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BRIEF NEWS

Former VP Dhankhar Collapses During Morning Walk, Hospitalised

New Delhi: Former Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar was admitted to AIIMS here after he fell unconscious during his morning walk on Wednesday, sources said. Details about his health condition were not immediately available. AIIMS authorities have not issued an official statement so far. Security personnel accompanying Dhankhar took him home in a PCR vehicle after he collapsed during the morning walk and remained unconscious for a few minutes. An ILBS medical team and AIIMS doctor Sandeep Seth subsequently attended to him and provided medical care. However, in view of his concerning health condition, Dhankhar was rushed to AIIMS in an ambulance, the sources said. The 75-year-old former vice president has been admitted to the hospital's Cardio-Neuro Centre and is currently under the care of the Department of Cardiology for medical evaluation and treatment, they said. Dhankhar served as India's 14th vice president from August 2022 until his resignation in July 2025.

Mother Dairy Hikes Milk Prices by Rs 2-4 per Litre From Today

New Delhi: Consumers will have to pay more for milk as leading dairy brands Mother Dairy and Amul are set to increase prices by Rs 2 to Rs 6 per liter from November 12, amid tightening milk supplies and rising procurement costs. According to industry sources, the price revision will vary across different milk categories, with toned milk becoming costlier by Rs 2 per liter, full cream milk by Rs 4 per liter and full cream buffalo milk by Rs 6 per liter. In the Delhi-NCR region, the price of toned milk supplied through bulk vending machines is set to increase from Rs 58 to Rs 60 per liter. The price of full cream packaged milk will rise from Rs 72 to Rs 76 per liter, while packaged toned milk will become costlier from Rs 60 to Rs 62 per liter. The price of buffalo full cream milk, containing 6.5 per cent fat, will increase from Rs 80 to Rs 86 per liter.

Terrorists Open Fire at CRPF Checkpost in JK; 3 Injured

AGENCY



Srinagar: Three personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were injured Wednesday as unidentified motorcycle-borne assailants opened fire with an AK-47, at a bridge guard party in Nawapora, near Mir Bazar, in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district.

A CRPF spokesperson, while confirming the "firing on CRPF Naka at Kulgam", said operations are underway to nab the perpetrators.

According to a senior police officer, the incident took place around 2:15 pm when the assailants, one of whom is suspected to be a foreign terrorist associated with the terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), opened fire at the CRPF personnel before fleeing the spot.

Constable Rakesh Dass sustained injuries on his leg, while Constable Santosh Chadru sustained injuries on his abdomen and spine. Head constable Somveer Singh sustained an injury on his left arm, the senior police officer confirmed.

"The injured personnel, including two constables and a head constable, have been shifted to a hospital in Anantnag district, where they are under treatment," the officer said. Two of the three personnel are critical. "The assailants were riding a motorcycle when they opened fire at the CRPF personnel. These personnel were part of a bridge guard deployment in the area. Teams have been dispatched to conduct search operations," the officer said.

Lateef Bhatt connection?

According to a source in the security establishment, the attackers are suspected to be associates of Lateef Bhat, an alleged operative of The Resistance Front (TRF) involved in similar attacks in the past. "Bhatt has been roaming around with two foreign terrorists in the area. They appear to be behind this attack just like they executed two other attacks in the past," a source told ThePrint.

On 22 July, a 35-year-old Jammu and Kashmir Police (JKP) personnel deployed as part of the security contingent for the Amarnath Yatra was shot dead. CCTV footage showed the suspected attacker carrying an AK-47. The Resistance Front (TRF), suspected to be a front of LeT, later claimed responsibility for the attack. A little over a week later, on 31 July, two migrant workers from Chhattisgarh were killed in another attack in Kulgam.

According to sources, both attacks were carried out by Lateef Bhat.

A local carpenter, Bhat went missing from his home in Kulgam in November 2025 and subsequently joined the terror outfit, it is learnt. He was trained in the higher reaches of Kulgam and Shopian and then inducted into the TRF, said sources, adding that he was recruited by Pakistan-based designated terrorist Sajjad Gul.

