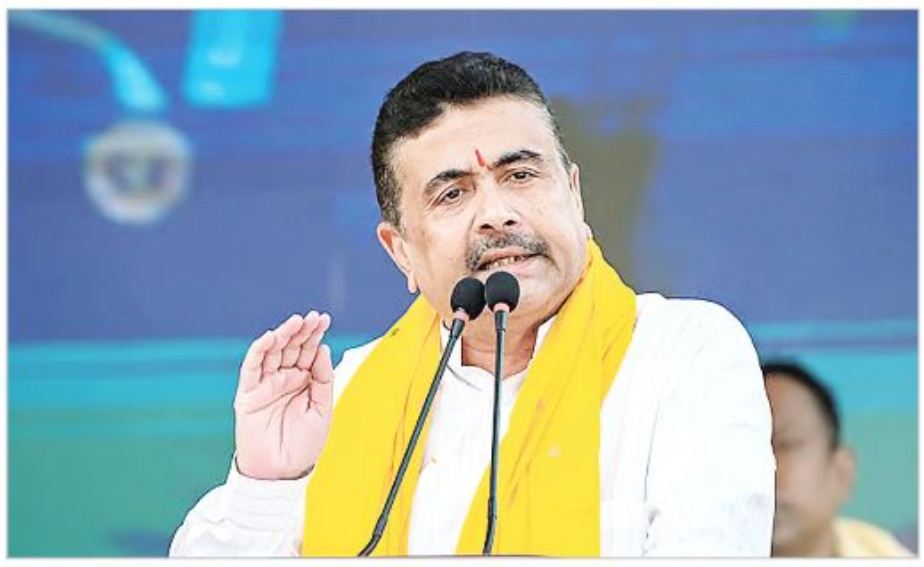
AGENCY

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Saturday blamed the previous TMC regime for alleged shortcomings, including lack of infrastructure, logistics and professionalism in the state police force and asserted that his government was taking steps to address them through modernisation, better training and large-scale recruitment.

Addressing an event at the Kolkata Police headquarters, where he handed over appointment letters to 309 recruits, Adhikari said police personnel had "no financial security" during the Trinamool Congress rule.

"Bengal Police are lagging in infrastructure, logistics, professionalism and training. If the previous governments had taken steps to upgrade the police force continuously, the current dispensation would not have faced such problems," Adhikari said.

"Several thousand police personnel did not have financial security. They were deprived of 42 per cent dearness allowance (DA). Even



after the Seventh Pay Commission was implemented across the country, they did not receive its benefits," the chief minister said.

Adhikari said his government had taken up several programmes and signed MoUs with organisations to provide training to police personnel and on modernising the force.

"Steps will be taken towards modernisation and training of the police. For this, an MoU has been signed with the Assam Police Training Centre. We have also decided to strengthen coordination between the state police and the Centre," he said.

Adhikari said policing in West Bengal was particularly challenging given its large population of around 11 crore and geographical and cultural diversity.

"There are different languages, dresses and food habits. On one side are the hills, and on the other is Jangalmahal, besides several isolated islands. The police work to maintain normalcy in public life. For a long time, they did not receive any facilities or benefits and lacked financial security. Now, financial security will be provided to the police force," he said.

The chief minister also acknowledged that the state was lagging behind in police recruitment and announced that several vacant posts would be filled in phases.

"Recruitment of 11,000 personnel has already been completed in the state police. At present, around 46,000 posts are lying vacant. These will be filled gradually," he said.

Adhikari announced that 6,345 women police personnel would be recruited, while 4,000 constables would be appointed to the Kolkata Police.

"We will undertake large-scale recruitment in the police force over the next few months. Further recruitment will take place in December-January," he said.

The chief minister also assured recruitment in the forest department and fire services, adding that appointments would be made in other uniformed services, including the forest department, fire brigade and excise department. "During our tenure, recruitment will be conducted through the Police Recruitment Board. We will not provide anyone an opportunity to approach the court. Everything will be done transparently, based on merit and in accordance with our recruitment rules," he said.

Issuing a stern warning against attacks on police personnel, Adhikari said anyone assaulting a policeman and causing bloodshed would face strict action.

CCL's Financial Morass ?

Special Correspondent

Ranchi: Allegations are rife about corruption and financial irregularities perpetrated by few top officials of Personnel Department of Central Coalfields Limited (CCL), a subsidiary of Coal India Limited. Sources requesting anonymity for the fear of reprisal claimed this.

CCL's Personnel Division is accused of being the epicentre of financial misappropriation and opacity in dealings sources alleged.

Sources pointed to CSR activities where much of financial aberrations were centred on. Specifically; procurement of

Mobile Medical Vans, sports sector activities and conducting marathon run events were mired in financial inconsistencies, it was claimed.

Another serious allegation, which Samay Paribartan could not independently verify, was that part of the material intended for a hospital building was directed towards the construction of a house owned by a top official of CCL's Personnel Division. If true, this is a bleak situation. In what could be construed as a serious kickback gratification, it was alleged that the release of sanctioned funds to various NGO's operating under CCL was conditional upon the payment of a certain percentage to officials dealings many issues.



Raj Kishore, GM, HoD-MM Dept., CCL

Other accusation involve Rajkishore, CCL's Head of the Materials Management Division and his alleged large-scale corruption and financial discrepencies since 2022.

An independent forensic accounting and impartial investigation appears imperative.

Mamata Protest After Alleged 2 AM Attack at Abhishek's Kolkata residence

AGENCY



Kolkata: Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee and party national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee protested following an alleged assault at Abhishek Banerjee's residence in Kalighat, south Kolkata, at approximately 2 am on November 7.Abhishek Banerjee claimed his home and office were targeted by a group he described as "BJP goons" after two days of prior surveillance. He stated this was the seventh attempt on his life in the preceding six months and criticised the Kolkata Police and judiciary for purported inaction.

Reports from police and the party indicated clashes erupted between Trinamool Congress workers celebrating Abhishek Banerjee's 39th birthday and supporters of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) between 2 am and 3:30 am. At least eight people were injured, three seriously. A substantial police presence was deployed to secure the area, and several individuals were detained in connection with the disturbance. Mamata Banerjee arrived at the Kalighat residence later that morning and accused the BJP of orchestrating "hooliganism" and disrupting traditional Kali Puja and Diwali preparations. She stated she had written to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha concerning the breakdown in law and order. Outside Abhishek Banerjee's residence, TMC supporters demonstrated, raising slogans expressing anger over the incident. Earlier, Mamata Banerjee condemned the BJP for "hooliganism" and alleged that a "gang of thugs" had attacked a Kali Puja celebration in the Kalighat area. She questioned the disruption of traditional puja festivities ahead of Kali Puja and Diwali and accused those responsible of disturbing cultural observances. Following the incident, police arrived at Abhishek Banerjee's residence. Mamata Banerjee questioned why traditional puja celebrations were being disrupted, emphasising the significance of the locality as a route for processions of Goddess Kali. She said, "Tomorrow is Kali Puja and Diwali. Last night, at 2:00 AM, an attack was carried out at Abhishek Banerjee's house.

This is our locality, a route through which many processions of Goddess Kali pass. Why are you causing such a disturbance? You have revoked permissions for our traditional, long-standing pujas while allowing new ones to be held instead. Furthermore, you prevented our local clubs from functioning last night… We are part of the 'INDIA' alliance, and this is the reason for their anger." Mamata Banerjee alleged that groups were arriving late at night to disrupt activities and described the situation as "complete hooliganism". She questioned, "People show up here at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning… If you dare to use a bulldozer, why do you come here at 3:00 in the morning with a gang of thugs to attack a Kali Puja celebration?.. We are carrying out party-related work here, and you are coming to disrupt it." The TMC chief further claimed that permissions for traditional puja celebrations had been revoked, while a new puja was permitted on a main road, obstructing access to their own event. She said, "This is completely illegal.

BRIEF NEWS

Parking Dispute Turns Deadly In Haryana: Man Killed As Neighbour Opens Fire

Faridabad: A house in Faridabad's Sector 21C plunged into darkness on the night of Dhanteras as a dispute over parking claimed one life.

The deceased was identified as Paramjit Dhankhar, who resided on the first floor of house number 641 with his wife, son and daughter. Employed by a major national company, he had been living in Singapore for work. Originally from Hisar, he had returned to Faridabad from Singapore just two days earlier to attend his nephew's wedding on November 24. Around 8 pm, Paramjit returned home from the gym. An argument broke out with his neighbour, Mohan, also known as Monu Sharma, who lives on the third floor, over parking. When the dispute escalated, the accused drew his licensed pistol and fired around 15 to 16 rounds at Paramjit, who died on the spot.

Akhilesh Yadav to Visit Ayodhya's Ram Temple for First Time on Dec 12

Ayodhya: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav will visit the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on December 12, former SP MLA Pawan Pandey said on Saturday, an announcement set to spice up politics in the key Hindi heartland state ahead of Assembly polls in early 2027. The ruling BJP has been targeting Yadav for not visiting the Ram Temple over "appeasement politics", while the SP chief has been vociferously raising the issue of "chanda chori" in the Ram Temple and blaming the BJP and Sangh outfits.

IAF Scripts History with World's Highest-Altitude Landing Near LAC

AGENCY

Srinagar: The Indian Air Force (IAF) has on Saturday achieved a major milestone in high-altitude aviation after its IL-76MD military transport aircraft successfully landed at the Nyoma airfield in eastern Ladakh, setting a world record for the highest-altitude landing ever made by the aircraft. The historic landing, at an elevation of 13,629 feet, marks a significant achievement for India's strategic airlift capabilities and highlights the ability of the country's military aviation fleet to operate in some of the world's most challenging geographical conditions. Announcing the achievement, an IAF spokesperson said the IL-76MD had scripted history with the successful landing at Nyoma, describing it as the highest-altitude landing ever achieved by the aircraft anywhere in the world.



The Air Force credited the aircraft's enduring operational capabilities and the exceptional skill, precision and professionalism of its crew for the achievement. "13,629 feet. A new height in aviation history," the IAF said, describing the landing as a milestone that reinforces India's strategic airlift capability.

The achievement is particularly significant given Nyoma's location in eastern Ladakh, close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. The airfield is expected to play an important role in strengthening military logistics, improving connectivity to forward areas and facilitating the rapid movement of troops and equipment along India's sensitive northern frontier. Mudh-Nyoma airfield is among India's highest-altitude airfields and the closest Advanced Landing Ground (ALG) to the LAC in the region. The airfield has undergone a major infrastructure upgrade, transforming from a small mud strip into a strategically important aviation facility equipped with a three-kilometre-long paved runway. The runway has been designed to support heavy military transport aircraft and facilitate emergency as well as strategic operations in the challenging terrain of eastern Ladakh.

Fourth major IAF base in Ladakh

Nyoma has become the fourth major Indian Air Force base in Ladakh, complementing existing facilities at Leh, Kargil and Thoise. Leh serves as the principal operational air base in the region, while Kargil and Thoise perform important strategic functions. Thoise, in particular, provides logistical access to the Siachen Glacier, one of the world's highest and most challenging military deployment areas. Other advanced landing grounds, including Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO), Fukche and Chushul, also serve important military purposes along the frontier. However, several of these facilities face operational limitations because of their infrastructure, geographical location and demanding weather conditions.

E20 Has Become 420: Rahul Claims Excess Ethanol in Petrol, Targets Govt

AGENCY

New Delhi: Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has accused major oil marketing companies of supplying petrol with ethanol content exceeding the prescribed 20 per cent limit, citing laboratory tests of fuel samples collected from seven districts in Karnataka.

In a post on X on Saturday, Gandhi claimed that 11 of the 14 samples tested at an accredited laboratory contained more than 20 per cent ethanol. Taking a swipe at the Centre's ethanol-blending programme, Gandhi said, "E20 turned into 420 - stealing petrol from the public's cars!" He accused both public sector and private fuel companies of exceeding the prescribed blending limit and questioned the transparency of their testing processes. According to the findings cited by Gandhi, samples from Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) recorded ethanol concentrations of 31.2 per cent and 30.5 per cent, respectively.



The samples were collected from seven districts in Karnataka - Bengaluru, Kolar, Chikkaballapura, Bengaluru Rural, Ramanagara, Mangaluru and Tumakuru.

Gandhi also named Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), Nayara Energy and Shell among the companies whose fuel samples were part of the testing exercise. He claimed that the companies' in-house laboratories had failed to disclose the ethanol content in the samples. "Modi ji, tell us, what's being put in the country's tank? How much ethanol is actually in petrol? When will action be taken against companies mixing more than 20% ethanol? And the debate challenge still stands. We'll add this issue too - who is actually benefiting from your policies?" he said.

Oil Companies Dispute Karnataka's Test Findings

The claims come amid a dispute between the Karnataka government and oil marketing companies over the ethanol content in petrol sold at retail outlets in the state. Karnataka Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister Rizwan Arshad had earlier said that tests conducted by the NABL-accredited and ISO-certified Shriram Research Institute in Bengaluru found ethanol levels exceeding the prescribed 20 per cent limit in several samples. The state government said the samples were initially sent to the in-house laboratories of IOCL and BPCL, but the reports did not disclose the ethanol content, prompting it to seek independent testing.

Companies Respond to the Allegations

The three public sector oil marketing companies - IOCL, BPCL and HPCL - have disputed the Karnataka government's findings of excessive ethanol blending in petrol, saying the claims were not supported by tests conducted under prescribed procedures. In a joint statement, the companies said E20 petrol supplied across the country, including Karnataka, conforms to the Bureau of Indian Standards specification IS 17021. They raised concerns over the sampling process followed during the October 2026 exercise, claiming their representatives were not involved and that they had not received retention samples, outlet-wise details or complete laboratory reports. The companies also questioned the third-party laboratory certificates cited by the Karnataka government, saying they lacked technical details about the testing methods required to verify ethanol content. They said the reported findings could not be independently validated without the prescribed documentation and samples. Rejecting estimates of Rs 62,000 crore in annual mileage losses and Rs 39,000 crore in vehicle repair costs, the OMCs said these figures required scientific and technical substantiation. They have sought complete sampling records and access to counterpart samples for independent testing at an authorised laboratory in the presence of state government representatives.

E20 Fuel Debate Raises Questions Over Vehicle Compatibility

The dispute has renewed concerns over the quality of ethanol-blended petrol and its compatibility with vehicles on Indian roads. E20 petrol refers to fuel containing up to 20 per cent ethanol blended with petrol. The Centre has promoted ethanol blending as a way to reduce dependence on imported crude oil, lower emissions and support domestic ethanol producers. However, concerns have been raised over the possible impact of higher ethanol concentrations on fuel efficiency and vehicle components, particularly in vehicles not designed for such blends. The Karnataka government has sought action against companies found supplying petrol beyond the prescribed limit and called for greater transparency in the disclosure of ethanol content at fuel stations. The dispute has also brought the Centre's ethanol-blending programme under renewed scrutiny, with questions over fuel quality, testing procedures and consumer protection.



Ahead of Diwali, CM Dhami celebrates with Garhwal Rifles soldiers, lauds their dedication to nation

■ AGENCY

Dehradun : Uttarakhand Chief Minister, Pushkar Singh Dhami, on Saturday celebrated Diwali with soldiers of the Garhwal Rifles and praised their dedication and commitment to the nation, saying that their spirit of service despite staying away from their families was an inspiration for everyone.

Speaking to IANS, Dhami said that celebrating the festival of lights with soldiers was an emotional moment for him, particularly as they remain away from their families while performing their duties under challenging conditions.

"Diwali is our special festival, and coming among all our soldiers of the Garhwal Rifles at such a time is a very emotional moment for me. Everyone stays away from their families and works in difficult conditions, yet they possess the spirit of lifelong dedication to the country and a constant desire to work for the nation at all times," he said.

He added that the soldiers' commitment to the country inspires everyone to place national interests above everything else.

"It inspires all of us to work with the understanding that the country always comes first and remains our top priority. On the occasion of Diwali, I extend my heartfelt greetings to all the jawans and their families," the Chief Minister said.

Diwali, the festival of lights, will be celebrated across the country on Sunday, November 8. The festival is observed on Amavasya, or the new moon day, during the Hindu month of Kartik.

According to the Hindu calendar, the Amavasya Tithi will begin at 11.28 a.m. on November 8 and continue until 12.32 p.m. on November 9.

MLA Tankadhar Tripathy Lays Foundation Stones for Multiple Road Projects, Inspects Hatianala Dam

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA ■ Jharsuguda





Jharsuguda MLA Tankadhar Tripathy visited Laikera block and laid the foundation stones for several development projects while reviewing key infrastructure works in the region on Saturday. Giving priority to rural development and improved connectivity, he inaugurated the foundation-laying ceremonies for several roads under the Mukhyamantri Sadak Yojana.

During the visit, foundation stones were laid for road construction projects connecting Khadiapada to Dumkumal in Sahaspur Gram Panchayat, Kumharpada from the Tileimal PWD road, Pandadihi from Saraiguda in Babuchipidihi Gram Panchayat, and Niktimal from the PWD road in Niktimal Gram Panchayat.

The MLA also visited Hatianala Dam to inspect the ongoing improvement work and directed the concerned officials to ensure quality construction and timely completion of the project. Subsequently, he visited Kirmira bus stand and reviewed its existing condition and infrastructure requirements.

Speaking on the occasion, Tripathy said that improved rural connectivity was a key foundation for comprehensive development. The construction of these roads would facilitate easier transportation for local residents and bring significant improvements in access to education, healthcare, economic activities and everyday life. He added that efforts would continue to connect every village in the region through better road infrastructure, protect water resources and ensure that the benefits of development reach all sections of society.

Among those present during the visit were local administrative officials, Mandal presidents Kulamani Kishan and Dutia Oram, Motilal Dansena, Nirmal Patel, Sarpanch Sukanti among others.

Lawrence Bishnoi gang member Hari Boxer detained in US; process to bring him to India underway

■ AGENCY

Jaipur : In a major breakthrough in Rajasthan Police's ongoing crackdown on organised crime and criminal gangs, notorious gangster Harichand Jat alias 'Hari Boxer', an active member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang and a wanted fugitive, has been detained in the United States.

The operation was carried out under the directions of Director General of Police (DGP) Rajiv Kumar Sharma as part of the state police's sustained campaign against organised criminal networks.

The Rajasthan Anti-Gangster Task Force (AGTF), working under the guidance of Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Dinesh M.N., played a key role in securing the detention.

A special team operating under the supervision of Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) Deputy Inspector General of Police and Interpol Liaison Officer Yogesh Yadav gathered crucial intelligence and coordinated efforts to trace the fugitive.



As part of the international operation, Rajasthan Police facilitated the issuance of a Red Corner Notice against Hari Boxer.

It also sent 14 separate references to Interpol across five countries to track his whereabouts and secure action against him.

To strengthen the case for his detention, the police submitted a provisional arrest request, an updated and comprehensive dossier containing details of the accused, and his fingerprints to the concerned authorities.

Hari Boxer has deep roots in Rajasthan. His birth, upbringing and early journey into the world of crime are all closely linked to the state. His real name is Harichand Jat, and he originally hails from the Bansur area of Rajasthan's Kotputli-Behror district.

His father Girdhari Jat is an ordinary farmer from the region.

Before entering the world of crime, Harichand reportedly led an ordinary life in his village and aspired to serve the country or the state.

A look into Hari Boxer's background reveals that Harichand Jat initially aspired to join the Indian Army or Rajasthan Police.

While preparing for competitive examinations, he moved to Jaipur, the state capital.



Man accused of killing wife in Nalasopara dies by suicide within a few hours after jumping before local train in Mumbai

■ AGENCY

Nalasopara : A man accused of murdering his wife following domestic disputes and suspicions about her character allegedly died by suicide by jumping in front of a local train at Grant Road railway station in Mumbai, hours after the woman's body was found at their residence in Maharashtra's Nalasopara.

The two incidents, which took place within a few hours, have sent shockwaves through the area, with police investigating the circumstances surrounding the murder and the subsequent suicide.

According to the Nalasopara Police, the accused, identified as Majeed Hanif Khan (50), was a resident of Alfatifa Building in Aman Nagar, Takipada, Nalasopara West. He allegedly suspected his wife, Tabassum Majeed Khan, of infidelity, leading to frequent arguments and disputes between the couple.

According to preliminary information, Tabassum ran tuition classes for young children from their home. Parents regularly visited the house to drop off and pick up their children. Majeed reportedly developed suspicions about his wife's character over these visits, which frequently led to arguments between them.

As per the complaint filed in the case, the family had dinner together on the night of November 6 and watched television until late. Subsequently, their daughter went to sleep in the hall, while her parents remained in their bedroom.

On November 7, around 5 a.m., the daughter woke up and noticed that the main door of the house was open. When she entered the bedroom, she found her mother, Tabassum, lying unconscious on the floor with injuries to her face and neck.

TN govt scraps Stalin-era panel on Centre-state relations, transfers mandate to state law commission

■ AGENCY

Chennai : In a significant policy shift, the Tamil Nadu government led by Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay has abolished the high-level committee on Union-State relations constituted by the previous DMK government and transferred its responsibilities to the Tamil Nadu State Law Commission.

The decision, formalised through a Government Order, brings an end to the three-member committee established by former Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to examine constitutional provisions governing Centre-State relations and recommend measures to strengthen federalism and state autonomy.

The committee, headed by retired Supreme Court judge Justice Kurian Joseph, included former IAS officer K. Ashok Vardhan Shetty and former State Planning Commission Vice-Chairman M. Naganathan.

NCP-SP chief Sharad Pawar discharged from Mumbai hospital in stable condition

■ AGENCY

Mumbai: NCP-SP Chief Sharad Pawar was discharged on Saturday from Mumbai's Breach Candy Hospital in a stable condition after receiving treatment for a chest infection and a bronchitis attack. Pratit Samdani, the doctor treating the NCP-SP Chief, confirmed that Pawar is recovering well and will continue his medication and recovery at his Silver Oak residence in Mumbai.

Given his age, Pawar has been advised to follow essential precautions and rest. "Sharad Pawar has been discharged in a stable condition . He will continue his treatment at home... He had suffered from a bronchitis attack and a chest infection, which are now improving... He has been asked to continue his treatment at home and to take standard precautions that every citizen of the country should take... Given his age, a few additional instructions have been provided. He is very compliant, and I am very sure that he will take care of himself," Samdani said. Pawar was on Wednesday discharged from Ruby Hall Clinic in Pune on following treatment. His health condition is stable and has shown improvement. He will be going straight to his Mumbai residence from the hospital, according to an official statement issued by Parvez K Grant, Chief Cardiologist, and Chairman and Managing Trustee of Ruby Hall Clinic.

Pawar was admitted to Ruby Hall Clinic on Monday after experiencing a cough and chest discomfort. He had embarked on a tour of rural areas to assess the drought situation in Maharashtra. During this tour, he was interacting with farmers in drought-affected regions to understand issues such as water scarcity, crop conditions, and agricultural challenges.

District-Level Revenue Review Meeting Held in Jharsuguda

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA ■ Jharsuguda



A district-level revenue review meeting was held today at the DMF Conference Hall under the chairmanship of Collector and District Magistrate Kunal Chavan. The meeting discussed and reviewed the functioning of various departments associated with revenue administration and the progress of different government schemes.

The Collector conducted a detailed review of revenue collection under various departments, including Revenue, Excise, Regional Transport Office (RTO), Registration, Mining and Water Tax. He issued strict instructions to achieve the prescribed revenue collection targets.

The meeting also reviewed the progress of farmer registration, mutation cases, Odisha Right to Public Services Act, OLR (Sections 8-A and 191-C), various certificate-related cases, eviction of encroachments and scanning and digitisation of land records. All Tahasildars and revenue officials were directed to ensure that public services are delivered within the stipulated time frame and pending cases are disposed of expeditiously. They were also instructed to initiate cases against violators under Section 8(1)(c) of the OLR Act.

The Collector further directed Tahasildars to coordinate with the concerned Block Education Officers to identify suitable government land for establishing Godabarish Mishra Adarsha Primary Schools and take necessary steps at the earliest.

He also instructed the Mining Officer to intensify enforcement activities to curb illegal mining and transportation.

Project Director Lalit Soreng, Sub-Collector Sabyasachi Panda, all Tahasildars and other district-level officials and revenue officers were present at the meeting.

VAML, SAIL Exchange Safety Best Practices at Jharsuguda Plant

SPNN ■



Jharsuguda: Vedanta Aluminium (VAML) hosted an 11-member delegation of senior officers from Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) at its Jharsuguda plant for a safety benchmarking visit aimed at promoting knowledge exchange and operational excellence.

The delegation explored the plant's advanced safety systems, including the Safety Galaxy park, potline and casthouse areas. Discussions focused on safety culture, digital transformation, emergency preparedness and innovative risk management practices.

C Chandru, CEO, VAML Jharsuguda, said safety was fundamental to operational excellence and that interaction with industry peers helped strengthen safety standards through shared learning.

Suresh Kumar, General Manager - in - charge (Safety), SSO, SAIL, appreciated the exposure to modern industrial safety practices and highlighted the importance of knowledge sharing.