Piyush Goyal Meets Canadian Trade Minister, Discusses Advancing CEPA Negotiations

SP BUREAU



New Delhi: Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday held a meeting with Canada's Minister of International Trade Maninder Sidhu and the accompanying Canadian delegation to discuss advancing negotiations on the India-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and strengthening bilateral economic ties.

In a social media post, Goyal said the two sides discussed the importance of a balanced and mutually beneficial agreement that delivers meaningful market access, leverages the complementarities of their economies and creates new opportunities for trade and investment.

Goyal said, "Had a warm and engaging breakfast meeting with Mr. Maninder Sidhu, Minister of International Trade of Canada, and the accompanying Canadian delegation to discuss advancing negotiations on the India-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and strengthening our bilateral economic ties".

He also reaffirmed the shared commitment of both countries to taking the India-Canada economic partnership to new heights, with CEPA serving as a catalyst for deeper commercial engagement and shared prosperity.

India and Canada are actively negotiating a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

India and Canada are aiming to more than double their bilateral trade to USD 70 billion by 2030, from CAD 30.4 billion in 2025. The proposed CEPA is expected to support this ambition by strengthening trade and investment ties between the two countries.

Bilateral trade between India and Canada reached USD 8.66 billion in FY 2024-25. The negotiations for the agreement were originally launched in November 2010, with 10 rounds of discussions held through 2017 before the process stalled. The negotiations gained fresh momentum following a reset in bilateral relations. On March 2, 2026, Goyal and Sidhu signed the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the CEPA in New Delhi. The signing was witnessed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney. The second round of negotiations took place from May 4 to 8, 2026, at Vanijya Bhawan in New Delhi. Discussions covered several areas, including goods, services, intellectual property, rules of origin and sanitary measures. Subsequent rounds, including a round in Ottawa and ongoing discussions in November 2026, have continued the negotiation process.

Hijack Threat Note Found in Air India Plane at Kolkata Airport

AGENCY



Kolkata: A hijack threat note found in the washroom of a Mumbai-bound Air India flight before take-off on Wednesday morning prompted security officials to park the aircraft in an isolation bay at the airport here, an official said.

The flight was scheduled to depart at 10.20 am. The note, which threatened that the plane would be hijacked at 11.10 am, was found in the washroom just before take-off, said Vikram Singh, director of the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport. All 105 passengers on board were deboarded, and the aircraft was taken to the isolation bay, he said.

According to an official statement, the hijack note was found by the cabin crew inside the lavatory of Air India flight AI 2772 at 10.37 am. "The aircraft had 105 passengers on board when the note was detected. Necessary checks were underway by the agencies concerned," it said. Air India is yet to issue a statement on the matter.

Five Coaches of Kolkata-Sairang Express Derailed, 4 Injured



AGENCY

Kolkata: More than 300 passengers from West Bengal were on board the Kolkata-Sairang Express that derailed near Assam's Guwahati on Wednesday, prompting railway authorities to set up helpdesks at several stations to assist them, an official said. Four persons suffered minor injuries after five coaches and the engine of the train derailed at Digaru in the morning. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said earlier in the day. "Our data shows that over 300 passengers travelled from West Bengal, covering stations like Kolkata, Naihati, Krishnanagar, and the Malda and Katihar Divisions, who were heading beyond Guwahati," an Eastern Railway official said.

"We are assisting them. Helpdesks have been set up for the passengers and their families," he said.

There is no report of any fatality in the incident, he said, adding that officials from the Eastern Railway rushed to the accident site.

The helpdesks have been set up at Sealdah, Alipurduar, Naihati and Berhampore Court stations to provide assistance and information to passengers and their families from West Bengal, the official said.The accident occurred when the Kolkata-Sairang Express was entering the Digaru railway station in Kamrup (Metropolitan) district, and the loco pilot gave precedence to another train, but could not control the speed, a Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) spokesperson said.

CM Greets People On Bhai Phota, Prays For Peace & Prosperity

AGENCY



Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday greeted people on Bhai Phota, a festival celebrating the love between brothers and sisters, and expressed hope that their cherished relationship would remain strong and enduring.