VAML's safety measures include 33 km of pedestrian pathways, simulator-based driver training, digital hazard-reporting applications, regular mock drills and safety audits. The plant recently received the British Safety Council Five-Star Occupational Health and Safety Audit Award.

CM Shubhendu Adhikari Pays Tribute to Bipin Chandra Pal

■ SPNN





Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Shubhendu Adhikari on Saturday paid tribute to renowned freedom fighter, writer, social reformer and powerful orator Bipin Chandra Pal on his birth anniversary. The Chief Minister remembered Pal's significant contributions to India's freedom struggle and social reform through a message shared on the social media platform X in the morning.

In his message, Adhikari offered his humble tributes to Bipin Chandra Pal, describing him as an eminent Bengali orator, writer, social reformer and freedom fighter. He recalled the veteran nationalist leader's contribution to the country's struggle against British colonial rule and his role in awakening national consciousness among Indians.

Bipin Chandra Pal was born on November 7, 1858, in the Sylhet district of undivided India, which is now part of Bangladesh. He emerged as one of the prominent leaders of the Indian freedom movement and played a significant role in shaping nationalist politics during the struggle against British rule.

Pal was an important member of the famous Lal-Bal-Pal trio, along with Lala Lajpat Rai and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The three leaders became prominent figures in the nationalist movement and advocated a more assertive approach towards achieving independence. Their efforts helped strengthen resistance against British policies and gave a new direction to the national movement.

A staunch supporter of Swaraj and complete political independence, Pal believed that Indians should actively work towards ending colonial domination rather than depend solely on constitutional reforms. He encouraged people to boycott foreign goods, adopt indigenous products and promote national education. His ideas played an important role in strengthening the Swadeshi movement and inspiring people to participate in the freedom struggle.

Pal was particularly active during the movement against the partition of Bengal in 1905. The British decision to divide Bengal triggered widespread protests across the region, with nationalist leaders mobilising people against the move. Pal emerged as one of the influential voices of the anti-partition movement and encouraged the adoption of Swadeshi principles as a means of resisting colonial rule.

Apart from his political activities, Pal made significant contributions as a journalist, author and public speaker. Through his writings and speeches, he sought to spread nationalist ideas and encourage Indians to develop a strong sense of political and social awareness. His powerful oratory helped him connect with people and communicate the importance of self-rule and national unity.

He also raised his voice against prevailing social evils and caste-based discrimination. Pal believed that political freedom would remain incomplete without social reform and the removal of inequalities within society.

Rajnath Singh Celebrates Diwali with Air Force Personnel at Bagdogra

■ SPNN

Siliguri : Defence Minister Rajnath Singh celebrated Diwali with Indian Air Force personnel at the Bagdogra Air Force Station on Saturday, extending festive greetings to the armed forces and sharing sweets with the personnel. He praised their courage, dedication and discipline, describing the contribution of the Indian Air Force to national security and disaster relief operations as a matter of pride for the country.



Interacting with the personnel, Singh said the courage and commitment of Indian Air Force soldiers were recognised not only in India but across the world. Whether safeguarding the country's borders under challenging circumstances or undertaking rescue and relief operations during natural disasters, Air Force personnel remained prepared to face every challenge, he said. Describing their dedication as one of the country's greatest strengths, the Defence Minister emphasised the importance of discipline in the armed forces. He said that no matter how advanced technology became, it would have little significance without courage and discipline among soldiers. "Discipline is what transforms an ordinary soldier into an extraordinary warrior," Singh said, highlighting that military strength depended not only on modern equipment but also on the determination, commitment and discipline of personnel. He stressed the need to enhance the capabilities of the armed forces in emerging technological fields, particularly drone operations and cybersecurity. According to the Defence Minister, soldiers are being trained in drone operations, cyber protection and evolving warfare strategies to prepare them for future security challenges. Singh said equipping the armed forces with advanced technologies was essential to respond effectively to changing threats. He expressed confidence that with the cooperation, dedication and commitment of military personnel, India would continue to make steady progress in strengthening its defence capabilities.

Stolen Public Money Will Be Recovered: Sukanta Majumdar

Manashi Ghosh ■

Hooghly: Union Minister Sukanta Majumdar launched a sharp attack on the Trinamool Congress from the stage of a Kali Puja inauguration in Hooghly. Warning that corruption would not be tolerated, he said that every case — from panchayats to the Swasthya Sathi scheme — would be investigated. Those who have looted public money will have to return it. If necessary, the stolen money will be recovered by applying every possible pressure. During the event, he also targeted Abhishek Banerjee and advised the police administration to perform its role impartially.

On Saturday, the Union Minister inaugurated the Kali Puja celebrations of the Yatrik Club in Hindmotor, the Singur Dakat Kalibari Unnayan Committee and the Pragati Sangha in Pandua. MLA Dipanjan Chakraborty of Uttarpara, Srirampur organisational district BJP president Shashi Singh, Singur MLA Dr Arup Kumar Das, Saptagram MLA Swaraj Ghosh and Pandua MLA Tushar Majumdar, among several other dignitaries, were present at the programmes.

Speaking to journalists in Singur, Sukanta Majumdar targeted Abhishek Banerjee and said that the BJP does not win elections relying on the police. He said, "We have neither won elections relying on the police in the past, nor will we do so in the future. We win elections on our own strength. The police and administration should perform their duties impartially." Referring to the police's conduct towards Abhishek, he said it was wrong to assume that the same circumstances as before would continue under a BJP government.

The Union Minister also took a dig at the celebrations planned for Abhishek Banerjee's birthday. He alleged that holding the programme on the footpath in front of Abhishek's residence was disrupting the movement of ordinary people. Sukanta claimed that earlier, security arrangements outside Abhishek's residence had even made it difficult for him to visit a nearby doctor's house. He suggested that if Abhishek wanted to celebrate his birthday, the programme could be held at Brigade Parade Ground, Netaji Indoor Stadium or any hall, but ordinary people should not be inconvenienced by occupying the footpath.

He also hit back at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's allegations regarding the stone-pelting incident outside Abhishek's residence. Responding to a comment made by the CPI(M) on social media about Make in India, he took a jibe at the Marxist ideology of the Left. He said that an Indian company acquiring ownership of a foreign company was a matter of pride for the country.

Sukanta also commented on Trinamool leader Kunal Ghosh. He claimed that Kunal Ghosh was unhappy with Abhishek Banerjee and took a sarcastic swipe by referring to the Kaurava-Pandava episode from the Mahabharata.

During the Kali Puja inauguration programmes, Sukanta Majumdar targeted the Trinamool Congress and the CPI(M) on several issues, including corruption, the role of the police and the political situation in the state. His statements indicated that the exchange of allegations in state politics could intensify once again.

12 Durga Puja Committees in Hooghly Receive Awards, 50,000 Each



Manashi Ghosh ■

Hooghly: Twelve Durga Puja committees from the four subdivision areas of Hooghly district were honoured in four categories at the 'Debi Durga Samman – 2026'. At a ceremony held on Friday at Rabindra Bhavan in Chinsurah, representatives of the winning committees received trophies and prize money of ?50,000 each.

The awards highlighted that the true merit of Durga Puja lies not merely in dazzling lights, lavish budgets or grand pavilions, but in artistic creativity, the aesthetic appeal of the idol and social responsibility. Of the 76 Puja committees initially selected from the district's 18 blocks, 12 municipalities and one municipal corporation, 12 were chosen for the final awards.

The competition was organised by the district administration and the District Information and Cultural Affairs Department, with the cooperation of the police administration.

Representatives of the district administration, Chandannagar Police Commissionerate , ISKCON and Sanskar Bharati were part of the judging process.

In the Best Puja category, the awards went to Baganbari Sree Sree Durga Puja Committee, Dhanyaghori Maa Durga Seva Sangha and Beguntala Jagorani Sangha. In the Best Idol category, Keota No. 1 Nabin Sangha, Chatra C.S.C. Club and Masinan Sarbojanin Sree Sree Durgotsav Shakti Sangha were honoured. The Best Pavilion awards went to Keota Ujjwal Sangha, Bagchi Bazar Sarbojanin Durga Puja Committee and Daulatpur Yubashakti Natyamandir. In the Social Awareness category, the awards were presented to Chakbazar Sarbojanin Durga Puja Samiti, Prabhasnagar Netaji More and Somra Colony Sarbojanin Durgotsav Committee.

Chandannagar MLA Deepanjan Guha, District Magistrate Khurshid Ali Qadri, ADM (G) Vivek Pankaj, Chandannagar Police Commissioner Sunil Kumar Yadav, Probal Boshak, representatives of ISKCON and Sanskar Bharati, Gauri Sengupta and several other dignitaries were present at the ceremony.

On the occasion, Vasudev Kole, president of the Baganbari Sree Sree Durga Puja Committee, said, "This award is the result of six months of tireless work. We are overwhelmed. We extend our congratulations and love to all the barowari Puja committees and the people of the district. Next year, we will present even more new pavilions. We invite everyone to visit our pavilion from now itself."

The competition sent out a clear message this year: a Puja is not considered the best merely because it attracts crowds; social responsibility must also be one of the defining features of the Durga Puja festival.

Dilip Ghosh Dismisses Attack Claims Against Abhishek Banerjee, Takes Dig at Birthday Event

■ SPNN

Kolkata: West Bengal Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Dilip Ghosh on Saturday dismissed allegations of an attempted attack on Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee and took a sarcastic swipe at the arrangements made for the latter's birthday celebration.

Speaking to reporters during his morning walk at Eco Park in Kolkata, Ghosh remarked that a leader of Abhishek Banerjee's stature should have celebrated his birthday at a luxury hotel rather than organising an event on the footpath. In a sarcastic comment, he said that sweets should have been thrown at the gathering instead of bricks and stones.

The controversy erupted on Friday night when TMC workers and supporters gathered outside Abhishek Banerjee's residence on Kalighat Road to celebrate his birthday. BJP workers were also allegedly present at the location, triggering a confrontation between the two groups.

The situation escalated following slogan-shouting and counter-sloganeering, eventually leading to a physical altercation. Abhishek Banerjee also came out of his residence after the confrontation broke out.

Following the incident, the TMC MP alleged that some people had arrived at the spot carrying firearms with the intention of killing him. He claimed that his supporters had managed to catch the alleged attackers at the scene. Reacting to these allegations, Ghosh questioned the claims and said that he was not fully aware of the circumstances surrounding the incident. However, he took a dig at the birthday arrangements, suggesting that organising such a celebration on a footpath may have contributed to the situation.

Commenting on Abhishek Banerjee's allegation of an attempted assassination, Ghosh said that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had made similar statements in the past. He remarked that people sometimes resort to emotional statements when they feel their political position is weakening. During the interaction, Ghosh also targeted the Left parties over their recent campaign encouraging people to read books. The campaign was launched by Left workers following allegations of vandalism at a party stall during Durga Puja celebrations. Questioning the initiative, Ghosh said that those who had allegedly destroyed the state's education system were now advising people to read books. He described the campaign as ironic and questioned who would be interested in reading books published by the Left parties.

His remarks came amid continuing political exchanges between the ruling Trinamool Congress, the BJP and Left parties in West Bengal following the confrontation outside Abhishek Banerjee's residence.

ABVP to Hold Student Rally in Siliguri on November 19

SPNN ■

Siliguri: The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) will organise a major student rally in Siliguri on November 19 under the slogan 'Save Democracy, Remove Anarchy'. The rally will begin at Baghajatin Park and proceed towards the Sub-Divisional Officer's (SDO) office.

The announcement was made at a press conference held at the organisation's office on Saturday. The student body said it aims to mobilise around 10,000 students from across North Bengal for the proposed demonstration.

According to ABVP, students from 12 organisational districts of North Bengal are expected to participate in the rally. The organisation is also planning to expand the movement to South Bengal and other parts of the state.

Shyam Bazar Temple Houses Centuries-Old Veiled Goddess Kali

■ SPNN

Kolkata : West Bengal is home to numerous ancient and unique temples dedicated to Goddess Kali, each associated with its own beliefs, traditions and religious significance. Among them is a distinctive temple in Shyam Bazar in north Kolkata, where the goddess is worshipped not in her commonly seen fierce form but in a calm and gentle appearance, with a veil covering her head. Popularly known as Ghunghat Wali Maa Kali, the temple is a special centre of devotion for its unique idol and centuries-old religious traditions.

The ancient temple is located on Balaram Ghosh Street, opposite Shyampukur Police Station. Visitors travelling from Shyam Bazar's five-point crossing along Bhupen Bose Avenue will find Maharaja Manindra Chandra College on the way. The temple stands directly opposite the college, near the police station. Situated amid the busy streets of north Kolkata, the shrine offers an atmosphere of tranquillity and spiritual calm as soon as devotees enter its premises.