In a post on X, the chief minister invoked a traditional Bengali blessing associated with the festival, which essentially translates to, "May the ceremonial mark (tilak) on my brother's forehead keep the god of death at bay."

Describing the festival as a celebration of the eternal love, affection and spiritual bond between siblings, he extended his heartfelt wishes to brothers and sisters.

Delhi-NCR's Pre-Diwali PM 2.5 Touches 3-Year High: Report

AGENCY

New Delhi: Delhi-NCR's early-winter air pollution has worsened this year, with the average PM2.5 concentration in the week preceding Diwali touching a three-year high, while vehicular emissions and regional pollution inflow continued to drive the toxic air, according to a new analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).

The analysis released on Wednesday said the average PM2.5 concentration during the week before Diwali stood at 236 micrograms per cubic metre, marking a 97 per cent increase from 120 micrograms per cubic metre in 2025 and a 32 per cent rise from 179 micrograms per cubic metre in 2024.

It said pollution levels were generally higher in the pre-winter period this year than in 2025, except for a brief decline in late September due to rainfall.

CSE said the findings highlighted the failure of year-round pollution control measures, with Diwali firecrackers aggravating an already deteriorating situation rather than being the sole cause of the pollution crisis.

"Baseline pollution is higher than in previous years," said Anumita Roychowdhury, executive director of research and advocacy at CSE, adding that inadequate emission control across major pollution sources had contributed to the worsening air quality.

The analysis, based on air quality data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), pollution-source contribution estimates from the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), crop fire data and traffic analytics from Tom Tom (the geological and mapping technology company that aggregates GPS data), said vehicular transport remained the largest contributor among Delhi's local pollution sources.

According to the IITM's Decision Support System data for November 1-8, pollution transported from neighbouring NCR districts accounted for 54.43 per cent of Delhi's PM2.5, while local sources contributed 33.06 per cent and stubble burning 14.29 per cent.

Govt Bans Export of Battery Waste Including Lithium-Ion Black Mass

AGENCY



New Delhi: The government has prohibited the export of waste and scrap of primary cells, primary batteries and electric accumulators, including lithium-ion battery black mass, with immediate effect. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), under the Commerce Ministry, said in a notification that it had amended the export policy for the product. "The export policy of Waste and scrap of primary cells, primary batteries and electric accumulators; spent primary cells, spent primary batteries and spent electric accumulators - Unsorted and not containing lead cadmium or mercury (Lithium-Ion Battery Black Mass) under ITC (HS) Code 85491400 is amended from Fre to Prohibited with immediate effect, until further orders," the DGFT notification read.

It said that the amendment was made under the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992. The transitional arrangements "under Para 1.05 of the Foreign Trade Policy 2023" will apply to the notification.

The government seeks to strengthen domestic battery recycling capacity and secure supplies of critical minerals.

Last week, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved a capex support scheme to promote critical mineral processing with a financial outlay of Rs 2,814 crore over a period of five years. The 'Capex Support Scheme to Promote Critical Mineral Processing' aims to develop domestic processing capabilities in India to support value addition within the country, reduce import dependence, and develop the value chain.

The scheme period is from FY 2026-27 to 2030-31. Under the scheme, capital subsidy of 30 per cent of eligible investment will be provided for setting up four critical mineral processing plants, comprising two lithium processing plants (with a minimum capacity of 30 kt each) and two nickel processing plants (with a minimum capacity of 50 kt each).

The maximum capital support will be capped at Rs 500 crore per lithium beneficiary and Rs 900 crore per nickel beneficiary, respectively, according to an official statement.

At present, India remains substantially dependent on imports for refined intermediates and high-purity materials, owing to the nascent stage of domestic beneficiation and processing infrastructure for critical minerals, including lithium, nickel, and cobalt.

PK Mishra calls for stronger research policy partnerships across Global South

■ AGENCY

Kozhikode: Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Dr. P.K. Mishra, on Wednesday called for a stronger integration of scientific research, granular data and evidence-based policymaking to address the interconnected challenges of climate change, agricultural resilience, food security and nutrition.

He was addressing the inaugural session of the 20th Annual Meeting of the Environment for Development (EfD) Network at IIM Kozhikode through video conference.

Dr. Mishra said climate change must no longer be viewed merely as an environmental concern, as its implications extend to agricultural productivity, water availability, food prices, public health and livelihoods.

Emphasising the need to move beyond conventional measures of food security, he observed that adequate food production alone was not sufficient. Ensuring access to affordable, diverse and nutritious diets was equally important, particularly as climate-related disruptions could affect the availability and affordability of pulses, fruits, vegetables, milk and other nutrient-rich foods.

Highlighting the importance of crop diversification, Dr. Mishra referred to the Prime Minister's initiative in securing the United Nations declaration of 2023 as the International Year of Millets.

He noted that this initiative helped bring global attention to the nutritional value and environmental sustainability of millets, while promoting their wider adoption as part of diversified and resilient food systems.

Calling for a shift towards region-specific climate adaptation, Dr. Mishra highlighted that assessments under ICAR's National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture programme identified 310 out of 651 agricultural districts as highly or very highly vulnerable.

He said this underlined the need for interventions tailored to local agro-climatic conditions rather than uniform policy approaches.

On the role of data in policymaking, Dr. Mishra stressed that the priority should not simply be to generate more data, but to ensure that information is timely, reliable, comparable and actionable.

He called for greater use of disaggregated, district-level data to identify variations in rainfall, water availability, soil conditions, crop performance and nutritional outcomes.

Farmers Urged to Avail Benefits of Government Schemes at Block-Level Fisheries and Animal Resources Fair

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA ■ Jharsuguda,



The Kolabira Block-Level Fisheries and Animal Resources Fair 2026 was organised with great enthusiasm at the local Mini Stadium on Wednesday.

Attending the programme as the chief guest, Jharsuguda MLA and District Planning Board Chairman Tankadhar Tripathy urged farmers to take advantage of various government schemes aimed at promoting the development of fisheries and animal resources. He said farmers could become self-reliant by adopting modern techniques of fish farming and rearing cattle, goats, sheep, pigs and poultry alongside traditional paddy cultivation. He also highlighted the various subsidy schemes being implemented by the Mohan Charan Majhi-led state government to encourage allied agricultural activities.

The meeting was presided over by Chief District Veterinary Officer Aravinda Behera. Deputy Director of Fisheries, Sambalpur Zone, Gyanaranjan Samal attended as the chief speaker and explained various government schemes available for farmers. Block Chairman Bhojaraj Patel, Zilla Parishad member Nrupalal Pashayat, BDO Abinash Lakra, retired Sub-Divisional Veterinary Officer Dr Bhisma Chandra Nayak, Kolabira in-charge Sarpanch Anjali Bag and Jhirlapali Sarpanch Tilottama Chhachan attended as guests of honour.

On the occasion, progressive farmers Dev Majhi of Siriapali (pig farming), Abin Sahu of Samasingha (dairy farming), Manjulata Patel of Pokhrasale and Raju Saraf of Raghunathpali (fish farming) were felicitated by the dignitaries. Work orders were also distributed to two livestock farmers, Paramananda Kisan of Kulihamal and Chudamani Kisan of Badbahal. Similarly, financial assistance was provided to fisheries and livestock farmers Manbodh Kisan of S. Pandkimahal, Vivekananda Amat of Paikpada, Lingaraj Bag of Sanyasipali and Sumitra Kisan of Lariapali.

Dr Sudhanshu Sekhar Patel, Block Veterinary Officer, Kolabira, delivered the welcome address, while Soumyajit Jena, Assistant Fisheries Officer, Kolabira, proposed the vote of thanks.

The fair featured 11 exhibition stalls, including two from the Animal Resources Development Department, three from the Fisheries Department, two from Mission Shakti, one from the Agriculture Department, and one each from SEWA, OMFED and BAIF. The exhibitions showcased various schemes, technologies and opportunities in fisheries, livestock and allied agricultural activities.