The most striking feature of the temple is the unusual appearance of the goddess. Traditionally, Goddess Kali is depicted with dishevelled hair, a garland of severed heads and a fierce expression. However, the idol at this temple presents an entirely different image. Maa Kali is seen wearing a beautifully arranged veil over her head, while her face reflects peace, compassion and motherly affection. This distinctive representation has earned her the name Ghunghat Wali Maa Kali, making the temple stand apart from other Kali shrines in the city.

The history of the temple dates back to 1888 and is closely associated with the Ghosh family, whose members were prominent zamindars in the area. According to local belief, Tulsiram Ghosh, a descendant of the respected zamindar Balaram Ghosh, had a divine dream one night in which Goddess Kali appeared before him. Unlike the fierce form commonly associated with the goddess, she appeared wearing a veil and displaying a peaceful and gentle expression.

Deeply influenced by this spiritual experience, Tulsiram Ghosh decided to establish an idol of the goddess in the same form in which she had appeared in his dream. Accordingly, an idol was commissioned and installed in the temple, preserving the distinctive appearance of the deity. Since then, the shrine has continued to attract devotees who come to seek the blessings of the veiled goddess.

The temple continues to follow its traditional rituals and practices, with regular worship performed according to established customs. The offerings made to the goddess also reflect the shrine's distinctive traditions. These include salt-free luchis, five varieties of fried vegetables, boondi and different kinds of sweets. Such offerings form an important part of the daily religious practices and are prepared with devotion as part of the worship. The temple witnesses a particularly large gathering of devotees during Kali Puja, observed on the new moon night of the Hindu month of Kartik. Devotees from different parts of Kolkata and neighbouring areas visit the shrine to offer prayers and seek the blessings of Maa Kali. The occasion is marked by special worship and religious activities, making it one of the most significant events in the temple's annual calendar.

On Rising Heart Disease Risk Among India's Affluent

A study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, involving 65,364 Indians aged 45 and above, has found that sustained socioeconomic advantage is associated with higher odds of heart failure and heart attack than persistent economic disadvantage. The finding demands scrutiny of the relationship between prosperity and health. Sedentary lifestyles, abdominal obesity and unhealthy diets - the traits among the affluent? - explain why greater purchasing power can accompany higher cardiovascular risk. But the study, based on survey data from 2017-18, only establishes association. Factors such as access to diagnosis and affordable treatment can influence differences in survival. Affluent patients have greater access to investigations to screen for cardiovascular as well as other lifestyle diseases and also to get continual treatment; poorer patients often remain undiagnosed or die prematurely. Lower recorded disease prevalence among disadvantaged groups, therefore, offers little justification for complacency.

For instance, an analysis of national survey data from 2019-21 shows that just 8.5% of Indians had the means to treat their blood pressure.The expenditure associated with cardiovascular illnesses can also be prohibitive. A study published in 2026, covering 1,859 heart-failure patients across 21 hospitals, reported average annual out-of-pocket spending of Rs 1,06,566; for 37.7% of households, this was a catastrophic health expenditure. These findings demand financial protection being extended to outpatient medicines, investigations and follow-up care. Moreover, the conditions in which cardiovascular illnesses develop must also be considered. Air pollution accounted for about 31.1% of India's cardiovascular burden from 1990-2016. Air pollution affects the poor more than the rich, as do adverse temperatures and polluting cooking fuels. Advice about diet and exercise is inadequate while affordable nutritious food, clean air and safe public spaces remain inaccessible.

Public policy must integrate reliable primary care with emissions control, clean cooking, healthier food environments and protection from hazardous temperatures. Treating heart disease principally as a consequence of socio-economic status may lead to the exclusion of failures in healthcare financing and environmental regulation. The appropriate response should be prevention across income groups, with greater protection for those least able to secure treatment or absorb its costs.

Towards A Culture Of Care In Education: NCERT Director Writes On Mental Health And Well-being

DINESH SAKLANI

Mental health and well-being are integral to the development of every individual and, more importantly, to the development of a healthy society. In the context of education, this understanding assumes even greater significance.

A child does not come to school merely to learn different subjects but with a bundle of motions, aspirations, relationships, concerns, strengths and vulnerabilities. Therefore, the quality of education must also be reflected in the extent to which it enables children to develop emotional resilience, healthy relationships, self-awareness and the ability to deal with the goodness and challenges of life.

NCERT's text books, health and wellness resources approaches mental health similarly, as a continuum, and emphasises on self-awareness, managing emotions, decision-making and problem-solving as important life skills.

The contemporary world presents young people with opportunities as well as unprecedented pressures. Academic competition, changing career pathways, social expectations, digital exposure, social media, concerns about identity and body image, loneliness and uncertainty about the future can significantly influence the emotional well-being of children and adolescents alike.

At the same time, the Indian perspective on mental well-being offers us a valuable foundation. Indian of human development. Similarly, the Panchakosha framework, the five sheaths of Vedantic philosophy described in the Taittiriya Upanishad, offers a particularly meaningful perspective on holistic develop-



Knowledge Systems (IKS) have traditionally viewed education as a holistic process of developing the individual in harmony with the self, society and nature. The objective of education has never been restricted to accumulation of information or preparation for livelihood. As our ancient text greatly emphasises on that, it reminds us that true knowledge should contribute to freedom from fear, confusion and limitations.

Practices such as yoga, meditation, pranayama, self-discipline, reflection, dialogue, physical activity and amicable teacher-student relationships were understood as important dimensions ment. It views the individual through five interconnected dimensions: Annamaya (physical), Pranamaya (vital life force energy), Manomaya (mental and emotional), Vijnanamaya (intellectual and reflective) and Anandamaya (experience of happiness and bliss, self-realisation and consciousness). The framework emphasises their interdependence and balance, offering a valuable conceptual foundation for contemporary approaches to mental well-being, and holistic education.

This holistic understanding remains highly relevant today. Importantly, well-being need not always be taught through a separate lesson titled "mental health". Stories, poems, narratives, classroom discussions and activities can themselves become powerful means of nurturing emotional and social well-being. A story can help a child understand another person's feelings. A poem can create space for reflection, hope and imagination. A character facing failure can help normalise setbacks. A classroom discussion can enable children to recognise emotions, appreciate differences and develop empathy. Textbooks are not merely repositories of information; they also help build and influence the values, attitudes and ways of looking at life that students gradually develop. However, institutionalising mental health requires us to go beyond programmes and events. A one-day workshop can sensitise. A counselling session can provide immediate support. A textbook can initiate a conversation. But a mentally healthy school environment is created through consistent everyday practices. The task therefore before our education system is not to choose between academic excellence and well-being; rather, they should reinforce each other.

Cursed TechGen: Data-Drugged, Distant And Dead Inside

"We Have Given Our Children Everything They Could Want, But Are We Losing Them to the Very World We Created for Them?"

Hunched backs. Earphones plugged in. Eyes either fixed on a screen or staring into nothingness. The beautiful natural world around them has ceased to exist. For the 'TechGen', humanity seems to have taken a back seat, while the digital world has become reality. On streets and roads, in drawing rooms and lounges, colleges and university spaces, among hawkers and air travellers, in BMWs or rickshaws, people are unsmiling, busy living in an imaginary world created by digital technology.

Dead to the outside world and seemingly disconnected within, people are emerging into a disturbing new reality, the air the moment the media approached or mobile cameras switched on. The drama was recorded by dozens of phones, with content quickly shared across influencer platforms to garner views, a few seconds of glory and more followers. Thereafter, they returned to their screens, detached from the moment that had briefly consumed them.

Interestingly, nearly 100 per cent of the protesters were young girls, with a few middle-aged women competing for space. Many used abusive language and expressed their anger in explosive outbursts, while 30 to 40 men watched, cheered and recorded the spectacle. The drama often died down within minutes, once influencers and media personnel had captured their content and moved on. A few seconds of glory, glamour and



where cameras record an injured person dying on the street rather than someone stepping in to help. It is a world our generation has created in the name of progress, sacrificing humanism for a tech-enabled, efficient but socially struggling generation. As parents, we have placed smartphones in the hands of children as young as two, allowing them to consume digital content curated specifically for their age group. We proudly showcase their navigational skills on screens, often using these devices to buy ourselves some time, whether for personal needs or work.

Smiles seem to be missing even from the faces of billionaire social media platform owners such as Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg, whose platforms generate and curate content for a connected and empowered class. Smartphones have reached an estimated 97 per cent of Indian youth, with similar trends evident across the world. Unfortunately, those consuming digital content also seem to be losing their smiles, their social lives increasingly fractured. They remain digitally connected to a distant world while living in isolation within their own homes.

The contrast is difficult to ignore. On one side, unimaginable wealth is being accumulated; on the other, people are becoming increasingly dependent on a stream of data that never ends.

The online content business model draws and rewards attention, but consumers pay a price in the form of isolation and a break from humanity. The human cost is being borne by the TechGen. Smiles are disappearing. Anger is taking their place, both among the Elons and Marks of the world and among the consumers addicted to the digital content their platforms deliver.

In recent protests in Delhi, young people from reasonably comfortable backgrounds took to the streets, shouting with clenched fists and displaying hostility towards people or causes they may not fully have understood. Their hands went up in validation-and then what? Women and young girls must understand that algorithms can turn them into content for consumption, often divorced from the cause they believe they are supporting.

The same phenomenon is visible in France, Belgium and other affluent countries, where young people in hoodies and loose black sweatshirts engage in the destruction of public and private property built through years of hard work. Their actions may reflect pent-up anger, isolation and fractured family lives. Sometimes, the need to feel connected and useful can become more compelling than the desire to understand a cause or its consequences. The need to belong, to be seen and to be validated can become more powerful than the desire to understand. Reflection gives way to reaction; thought gives way to impulse.

Some parents appear to push their children into public causes and a career of protest before they have developed the maturity to understand the burdens they are being asked to carry. Greta Thunberg is a case in point. Consider Nisha, a 15-year-old who may barely understand the meaning of education and opportunity, yet maintains an X profile declaring herself an atheist. Content expressing anger and divisiveness is generated by the hour, with her father and a group of people seemingly at the forefront. The girl is young and outspoken, but now appears unhappy, as though her childhood is being snatched away-not by society, but by her own people, for reasons best known to them.

Meanwhile, the digital world has become a substitute for human company. A child who finds it difficult to speak to parents may pour out feelings to an online stranger or an artificial intelligence companion. A young person struggling with loneliness may find comfort in a screen, only to return to the same isolation when it goes dark. Technology can offer support, but it cannot replace the warmth of a family, the reassurance of a friend or the wisdom of a human being who genuinely cares.

Pakistan's 3D Terror Tactics: Drugs, Drones And Dead-Drops

DR G SHREEKUMAR MENON

Pakistan's drug smuggling networks have undergone a massive technological makeover, relying on exploiting the darknet and cryptocurrency to orchestrate transnational narcotics trafficking. Traditionally operating as a primary transit corridor for plant-based Afghan opiates via the Golden Crescent, modern Pakistani narco-terror syndicates utilize anonymized digital marketplaces to coordinate domestic distribution and cross-border operations, especially into India, transforming how narcotics enter and exit through Pakistan's international borders.

The dead-drop model has reshaped how drugs are distributed across the globe. Modern drug transactions now involve no face-to-face interactions; instead, orders are placed online, paid for with cryptocurrency, and retrieved from secret locations across cities within hours. This system, offering convenience and anonymity, has seen synthetic drugs, being distributed with ease and secrecy.

This ground-breaking shift in the global drug trade, pioneered in Russia and now spreading globally, leverages darknet markets and cryptocurrency for anonymous transactions, allowing buyers to retrieve drugs from hidden physical locations, or "dead drops," rather than direct exchanges. Driven by large platforms such as Kraken, Mega, and Blacks Prut, Russian darknet markets control 93% of the global share, generating approximately $1.5 billion in revenue in 2023 alone. This dominance marks a new era for organized crime, with Russia's digital drug economy vastly surpassing traditional Western darknet markets in scope and influence.

Darknet market (DNM) activity remains globally resilient, with aggregate DNM flows reaching nearly $2.6 billion in 2025. Darknet markets (DNMs) remain one of the most persistent segments of the crypto-enabled illicit economy.

Despite repeated law enforcement takedowns, market exits, and infrastructure disruptions, DNMs continue to facilitate the sale of illicit drugs at scale, while also serving as key hubs for fraud-related services.

Pakistan remains the indispensable transit corridor, channelling Afghan-origin heroin, hashish, and synthetics eastward into India while also moving narco-products westward toward Europe.

What Is AWACS And Why Does India Need More Flying Radars?

VALLARI PARASHAR

Six. That is how many airborne radar aircraft India has to watch two hostile borders, and the case for AWACS in India starts there. An AWACS is a radar on an aircraft. Put it high up and it sees what ground radars cannot, over the horizon and past the mountains. The crew inside separates friend from foe and talks fighters onto targets.

The Phalcons came first. Three Israeli radars on Russian IL-76 transports, in service since 2009. They see all the way round, and they are still the best India has. The Netra AEW&C fleet is homegrown.

DRDO built the radar and fitted it on small Embraer jets. Three fly from Bathinda, and they received final operational clearance on 25 June 2026. The radar covers about 240 degrees, so there is a blind sector behind the aircraft.

Six more Netra Mk1A aircraft were cleared by the Defence Acquisition Council in March 2025. Since then, little visible movement.

Reports from August 2026 say no contract had been signed, though a deal was expected by the end of the year. The Mk II is firmer. On 22 July 2026, DRDO signed two contracts. One lets Air India's engineering arm convert six Airbus A321 airliners. The other makes Adani Defence the partner for the mission systems. It is a real step forward, but no official delivery



date has been announced, and trade reports point to the early 2030s.

The IISS Military Balance, as reported in December 2025, lists about 40 KJ-500 aircraft in the Chinese air force alone, with more in the navy. Pakistan is usually credited with nine Saab Erieye aircraft. None of these is an official inventory, and none says how many are flying on a given day. The types also differ widely in range and endurance. Still, both neighbours are credited with more airborne early warning aircraft than India's six.

Small fleets have a hidden problem. One aircraft on patrol is never just one aircraft. Others are in servicing, crews need rest, and each sortie burns hours getting to station. Keeping a radar up through the night takes several airframes. Then there is geography. In the north, the Himalayas hide low flyers from ground radars, and China has been extending airfields across Tibet. In the west, the distances are so short that warning time is measured in minutes. One theatre could absorb most of the fleet. Covering two at once looks very difficult. It is no magic shield. These aircraft are big, slow and expensive, which makes them a prize target. How far back one should fly depends on the threat, the mission and the escort. Long-range missiles such as the PL-15, reportedly carried by Pakistan's J-10C fighters, are one reason planners worry. Jamming is another. Cut the data link and a radar aircraft could become a lonely observer.

It also needs fighters. The IAF has around 30 squadrons against 42 sanctioned, and a radar picture is only useful if there are jets to act on it.

If the Mk1A contract keeps slipping, India may spend much of this decade with the same six aircraft it has today. That is a risk, not a certainty, and the Mk II contracts suggest the larger programme is moving. But the Mk II is a development project. Delays are common in such programmes, and the 2030s may arrive before the aircraft do.

India's record is not encouraging. More Phalcons were discussed from around 2011 and never bought. The indigenous route began with joint IAF and DRDO feasibility studies in 2003, and full clearance of the Netra came in 2026, more than two decades later. Neither route has been quick, and the neighbours may not wait. Early warning creates an advantage, but it does not guarantee victory. If the gap is not closed, India could find itself seeing first in only a few places at a time.

English Daily Samay Paribartan, Kolkata is Published by Ashok Kumar Roy 3, Jagabandhu Modak Road, Flat no.101, Sovabazar, Kolkata - 700 005, owned by Ashok Kumar Roy,
Edited by Debasis Dutta and Printed by Ritesh Vajpeyi at L.S.Publications Pvt.Ltd at 4 Canal West Road, Kolkata - 700 015, (M)-98300 52196, Mail id: editorsamayparibartan@gmail.com, PRGI NO.WBENG/2011/37824

Pakistani military action displaces 300 families in Balochistan's Quetta

■ AGENCY

Quetta: Pakistani military operations in Balochistan's Quetta district have forced around 300 Mashwani tribal families to flee their ancestral homes, with the displaced people facing severe difficulties in finding food and shelter amid rain and cold weather, local media reported on Saturday, citing sources.

The families fled Killi Muhammad Khail in Panjpai, located southwest of Quetta, following several days of heightened tensions and military operations.

Reports suggest that shelling by Pakistani forces and the use of heavy weaponry caused damage to several houses.

The displaced included women, children and elderly people, with families facing severe shortages of food, shelter and clean drinking water. Families said they had nowhere to go with their children and remained uncertain about when they could return home, The Balochistan Post reported.

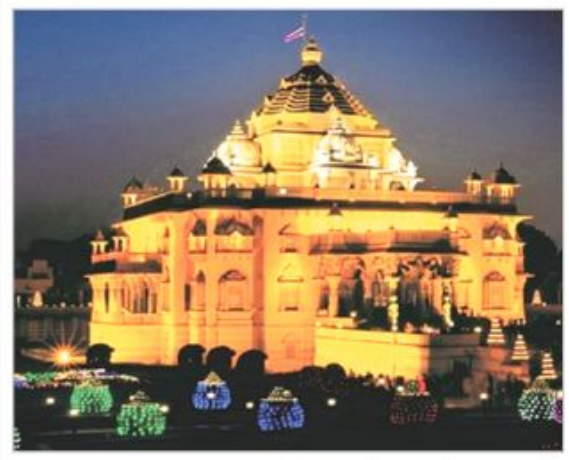
On Wednesday, clashes erupted between Pakistani forces and armed men in the Killi Muhammad Khail area, reportedly leaving a Frontier Corps (FC) soldier dead.

Citing local sources, The Balochistan Post reported that



gunfire was heard near an Afghan refugee camp, which was subsequently cordoned off, with residents asked to evacuate.

Condemning the displacement, the Pashtunkhwa National Awami Party said that authorities should ensure the safety of residents instead of driving them out of their ancestral areas in the aftermath of attacks. "Evicting people from their homes and ancestral areas in the name of security is outright injustice and oppression," the party said in a statement. It called on the authorities to meet the basic needs of displaced families, including food, shelter and healthcare, and ensure their safe and dignified return. The party maintained that combating militancy and protecting the population were the state's responsibility and that innocent residents should not be subjected to collective punishment. The displacement of families in Quetta comes against the backdrop of similar grievances raised by farming communities in Gwadar's Shadi Kaur, where evictions and restrictions imposed on the pretext of security reasons have reportedly deprived residents of access to their homes and agricultural lands. Residents told The Balochistan Post that several families had already been displaced, while landowners, farmers and tenant farmers were being prevented from accessing their orchards and crops ready for harvest. They further said that the restrictions have put agricultural assets valued at tens of millions of rupees at risk. Last month, human rights body Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) strongly condemned Pakistani authorities, accusing them of forcibly displacing thousands of families across Balochistan and stripping people of their ancestral homes.



Melas to mithai, Diwali lights up US, Canada

■ AGENCY

Washington: From Ramlila on New Jersey's Oak Tree Road to fireworks near Chicago and a street mela in Toronto, communities across the United States and Canada are marking Diwali with music, sweets and gatherings that bring the festival into neighbourhoods and shopping districts.

With Diwali falling on Sunday, November 8, the weekend promises temple celebrations, festive meals and illuminated public spaces. Earlier events have already brought families together in New York's Jackson Heights and New Jersey's Indian shopping corridor.

In Jackson Heights, Queens, the Indian Merchants' Association organised a November 1 mela on 74th Street, between 37th Avenue and 37th Road. The neighbourhood event listing advertised live music and a celebration for families and friends.

On Oak Tree Road in Iselin, New Jersey, gathering featured Ramlila, music and cultural performances at the Raj Jewels parking lot.

The celebration included a Ramlila by Pandit Satya Narayan Charka and 40 classically trained artists. Elaborate costumes, dance and English narration brought the story of Lord Ram to the audience. Edison's annual Diwali festival follows on Saturday at Papaianni Park, with diya lighting, cultural dances, food stalls, free chai and mehndi, according to a Friday report by Patch. More than 100,000 lights are planned, with a drone and fireworks show sponsored by Patel Brothers closing the evening. The township's theme, "Celebrating Diwali in America 250", links the festival to the United States' 250th anniversary. Jersey City will also host "Diwali Together 2026" at Exchange Place on Saturday, from noon to 7 p.m., according to its Office of Cultural Affairs. In Chicago, Indian restaurant is serving chef Jeet Singh's festive specials through Sunday, with dishes ranging from raj kachori chaat to chocolate mousse with jamun. In nearby Bartlett, the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir has scheduled a fireworks and sound show for Saturday.

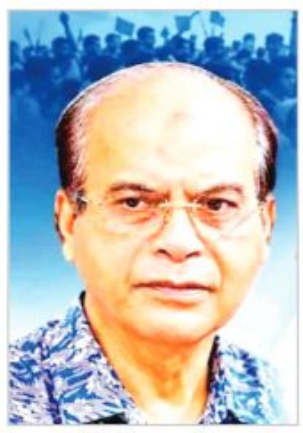
Rights body slams 'politically motivated' imprisonment of Bangladeshi senior journalist

■ AGENCY

Paris: A leading international human rights organisation has strongly condemned the arrest and imprisonment of a senior Bangladeshi journalist, describing the move as an act of political persecution and an abuse of the criminal justice system to punish him for his political identity and professional background.

The remarks came after a Bangladeshi court sent Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, chairman of DBC News and a former information advisor to ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, to jail in connection with a murder case linked to the July 2024 protests.

The order was passed by Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Sarah Farzana Haque on Thursday following a petition submitted by the investigating officer, according



to Public Prosecutor Muhammad Shamsuddoha Chowdhury, Bangladeshi media reported.

Justice Makers Bangladesh in France (JMBF) alleged that Sobhan Chowdhury had been implicated in the murder case and imprisoned solely because of his perceived support for the Awami League and his association with the ideals of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War.

Expressing grave concern, the rights body said that a murder case was being weaponised to silence a journalist and criminalise his political identity. It noted that the published court account did not cite any specific evidence establishing his direct involvement in, or responsibility for the killing, or showing that he had instructed it.

The rights body further stressed that political affiliation or professional association with a former government cannot substitute for evidence of individual criminal responsibility.

"We unequivocally condemn the politically motivated arrest and imprisonment of veteran journalist Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury. This disturbing pattern of persecution began under the previous interim government led by Muhammad Yunus and continues to threaten fundamental freedoms in Bangladesh. JMBF firmly believes that he has been targeted solely for his perceived association with the Bangladesh Awami League and his support for the ideals of our Liberation War," said JMBF Founder President Shahanur Islam.

"Weaponising criminal law to punish political beliefs and silence journalists is an outrageous abuse of state power. We demand his immediate release and an end to this political persecution," he added.

The JMBF called on the government of Bangladesh to immediately release Sobhan Chowdhury, end his "politically motivated" detention and prosecution, and withdraw all charges brought against him based on his perceived political affiliation.

Paraguayan President Removed After Senate Impeachment Vote

■ AGENCY

Asuncion: Paraguay's Senate voted unanimously to remove President Santiago Pena from office following an impeachment trial over alleged misconduct linked to the collapse of Ueno Bank, with all 44 senators present voting in favor. Prosecutors ordered the detention of ousted President over alleged breach of trust and other offenses linked to the collapse of Ueno Bank, local media reported. According to local newspaper ABC Color, the order was issued by a team of four prosecutors investigating the banking scandal and sent to the national police for enforcement. Pena faced accusations of conflicts of interest involving the private bank, regulatory manipulation and misuse of pension funds, Xinhua news agency reported. Pena submitted his resignation Thursday amid a crisis triggered by the authorities' intervention in Ueno Bank, apparently seeking to avoid impeachment. The Senate voted 24-20 against his resignation, but a joint session of Congress failed to complete the process as lawmakers' walk-out left the Chamber of Deputies without a quorum. The Chamber of Deputies had separately approved impeachment charges against Pena, paving the way for the Senate trial. Pena had sought additional time to prepare his defense, arguing that he received the impeachment charges only late Thursday night. The Senate later ruled that Pena had failed to appear to present his defense and proceeded to review the evidence. His defense lawyers subsequently arrived at Congress.

Amish Shah urges curbs on Trump's Iran war powers



■ AGENCY

Washington: Indian-American congressman-elect Amish Shah on Friday called for Congress to reclaim authority over the war with Iran, promising scrutiny of President Donald Trump's administration as he prepares to enter the US House.

"We've got to take the authority away from the president on this because Congress has the responsibility to declare war," Shah told AZFamily's Good Morning Arizona programme. The Democrat, an emergency room physician and former Arizona legislator, defeated Republican Jay Feely in Arizona's 1st Congressional District. He will succeed Republican David Schweikert in the Scottsdale-area seat. Shah said he wanted Defence Department officials to provide a comprehensive plan and options for ending the war.