More than 250 fish farmers and livestock rearers from all nine gram panchayats of the block participated in the event. Additional District Animal Resources Development Officers Dr Aravinda Jena, Dr Bhagabati Prasad Das and Dr Pradeep Kumar Choudhury, among others, were also present on the dais.

The fair was aimed at promoting the economic empowerment of farmers and accelerating the growth of fisheries and animal husbandry in the region. Officials and employees of the Fisheries and Animal Resources Development departments played an important role in organising the programme successfully.

Over 31 lakh devotees visit Hasanamba temple as annual closure rituals begin in Hassan

■ AGENCY

Bengaluru : More than 31 lakh devotees visited the famous Hasanamba temple in Hassan district this year, with the annual closure rituals commencing on Wednesday.

The temple's sanctum sanctorum was closed and sealed at 12 noon, marking the end of the annual darshan period. The temple will remain closed until it reopens next year as per tradition.

The district administration had extended public darshan hours until 3 a.m. on Wednesday, considering the large number of devotees arriving to seek the blessings of Goddess Hasanamba.

The temple authorities have collected Rs 25.36 crore through the sale of entry tickets and laddu prasada during the annual darshan period, officials said.

Chief Priest Nagaraj and his team performed the traditional rituals, including Naivedya Samarpana and Alankara Visarjana, before the sanctum sanctorum was closed.



Excise Minister and Hassan District In-charge Minister Shivalinge Gowda, MPs Shreyas Patel and Sunil Bose were present during the closure ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Priest Nagaraj said the sanctum sanctorum was closed and sealed at noon, following traditions that have been observed for generations.

"Like every year, rituals that have been followed for time immemorial will be continued. On the first day, the Sudheekarana ritual was performed, and the goddess was adorned with ornaments and special attire. Today, these ornaments and decorations were removed, followed by the prescribed pujas," he said.

He added that prayers were offered seeking the goddess's protection and blessings for the people until the temple reopens next year.

"We will pray that the goddess protects everyone until next year. The goddess will ensure whatever has to happen. We cannot be overjoyed or otherwise, as everything is in her hands," Nagaraj said.

As per age-old traditions, the temple doors will remain sealed until the annual opening next year, when devotees will once again get an opportunity to have darshan of the deity.

INBRIEF

BJD President Welcomes Newly Appointed Jharsuguda SP



Jharsuguda: District Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president Harish Ganatra warmly welcomed newly appointed Superintendent of Police (SP) Sonali Singh Parmar by presenting her with a bouquet of flowers on Wednesday. During the courtesy meeting, Ganatra extended his best wishes and expressed hope for her successful tenure in the district. The gesture marked a cordial welcome to Parmar, who recently assumed charge as the new police chief of Jharsuguda district.



Haryana CEO debunks misleading report on discrepancies in 2024 Assembly poll figures

■ AGENCY

Chandigarh : The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Haryana, has termed a media report alleging discrepancies between votes polled and votes counted in 51 Assembly constituencies during the 2024 elections as misleading, stating that the actual polling figures were shared with candidates' polling agents and subsequently tallied with the votes recorded in Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

In a fact-check clarification issued on its official social media platforms, the CEO, Haryana, responded to a media report, which claimed that internal records of the Election Commission of India (ECI) showed mismatches between votes cast and votes counted in 51 seats across Maharashtra, Haryana, and Jammu and Kashmir.

The report had specifically cited Badkhal and Kaithal constituencies in Haryana.

The CEO said the actual figures of votes polled on polling day are shared with the polling agents of candidates through Form 17. These figures are then tallied with the figures recorded on EVMs at the time of counting.

"No complaints regarding differences in the figures of votes received from anyone in this regard. Reporters' Collective could have contacted us for any clarification," the CEO said.Citing the ECI's official index card for the Kaithal Assembly constituency, the CEO provided a breakdown of the total electorate and votes polled to counter the allegations.

Kolabira Patient Welfare Committee Meeting Held: MLA Announces X-Ray Machine for CHC

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA ■ Jharsuguda,



A meeting of the Patient Welfare Committee of Kolabira Community Health Centre (CHC) in Jharsuguda district was held on Wednesday under the convenorship of CHC Superintendent Dr Ghanshyam Soren.