Kiren Rijiju visits historic Al Rahmah Mosque in Saudi Arabia

■ AGENCY

Riyadh: Union Minister for Parliamentary and Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju visited the iconic Al Rahmah Mosque in Jeddah, widely known as the Floating Mosque, a historic landmark reflecting Saudi Arabia's rich Islamic heritage and architectural grandeur.

Sharing a glimpse of his visit on Saturday, in a post on X, Rijiju said, "Visited the historic Al Rahmah Mosque in Jeddah, popularly known as the Floating Mosque, situated along the beautiful Red Sea coastline. A remarkable place of spiritual significance and architectural beauty, reflecting the rich Islamic heritage of Saudi Arabia."

Rijiju arrived in Jeddah on Friday for the 6th Haj



Conference and Exhibition 2027, where he will participate in signing the bilateral Haj agreement with Saudi Arabia and review preparations to ensure a safe and comfortable Haj journey for Indian pilgrims next year.

"Landed in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to attend the 6th Haj Conference & Exhibition 2027, participate in the signing of the Bilateral Haj Agreement with the KSA & review preparations for Haj 2027.Was warmly received at the airport by Shri Fahad Suri, Consul General of India in Jeddah. Looking forward to productive engagements focused on ensuring a smooth, safe & comfortable Haj journey for all Indian pilgrims," Rijiju posted on X.

Last month, India's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Vipul, met Saudi Arabia's Vice Minister of Hajj and Umrah, Abdulfattah bin Suleiman Al-Mashat, and reviewed preparations for Haj 2027, besides inspecting the Haj Terminal at Jeddah Airport and the Haramain High Speed Railway Station, the Consulate General of India in Jeddah said.

"Ambassador of India to Saudi Arabia H.E. Shri Vipul, accompanied by Consul General Shri Fahad Suri and Consul (Haj) Ms. Sadaf Choudhary, met H.E. Dr. Abdulfattah bin Suleiman Al-Mashat, Vice Minister of Hajj and Umrah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and other senior officials of the Saudi Hajj and Umrah Ministry, on 04 October 2026," the Consulate posted on X. "The two sides comprehensively reviewed preparations for Haj 2027 and discussed continued close coordination between the Indian Haj Mission and the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, Saudi Arabia, for the forthcoming Haj 2027," it added.

Two charged over Kapil Sharma cafe shooting

■ AGENCY

Washington: Two men have been charged in connection with a shooting at comedian Kapil Sharma's café in Surrey, Canada, and a separate attack on a home that injured a woman, according to police and Canadian media reports.

The Canadian Press identified the business as Kap's Café, reporting that the date and location released by police matched the October 16, 2025, attack on the establishment. British Columbia's Provincial Extortion Task Force announced the charges on Friday against Pardeep Singh and Saveer Khan, both 22. They were arrested in Surrey on November 1 and remain in custody.

Each faces two counts of reckless discharge of a firearm - one for each shooting. The charges have not been proven in court. The café was closed when shots were fired, but two employees were inside. Neither was injured. Four days earlier, on October 12, police had responded to gunfire at a home in the 13000 block of 103A Avenue, where a woman sustained injuries. The extortion task force took over both investigations after identifying possible links between the attacks. Its officers worked with Surrey Police Service and British Columbia's Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit to make the arrests. Chief Superintendent Duncan Pound, a senior RCMP officer in the Lower Mainland, said the charges followed more than a year of investigative work, including search warrants, judicial authorisations and analysis of evidence. "We recognize and share the concerns these incidents created within the community," Pound said in the police statement. He said the charges demonstrated cooperation among law enforcement agencies against extortion-related violence.

Bangladesh Coast Guard drops 'Joy Bangla', four 1971 Liberation War leaders' names from vessels

■ AGENCY

Dhaka: The Bangladesh Coast Guard has renamed five vessels, removing 'Joy Bangla' and eliminating the names of four prominent leaders from the 1971 Liberation War, who were killed in Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975, according to local media reports.

The move, approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs, marked a significant departure from Bangladesh's historical legacy and drew sharp condemnation.

Under the approved changes, BCGS Joy Bangla has been renamed BCGS Adommo Bangla, while the four vessels named after the national leaders have also



been rechristened, Bangladeshi daily Dhaka Tribune reported.

The four vessels have been renamed as BCGS Firoz Kabir, BCGS Nurul Islam, BCGS M Humayun Kabir and BCGS Ashraf Siddiqui, replacing their earlier names -- BCGS Syed Nazrul, BCGS Tajuddin, BCGS Mansur Ali and BCGS Kamruzzaman, respectively.

Condemning the move, the Awami League described the ruling BNP government's decision to rename four Coast Guard vessels bearing the names of four national leaders of 1971-and replace BCGS Joy Bangla with BCGS Adomya Bangla-as an alarming attack on Bangladesh's historical identity.

"Coming just days after Jail Killing Day, this decision is not merely about renaming vessels. It raises serious questions about an apparent attempt to erase the symbols, legacy and values of our Liberation War," the party stated.

Jail Killing Day is observed annually on November 3 to commemorate the assassination of four senior Awami League leaders and key organisers of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War -- Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmad, Captain M. Mansur Ali, and A. H. M. Kamaruzzaman, inside Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

The Awami League linked the renaming decision to what it described as a growing attempt to distance Bangladesh from its founding ideals and historical legacy, citing political developments under the former Muhammad Yunus-led interim government and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman-led BNP government's ties with the radical Islamist party Jamaat- e-Islami. "From Yunus's so-called 'reset' to Tarique Rahman's political alignment with Jamaat, the party whose leadership collaborated in the 1971 genocide, we are witnessing a disturbing pattern: an attempt to redefine Bangladesh by distancing it from its founding history," the party stated. According to the Awami League, Joy Bangla was not merely a political party's slogan but represented Bangladesh, its people, the 1971 Liberation War, and the country's freedom.

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Muhurat trading: Experts favour selective buying, caution against aggressive bets

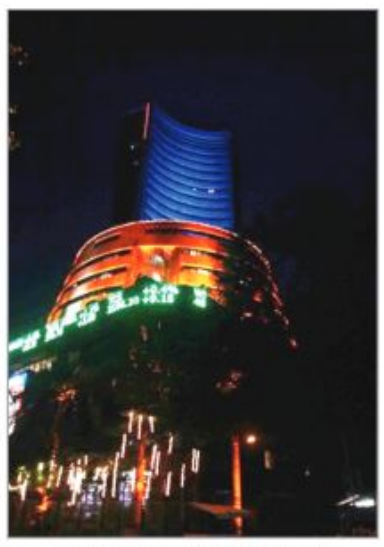
■ SP BUREAU

New Delhi : Investors and traders should adopt a cautious, stock-specific approach during the annual Muhurat trading session on Sunday which marks the beginning of Samvat 2083, as equity benchmark indices approach key resistance levels and limited liquidity could amplify market movements, market experts said.

The special Diwali trading session is traditionally considered auspicious for initiating investments and reviewing financial portfolios.

However, the market experts cautioned against making impulsive decisions driven by festive sentiment, recommending that investors focus on fundamentals, valuations and long-term financial goals.

Meanwhile, long-term investors can use the occasion to review asset allocation and selectively accumulate fundamentally strong stocks, short-term traders should monitor technical levels and global cues before taking positions, they added.



Analysts at domestic brokerage Motilal Oswal Financial Services (MOSL) said Nifty valuations were attractive at 17.5 times forward earnings, around 16 per cent below the long-term average, although small-cap stocks continued to trade at a 25 per cent premium to their historical average.

The brokerage has expected earnings growth to recover in the coming years with Nifty earnings per share projected to rise 16 per cent and 14 per cent year-on-year in FY27 and FY28, respectively, compared with 5 per cent in FY26.

For Samvat 2083, the experts favours banking and financial services, capital markets, manufacturing, global outsourcing and exports, consumption and digital businesses.

Similarly, they see opportunities in healthcare devices, aerospace, auto components, pharmaceutical ingredients, garments, port cargo, organised jewellery and quick-commerce platforms.

Investors should avoid large orders and aggressive trading during the limited Muhurat session, given the possibility of lower liquidity, the experts said.

For new investors, the experts said consider small investments in fundamentally strong companies with a long-term holding perspective, while avoiding stocks bought solely because of the auspicious occasion.

They expect the market to remain sideways to consolidative during the Muhurat session with both benchmark indices approaching crucial resistance zones after a recent rally. Trading around 24,600, Nifty has immediate support at 24,350, while resistance is placed in the 24,700-24,800 range.

They cautioned that profit booking could emerge following six consecutive sessions of gains, particularly amid geopolitical concerns, crude oil volatility and weakness in global markets.

Centre draws up special plan to speed up rabi sowing in 225 dry districts

■ AGENCY

New Delhi : The government has drawn up contingency plans to facilitate sowing in the current rabi season in as many as 225 districts across the country which have been affected due to the erratic monsoon this year in the wake of the El Nino weather pattern.

"We are taking contingency planning to a new level with the development of a dynamic dashboard that will integrate the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) weekly forecasts, data on water bodies and other relevant information to help officials make decisions based on local conditions," Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Director General ML Jat told journalists.

The proposed dashboard would allow users to access information at the district level, he added.

The ICAR chief said a district initially identified as vulnerable to drought could move out of that category if it received adequate rainfall in the coming days.



The assessment should therefore be revised using updated IMD forecasts and rainfall data, including projections for the following 15 days.

Rabi crops, including wheat, have been sown in around 3.8 million hectares as of October 30, which is around 46 per cent less than the same period last year. However, this is also due to untimely rains in the wheat belt, due to which sowing has been delayed and is expected to accelerate now, a senior official explained.

India's Diwali sales poised to cross Rs 7 lakh crore, Delhi clocks Rs 1 lakh crore: CAIT

■ SPNN

New Delhi : The Diwali-related trade in the national capital has crossed a record Rs 1 lakh crore while national sales are poised to cross Rs 7 lakh crore amid hectic buying which peaked on Dhanteras as waves of buyers flooded the markets on Friday, according to figures compiled by the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT).



This year, exceptionally strong demand has been witnessed across several product categories, including gold, silver and jewellery as well as electronic goods and home appliances such as mobile phones, LED televisions, refrigerators, washing machines, air conditioners, according to a CAIT statement issued on Saturday.

Clothing and fashion, too, recorded brisk sales with sarees, suits, kurtas, readymade garments, children's clothing and traditional attire flying off the shelves. Besides, puja and decorative items such as earthen diyas, idols of Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesha sweets and food Products recorded a surge in sales. Automobiles including cars, two-wheelers and commercial vehicles have also witnessed encouraging demand. Handicrafts and swadeshi products including khadi, handloom products, handcrafted decorative articles, products made by local artisans and goods prepared by women's self-help groups have recorded robust sales. CAIT Secretary General and Member of Parliament Praveen Khandelwal said that, according to information received so far, Diwali-related trade in Delhi has crossed the Rs 1 lakh crore mark, while nationwide Diwali business has exceeded Rs 6 lakh crore. Considering the continued surge in customer footfall and the strong buying sentiment in markets, the total figure is expected to cross Rs 7 lakh crore.

India offers remarkable resilience and opportunity amid AI frenzy: HSBC economists

■ AGENCY

New Delhi : India has managed to cushion the economy from higher energy prices and AI fears, so the story should not be one of concern about India losing its way in a world of AI, but one of remarkable resilience and opportunity, according to a new HSBC Global Investment Research report.

The AI frenzy has sucked capital into a narrow sector and a few, selected economies. Returns, at least for a while, have been stunning. But, given recent jitters, it's worth to widen the perspective again.

"That's where India comes in, bypassed by much of global capital in recent quarters. The challenges, in investors' minds, are easy to recount: the absence of a vibrant AI hardware sector, the risk that services exports might suffer as AI is adopted more widely, and the spike in global energy prices, which historically hit India hard. Well, time for a rethink," said HSBC economists. India's economy has weathered these challenges so far with remarkable ease. After a little pull-back earlier this year, around the height of the conflict in the Middle East, activity has bounced back. "For one, India has managed to cushion the economy from higher energy prices, with the current account deficit not blowing out as in previous such episodes. That is in part being helped by the continued, robust rise in services exports, which have yet to show, in aggregate, an adverse impact from AI," the economists noted.



Meanwhile, private credit growth and corporate revenue growth have rebounded, car sales are strong, and government infrastructure spending continues to push higher.

The export rebound is especially noteworthy, occurring in a global environment where most trade is driven by AI hardware, a sector in which India is not a major player.

Given that world trade in non-AI goods has largely stalled, this suggests that India is gradually gaining market share, said the report.

On the goods side, shipments have gone sideways for a few years after a ramp-up during the pandemic. But note the acceleration in the last few months. Meanwhile, services exports continue to shoot up in a straight line and are not far off goods exports on an annual basis.