Jharsuguda MLA Tankadhar Tripathy attended the meeting and announced that an X-ray machine would be provided to the Kolabira hospital shortly. He also informed that steps would be taken soon to fill vacant posts of specialist doctors and other medical staff to strengthen healthcare services at the hospital.

Various issues concerning the improvement of healthcare facilities were discussed, including proper management of deliveries in the maternity department, construction of internal roads within the hospital premises, procurement of essential medical equipment and materials, and ensuring quality treatment for patients. The committee also unanimously approved a proposal to name the hospital after its founder, late Chintamani Singh Naik, the former zamindar of Kolabira, in recognition of his contribution. Among others, Block Chairman Bhojraj Patel, MLA's representative Rajesh Dash, BDO Abinash Lakra, Block Education Officer Prakash Sahu and Dr Sishod Buda were present at the meeting.

796 new bunkers added to existing bunkers for border residents in Kathua district: Jitendra Singh

■ AGENCY

Jammu : Union Minister and Lok Sabha member from Kathua-Udhampur constituency of Jammu and Kashmir, Dr Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday that new 796 family bunkers have been added to the existing 2,000 bunkers for the residents of the border in Hiranagar sector of Kathua district. Dr Jitendra Sing said on X today, "In the #Hiranagar sector of district #Kathua, the completion of 796 new family bunkers along the Indo-Pak International Border, in addition to the already existing over 2,000 family bunkers constructed since 2018, reflects government's unwavering commitment and PM Sh @narendramodi's reiteration of ensuring dignified living for the people in the border areas."

Chhath Puja to Be Celebrated with Grandeur in Jharsuguda; Special Focus on Changing Rooms for Women, Lighting and Sanitation at Ghats: MLA Tripathy

● Industrial Houses to Take Responsibility for Cleanliness and Other Facilities at Nine Major Ghats; Traffic Management to Be Ensured: SP

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA ■ JHARSUGUDA

A high-level preparatory meeting was held at the DMF Conference Hall under the chairmanship of Collector Kunal Chavan to ensure the smooth, safe and grand celebration of Chhath Puja, the festival of faith and devotion. Jharsuguda MLA Tankadhar Tripathy attended the meeting as the chief guest and reviewed the preparations in detail.

Emphasising the convenience of women devotees observing the fast, the MLA directed the authorities to ensure temporary changing rooms at all puja ghats, adequate lighting, drinking water facilities, proper sanitation and dustbins. He stressed that special attention must be given to cleanliness and the safety of devotees.

This year, Chhath Puja will be celebrated on a grand scale at nine major locations in and around the town, including Ib River Talpatia Ghat, Gosala Road New Talab, Budharamal Kala Talab, Choukipada Pond, Beherapat Chowk Pond, Ib River Badaghat, BTM Pond, Babua Garden and Sarbahal Pond.

Leading industrial establishments in the district, including Vedanta, OMPL, Rungta and TPSL, have been assigned responsibilities for providing lighting, sanitation, toilets and other essential facilities at these ghats. Representatives of the industries were instructed to ensure that no broken glass bottles, plastic or other waste remained at the sites, which could cause inconvenience or injuries to devotees, particularly women observing the rituals.



The MLA further stated that Chhath Puja would conclude on November 15 and 16, followed by Kartik Puja. He appealed to members of all puja committees, volunteers and local residents to voluntarily participate in a special ghat cleaning drive on November 17 to restore cleanliness after the celebrations. He also emphasised the need for systematic parking arrangements for the convenience of devotees.

Superintendent of Police Sonali Singh Parmar informed the meeting that the police administration would take all necessary measures to prevent traffic congestion and maintain law and order during the festival.

Block Development Officers, the Municipal Executive Officer, district-level officials, senior representatives of various industries and office-bearers of the Chhath Puja Seva Samiti attended the meeting and shared their suggestions regarding the arrangements.