"This suggests that worries over AI derailing the sector are overdone. Sure, the technology will make some jobs, like call centres, obsolete, replacing workers with bots, but it opens other doors by raising the productivity of Indian workers in fields that they previously struggled to compete in," according to the report.

Govt invites startups for WaveX pavilion at IFFI Goa 2026

■ SP BUREAU

New Delhi : The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has invited applications from startups working in film and allied technologies to participate in the WaveX Startup Pavilion at WAVES Bazaar during the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) Goa 2026, an official statement said on Saturday.

The initiative aims to provide an exclusive platform for startups to showcase products, technologies and solutions to the national and international film and media industry, the statement from the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting said.

The platform will also facilitate networking opportunities, industry engagement and collaboration with filmmakers, production houses, investors in the global creative ecosystem. Applications are open to DPIIT-registered startups operating in the film and related technology



domains, the statement said. Eligible startups will be considered through a screening and evaluation process conducted by a Selection Committee constituted by WaveX.

"Interested and eligible startups are encouraged to apply and take advantage of this opportunity to showcase their innovations on an international platform," the statement noted.

IFFI, established in 1952, is one of Asia's prominent film festivals, held annually in Goa, that showcases global cinema, promotes creative exchange and encourages international collaboration in the film industry.

WaveX, the WAVES Startup Accelerator, is a startup accelerator and incubation initiative of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting focused on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in the media and entertainment sector. It focuses on supporting startups working in areas such as Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, Extended Reality (AVGC-XR) and media technologies.

Gold logs strongest weekly gain since August as crude oil plunges over 12 pc

■ SPNN

New Delhi : Gold recorded its strongest weekly gain since August with nearly 4.5 per cent surge as crude oil suffered its steepest weekly decline since April 2020 over hopes of policy shifts following the US midterm elections.

Concerns surrounding the global artificial intelligence sector drove sharp flows from equity markets to commodity markets, while a changing Federal Reserve outlook also improved positive sentiment for precious metals.

On Friday, MCX gold futures expiring December declined 1.20 per cent while MCX silver futures for December advanced 0.10 per cent. Gold futures stood at Rs 1,42,364, while silver futures stood at Rs 1,84,977 per kg.

WTI crude retreated from above $104-$105 a barrel to around $90, while Brent eased to the $97-$98 range, with both benchmarks posting weekly declines of over 12 per cent. After 4.5 per cent gains, prices retreated from their intraday highs after the stronger employment report lifted the dollar and Treasury yields. The price of 10 grams of 24-carat gold was at Rs 1,41,452 on Friday, up from Rs 1,40,054 seen last week's close, according to data published by the India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA).

Though the Fed had left interest rates unchanged at its October meeting, subsequent remarks by two officials favouring further gradual rate increase to contain persistent inflation added to expectations of additional monetary tightening.

The October US employment report, released on Friday, reinforced this hawkish outlook, with nonfarm payrolls rising by 165,000 against market expectations of 65,000, while the unemployment rate edged down to 4.1 per cent from 4.2 per cent.

The stronger-than-expected labour-market data pushed the implied probability of a December rate hike to around 81 per cent.

US Treasury yields moved higher in response, with the 10-year yield approaching 4.88 per cent, while the dollar strengthened, renewing downward pressure on precious metals towards the close of the week.



Jaisalmer Gold: Gift the rarest gold in India

■ AGENCY

New Delhi : A Diwali celebration of Kashmiri saffron, a distinctive gold-filtration process, and India's extraordinary botanical wealth. Kashmiri saffron is only the beginning. Jaisalmer Gold's name also draws on a distinctive filtration process in which the gin passes through intertwined golden silk filaments, a step the brand says enriches the spirit with gold ions. Add 18 botanicals, 14 sourced from India, and the result is a gin whose story brings together rare ingredients, craft, and an unusual approach to finishing.

When gold is more than a name

Diwali has an unmistakable relationship with gold. It appears in the lamps we light, the gifts we exchange, and the details that make a celebration feel special. Gold also stands in for rarity, value, and craftsmanship. For Jaisalmer Gold, however, the association is not merely symbolic. It is built into the story of the gin itself.

The name brings together two distinctive elements of its making: Kashmiri saffron, one of the world's most prized spices, also known as the gold of spices; and a special gold-filtration process the brand says enriches the gin with gold ions. It is this combination that makes the word 'Gold' more than a decorative flourish on the label.

At a time when drinkers are increasingly interested in provenance and production techniques, Jaisalmer Gold offers a story that moves beyond the familiar language of botanicals. It is a story of a rare Indian ingredient, a distinctive filtration step and a carefully assembled selection of flavours from across the country.



The saffron connection: a spice prized like gold

Among the world's most valued spices, saffron is prized for its colour, aroma and the painstaking labour involved in harvesting it. The delicate red threads are hand-picked from the crocus flower, a process that is both time-consuming and labour-intensive. Estimates commonly cited for saffron production suggest that around 150,000 to 250,000 flowers may be needed to yield a single kilogram of saffron threads.

Its rarity and value have long earned saffron comparisons with precious metals. For Jaisalmer Gold, Kashmiri saffron is not simply an evocative ingredient to support a luxury story; it is part of the gin's botanical composition and a direct link to one of India's most distinctive growing traditions.

The ingredient also brings a strong sense of place to the spirit. Kashmir's saffron fields have a long cultural and agricultural history, and the work involved in harvesting each thread offers a compelling reminder that some of the most prized ingredients are shaped by patience, skill, and generations of knowledge.

The gold in Gold: inside the filtration process

The most distinctive part of the making story comes after the gin has been distilled. Jaisalmer Gold undergoes a special filtration process: the spirit passes slowly through a filter made of intertwined golden silk filaments.

DIWALI 2026

THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS AND THE TRIUMPH OF HOPE

As homes sparkle with diyas, markets fill with festive colours and families prepare to welcome Goddess Lakshmi, Diwali once again brings together faith, happiness and hope. Yet, beyond the glitter of decorations and the excitement of shopping, India's most celebrated festival also invites reflection on environmental responsibility, social harmony and the true meaning of prosperity. As dusk descends and the first lamps begin to glow, an extraordinary transformation takes place across India. Streets that appeared ordinary during the day become illuminated corridors of light. Balconies sparkle with rows of diyas, doorways display colourful rangoli, and homes fill with the fragrance of sweets and festive delicacies. Families gather in new clothes, children wait excitedly for the evening celebrations, and neighbours exchange greetings that carry a familiar message of happiness and goodwill. This is Diwali, the festival of lights, a celebration that brings together millions of people across India and around the world. More than a religious occasion, Diwali represents renewal, hope, prosperity and the enduring belief that light can overcome darkness. In 2026, Diwali, also known as Deepavali, will be observed on Sunday, November 8, according to India's official holiday calendar. The festival is associated with the worship of Goddess Lakshmi, the lighting of lamps, family gatherings, festive meals and the exchange of gifts. Its rituals and stories vary across regions, reflecting India's extraordinary cultural diversity. For some, Diwali commemorates the return of Lord Rama to Ayodhya after fourteen years of exile and his victory over Ravana. For others, particularly in different regional and religious traditions, it carries associations with Goddess Lakshmi, Lord Krishna's victory over Narakasura, the worship of Goddess Kali or important events in Jain and Sikh history. Despite these differences, a common thread runs through the celebration: the desire to welcome a brighter future. Diwali has survived centuries of social change because it is not confined to one story or one ritual. It speaks to universal aspirations for happiness, peace, prosperity and the well-being of loved ones. As India becomes increasingly urbanised and digitally connected, the festival continues to evolve while retaining its emotional place in family and community life. The lamps may be traditional, the decorations may be modern and the greetings may arrive through smartphones, but the spirit of Diwali remains deeply rooted in the human desire for renewal.



The Ancient Stories Behind Diwali

The origins of Diwali are connected with several religious stories, and no single account explains the festival in every part of India. One of the most widely known traditions in northern India centres on Lord Rama, the prince of Ayodhya and an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. According to the Ramayana, Rama spent fourteen years in exile with his wife Sita and his brother Lakshmana. During the exile, Sita was abducted by Ravana, the ruler of Lanka. Rama eventually defeated Ravana and rescued Sita with the help of Lakshmana, Hanuman and an army of allies. After their return to Ayodhya, Rama and Sita were welcomed with great joy. In popular tradition, people illuminated their homes with rows of lamps to celebrate the return of their beloved ruler. The lighting of diyas during Diwali is often associated with this account. The lamps symbolise the victory of righteousness over wrongdoing, hope over despair and knowledge over ignorance. The story's continuing appeal lies in its moral dimensions. Rama's journey involves sacrifice, loyalty, courage and responsibility, while the defeat of Ravana is widely understood as a reminder that arrogance and wrongdoing cannot ultimately provide lasting security. For generations, the story has been transmitted through religious recitations, folk performances, television adaptations, books and the staging of Ramlila. During the festive season, the narrative brings families together and gives children an opportunity to learn about India's epic traditions. However, the significance of Diwali extends beyond the story of Rama. In many parts of India, Diwali is associated with Goddess Lakshmi, who represents wealth, prosperity and abundance. Devotees believe that the festival is an auspicious occasion to welcome her blessings into their homes and businesses. In parts of southern India, the celebration is closely linked to Lord Krishna's defeat of the demon Narakasura. The victory represents the destruction of oppression and the restoration of peace. In Bengal and some neighbouring regions, Kali Puja is an important part of the same festive period. Devotees worship Goddess Kali, whose imagery and religious significance differ from the Lakshmi-centred observances more common elsewhere. These regional variations demonstrate how a shared festival can carry different stories while expressing related aspirations.

Rangoli and the Art of Welcoming Guests

As homes are prepared for Diwali, doorways and courtyards become spaces for artistic expression. Rangoli is a traditional decorative art in which designs are created on the ground using coloured powders, flower petals, rice flour or other materials. Patterns may feature geometric shapes, flowers, lamps, peacocks and religious symbols. In some households, rangoli is made by experienced family members who have practised the designs for years. In others, children and younger relatives join in, experimenting with new patterns and colours. The activity is both decorative and social. Family members gather to choose colours, prepare materials and create a design that reflects the spirit of the occasion. Regional traditions have their own forms of floor decoration. Kolam in Tamil Nadu, for example, is associated with designs made using rice flour or other powders, while different communities maintain distinctive patterns and techniques. The designs are often placed near entrances, where they welcome guests and contribute to the festive appearance of the home. Modern materials and online tutorials have expanded the range of designs available to households.

The Sweetest Part of Diwali

For many people, the arrival of Diwali is inseparable from the preparation and sharing of sweets. Markets fill with boxes of laddoos, barfi, kaju katli, peda, jalebi and other delicacies. Homes prepare traditional recipes, while bakeries and sweet shops arrange special assortments for customers buying gifts for relatives, neighbours and colleagues. Food is an important part of the festival because it brings people together. A family meal provides an opportunity to pause from everyday responsibilities, while sharing sweets allows people to express affection and goodwill. Recipes often carry family histories. A particular sweet may be associated with a grandparent, a childhood memory or a special celebration. Preparing it again can preserve a connection with the past. Regional diversity is especially visible in Diwali cuisine. Different parts of India prepare distinct savoury snacks, sweets and festive meals, reflecting local ingredients and culinary traditions. The modern food market has also expanded the range of choices. Customers can find sugar-free options, vegan products, regional specialities and packaged gifts designed for corporate exchanges. While these developments have increased convenience, consumers should remain attentive to food quality, freshness and storage, particularly when purchasing products that contain milk or other perishable ingredients. The spirit of sharing can also be expressed without expensive gift boxes. Homemade sweets, a small packet of traditional snacks or a meal shared with neighbours can convey the same goodwill. Diwali's food traditions are ultimately about more than taste. They are a reminder that hospitality is one of the simplest ways to strengthen relationships.



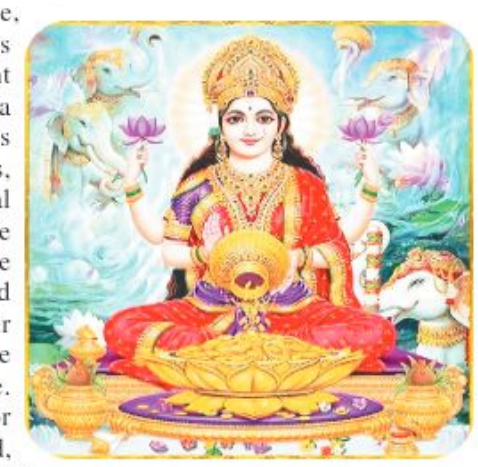
Five Days of Celebration

Diwali is commonly associated with a five-day festive sequence, although the names, emphasis and local customs differ from one region to another. The celebrations generally begin with Dhanteras, an occasion associated with prosperity, health and auspicious purchases. Families clean their homes, prepare decorations and, according to personal means and traditions, buy gold, silver, utensils or other useful items. The next day is commonly associated with Naraka Chaturdashi, also known as Choti Diwali in many northern Indian households. The day recalls the defeat of Narakasura in traditions that connect the vent with Lord Krishna. Ritual baths, lamps and other regional observances may form part of the celebration. The main Diwali day is marked by prayers, decorations, family gatherings and Lakshmi Puja in many communities. Homes and businesses are illuminated, sweets are exchanged and people welcome relatives and friends. Govardhan Puja, also known as Annakut in some traditions, follows in many parts of India. It is associated with Lord Krishna and the story of Govardhan Hill. In some communities, devotees prepare offerings of food and express gratitude for nature's abundance. Bhai Dooj brings the festive sequence to a close in many households. The day celebrates the bond between brothers and sisters through prayers, gifts and family gatherings. The dates and order of certain observances may vary according to regional calendars and religious customs. For 2026, India's official holiday calendar lists Diwali on November 8, Govardhan Puja on November 9 and Bhai Dooj on November 11, while some regional traditions observe related festivities on different dates. Together, these celebrations create a period in which faith, family and community become especially visible. Each day has its own significance, yet all contribute to the broader atmosphere of renewal associated with Diwali.



Welcoming Prosperity into the Home

For many Hindu families, Lakshmi Puja is the spiritual centre of Diwali. Preparations often begin days in advance. Homes are cleaned, entrances are decorated, prayer spaces are arranged and families prepare flowers, sweets, lamps and other ritual offerings. At the appointed time, devotees offer prayers to Goddess Lakshmi and, in many traditions, Lord Ganesha. Goddess Lakshmi is associated with prosperity, abundance and good fortune, while Lord Ganesha is revered as the remover of obstacles and the deity invoked at the beginning of important undertakings. The puja is therefore often understood as a prayer for a prosperous and peaceful year ahead. Families seek blessings for their livelihoods, education, businesses, health and household well-being. In commercial establishments, the occasion may include prayers for the success of a business, the welfare of employees and the responsible use of financial resources. Shopkeepers and business owners may arrange their accounts, decorate their premises and welcome the festive season with prayers. The ritual also carries an important symbolic message. Prosperity is not simply a matter of acquiring money or possessions; it involves the ability to sustain a household, fulfil responsibilities and live with dignity. For many worshippers, the act of offering prayers encourages gratitude for the resources they already possess and hope for the opportunities that lie ahead. The details of Lakshmi Puja differ by region and family. Some households conduct elaborate ceremonies with priests, while others perform a simple prayer at home. Some include traditional chants and detailed rituals; others focus on lighting lamps and offering sweets. The central intention remains similar: to welcome auspiciousness and begin the coming period with hope.





Patidar named Madhya Pradesh skipper for Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy

■ SP BUREAU

Indore: Rajat Patidar has been named as Madhya Pradesh's in the upcoming Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, starting on November 14. Madhya Pradesh have been drawn in Elite Group C of the competition and will play their first four matches in New Chandigarh and the remaining three games in Mohali.

Patidar, who has captained Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) to IPL titles in 2025 and 2026, may not be available for the entire league phase of the competition. Patidar and left-arm fast bowling all-rounder Arshad Khan scheduled to link up with the India A team for the Men's Rising Stars Asia Cup, scheduled to be played in Doha, Qatar, from November 19 to 29.

In the India A team, Patidar has been appointed as the deputy to skipper Tilak Varma. Apart from Patidar, who has played three Tests and an ODI for India, batters Akshat Raghuwanshi, Harsh Gawli and Aniket Verma will have to step up for Madhya Pradesh. There is still no place in the squad for seam-bowling all-rounder Madhav Tiwari, despite having featured for Delhi Capitals in IPL 2026 and Ujjain Falcons in the Madhya Pradesh League T20 Scindia Cup 2026.

The squad features two wicketkeepers in Gawli and Apoorv Dwivedi, while India fast bowler Avesh Khan will spearhead a bowling unit that also includes Mangesh Yadav, left-arm spinner Kumar Kartikeya Singh, off-spinner Saransh Jain and left-arm wrist-spinner Shivang Kumar.

Pacer Kuldeep Sen has not been picked due to him currently nursing an unspecified injury. Madhya Pradesh will open its campaign against Kerala in a day-night game at New Chandigarh on November 14. They will then take on Assam on November 16, Tripura in another day-night encounter on November 18, and Andhra on November 20.

Madhya Pradesh is also scheduled to face Maharashtra on November 22, Himachal Pradesh on November 24 and Puducherry in their final group match on November 26. Should Patidar depart after the game against Assam, the Madhya Pradesh team management led by Chandrakant Pandit will need to name a stand-in captain for their remaining games.

Madhya Pradesh squad: Ankush Singh, Akshat Raghuwanshi, Harsh Gawli (wk), Rajat Patidar (captain), Aniket Verma, Ritik Tada, Apoorv Dwivedi (wk), Saransh Jain.

'It's like batting on a trampoline,'

says Mitchell on challenging surface after NZ's 134



■ AGENCY

Wellington: New Zealand batter Daryl Mitchell described the Wellington surface as a difficult one to negotiate after the hosts were bowled out for 134 in the second ODI against India on Saturday, saying the unpredictable bounce and lack of assistance in rotating the strike made batting a testing proposition.

Mitchell, who top-scored with 55 off 104 balls, said the bounce varied considerably, leaving batters uncertain about how the ball would come through. New Zealand managed to put together a total, but the right-hander admitted they had hoped to finish with more runs.

"It's pretty challenging out there. Obviously, we'd always like a few more, but yeah, it's like batting on a trampoline at times. We weren't quite sure what height the ball was going to come through at. We scraped. We tried to do all we could and hopefully something special with the ball and you never know," Daryl told the broadcasters after NZ were bowled out.

He further pointed to the difficulty of finding gaps and keeping the scoreboard moving, explaining that the nature of the drop-in pitch made it harder for batters to take quick singles.

"All of us found it really hard to rotate the strike.

India edge New Zealand by four runs in rain-hit game via DLS

■ AGENCY

Wellington: India survived a dramatic batting collapse to beat New Zealand by four runs under the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method in a rain-hit second ODI here on Saturday, with persistent showers bringing an abrupt end to the contest after the visitors had slumped to 113/7 in 26 overs while chasing 135.

New Zealand's pace attack had put India under severe pressure after the hosts were bowled out for 134 in 41 overs, but the visitors were marginally ahead of the DLS par score when rain forced the players off for the final time.

The match, which had already been reduced to 47 overs per side following a one-hour delay at the start due to rain, looked set to offer India a straightforward chase. However, New Zealand's seamers made the most of the conditions to turn the contest into a gripping battle, with Jacob Duffy and Kyle Jamieson claiming three wickets apiece.

India's pursuit suffered an immediate setback when captain Shubman Gill was dismissed for a golden duck in the opening over. Duffy found movement outside off and induced an edge that Henry Nicholls held at second slip.

Virat Kohli briefly offered a glimpse of his class with a trademark cover drive, but Duffy struck again in the fourth over, drawing him into a drive that held up on the surface before Will Young completed the catch at cover-point. Kohli deParted for seven off seven balls.

Rohit Sharma, who had struggled to find his rhythm against Jamieson, managed a couple of boundaries and two sixes but never looked entirely settled. The New Zealand pacer eventually ended his stay on 23 off 28 balls, with Nicholls taking a catch at second slip after Rohit went hard at a delivery outside off.

India were 40/3 after 11 overs when Jamieson continued to trouble the batters with his extra bounce. Axar Patel, once again promoted to No. 5, struggled to get going and fell for seven, guiding Matthew Fisher's delivery straight to Duffy at third man. The dismissal left India reeling at 47/4 in the 13th over.

Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul then attempted to rebuild the innings, putting together 39 runs for the fifth wicket. Iyer looked increasingly assured as the partnership developed, striking four boundaries and a six in his 30 off 46 balls. However, Jamieson returned to break the stand with a sharp, in-seaming short delivery that Iyer could only fend towards Tom Latham.

Rahul, who had taken time to settle, began to find some momentum with a six and two boundaries. Naman Dhir offered brief support, scoring 12 off 16 balls, but Duffy removed him with a short delivery that was pulled straight to Tim Seifert at deep backward square leg. Jamieson then accounted for Anshul Kamboj, who edged an attempted cross-batted shot to Duffy at third man, leaving India at 113/7 after 26 overs.

Rahul remained unbeaten on 26, while Auqib Nabi was on one when the rain returned. With India three runs ahead of the DLS par score at the end of the 26th over, the players were forced off. The downpour intensified, and despite efforts by the ground staff to prepare the field for a possible resumption, conditions did not improve. The match was eventually called off at 23:00 local time, handing India a four-run victory on the DLS method.

Earlier, India's bowlers had restricted New Zealand to 134, with Gurnoor Brar leading the effort with a career-best four-wicket haul. Auqib Nabi and Anshul Kamboj struck early to reduce the hosts to 23/3, before Brar removed Tom Latham and Glenn Phillips in the same over to leave New Zealand struggling at 53/5.

Daryl Mitchell's 55 off 104 balls and Mitchell Santner's 31 offered resistance through a 59-run sixth-wicket partnership, but Brar broke the stand by dismissing Santner before returning to remove Nathan Smith. Axar Patel claimed two wickets, while Kamboj finished the innings by bowling Blair Tickner, as New Zealand were bundled out for 134 in 41 overs.

The result gives India a victory in a contest that looked destined for a tense finish.

Towhid Hridoy smashes highest-ever Test knock by Bangladesh player during 2nd WI match

■ AGENCY

Sylhet: Towhid Hridoy etched his name into the history books when he smashed the highest-ever Test knock by a Bangladesh cricketer during the second Test match against the West Indies at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium here on Saturday.



Hridoy broke the previous record of 219* that Mushfiqur Rahim had made during the 2018 Mirpur Test against Zimbabwe, as he put up a massive knock against the West Indies to bail Bangladesh out of trouble in the first innings.

Bangladesh were in a hole at 51/3, but Hridoy went on to slam a double hundred on the third day of the contest. He became just the fourth Bangladesh cricketer to have hit a double century in the format.Hridoy, who was playing in just his third Test match, went on to break Mushfiqur's eight-year-old record. He got there with a four off Jomel Warrican in the 106th over of the innings, which eventually also levelled Bangladesh to West Indies' score of 356 in the first innings.

Wanted Shami to retire while being in Test team, but God did not accept it: Laxmi Ratan Shukla

■ SP BUREAU

New Delhi: Bengal senior men's head coach Laxmi Ratan Shukla on Saturday said he and many others had hoped senior pacer Mohammed Shami would make a comeback to the Indian Test side and sign off from the red-ball format in national colours but lamented that it didn't happen as fate had other plans.

Known for generating seam movement and swing with both the new and the old ball, Shami announced on Friday night that he was retiring from Tests. He signs off with 229 wickets from 64 Tests, including six five-wicket hauls, making him India's sixth-highest wicket-taker among fast bowlers in Tests.

Shami last played a Test match for India in the 2023 ICC World Test Championship final against Australia and never returned to play the longest format for India thereafter. "Despite all of that, playing and practising for Bengal for the last two years in Ranji Trophy, Mushtaq Ali, and Vijay Hazare - I mean, you are the best, Shami."You are outstanding. We all wanted you to have a comeback in the Test team and retire from there. But God did not accept it.

3rd Unofficial Test: Jaiswal hits 102 as India A take control against NZ A on opening day

■ AGENCY

Lincoln: Yashasvi Jaiswal continued his prolific run with the bat, registering his second consecutive century to put India A in a commanding position against New Zealand A on the opening day of the third unofficial Test here on Saturday. The left-handed opener struck 102 off 127 deliveries, while Sai Sudharsan remained unbeaten on 77 as the visitors reached 227/2 before persistent rain brought an early end to the day's proceedings.



Having remained unbeaten on 155 in the previous unofficial Test in Christchurch, Jaiswal once again demonstrated his ability to dictate proceedings against the New Zealand A bowling attack. His 175-run opening partnership with Sudharsan laid the foundation for India's strong start, with the pair negotiating the initial movement before gradually taking control of the contest.

India A were asked to bat after losing the toss, but the decision did little to unsettle the visitors. With the upcoming Test series against New Zealand beginning on November 19, India A also included Jasprit Bumrah, Ravindra Jadeja and Prasidh Krishna in their line-up as preparations for the assignment gathered momentum.