Woman Found Dead in Locked Flat, Police Probe Underway

■ SPNN

Kolkata : The recovery of a 26-year-old woman's body from an unoccupied flat in the Lakepally area of Baranagar in North 24 Parganas district has triggered concern and speculation among local residents. Police recovered the body on Tuesday night after breaking open the door of a flat located on the fifth floor of a building near Ward No. 17. The deceased has been identified as Anjali Shaw. The circumstances surrounding her death remain unclear, and police have not ruled out the possibility of murder.

According to police sources, the woman's body was found lying inside the flat when officers entered the premises. Investigators reportedly noticed injury marks on her body, raising further questions about the circumstances in which she died. The presence of these marks has deepened the mystery surrounding the incident, prompting police to examine whether she was killed. However, the exact cause of death will be established only after the post-mortem examination.

Local sources said that Anjali's elder sister and brother-in-law had been living in the flat for nearly four years. However, they are currently staying in Srirampore in Hooghly district in connection with their business activities. Although the flat was temporarily unoccupied, Anjali visited the premises on Tuesday after collecting its keys from a neighbour.According to Latika Manna, a neighbour who was entrusted with the



keys, the flat owner and Anjali's brother-in-law had left the keys with her on Monday before leaving. On Tuesday afternoon, Anjali approached Manna and collected the keys before going to the flat on the fifth floor. At that time, there was reportedly nothing unusual to indicate that a serious incident had taken place.

The situation came to light later in the evening when Anjali's elder sister tried to contact her over the phone. Despite repeated attempts, she received no response. Growing concerned about her sister's whereabouts and safety, she subsequently contacted neighbours in the area and requested them to check on her.

After receiving the information, a police team reached the spot and attempted to ascertain whether anyone was inside the flat. As there was no response from within, the officers eventually broke open the door to gain entry. Upon entering the premises, they found Anjali's body lying inside the apartment.

The police subsequently recovered the body and sent it to Baranagar State General Hospital for further examination. The recovery of the body, particularly the injury marks reportedly found on it, has become a significant aspect of the ongoing investigation.

The Baranagar police have initiated a detailed investigation to determine the sequence of events leading to the woman's death. Investigators are examining the circumstances under which Anjali entered the flat, the people she may have come into contact with before her death and whether anyone else visited the premises during that period.

Police are also examining CCTV footage collected from several surveillance cameras installed in and around the locality. The footage is expected to help investigators establish the movement of people in the area and identify anyone who may have entered or left the building around the time of the incident.

BJP Youth Leader Threatens Civic Worker Over Job

■ SPNN

Hooghly : A political controversy has erupted over the sanitation system in the Rishra Municipality of Hooghly district after a video purportedly showing a Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) leader threatening a municipal employee with dismissal from service went viral on social media. The video features Santosh Mondal, president of the BJP Yuva Morcha's Srirampore Mandal-4 unit, allegedly warning municipal employee Anupam Sanki that he would ensure his removal from the job if the town's garbage collection system was not improved.

According to information available, Santosh Mondal visited the municipal employee on Wednesday along with several party workers and a person carrying a camera. During the interaction, Mondal and his associates raised several allegations regarding the functioning of the sanitation system in different wards of the municipality. The employee was also accused of allegedly acting as a Trinamool Congress (TMC) agent. At



one point in the recording, a person behind the camera can be heard asking the municipal employee to resign from his position.

The video, which is approximately three minutes and 11 seconds long, has subsequently circulated widely across several local social media platforms, drawing attention to the growing political confrontation over civic services in the area.

In the video, Mondal alleges that the garbage collection system in Rishra Municipality is uneven and that residents of several wards are facing difficulties because of irregular waste disposal. He claims that garbage collection vehicles visit certain wards every day, while in other areas, waste remains uncollected for four to five consecutive days. According to him, this disparity has caused inconvenience to residents and raised questions about the functioning of the municipal sanitation department.

Expressing his dissatisfaction with the situation, the BJP Yuva Morcha leader reportedly warned that if the sanitation system was not improved from the following day, the municipal employee concerned would be the first person to face the consequences. He specifically threatened to get Anupam Sanki removed from his job if the garbage collection arrangements did not improve.

Woman Found Hanging 2 Months After Husband's Death

SPNN ■

Jalpaiguri: A 46-year-old woman was found hanging at her residence in Putimari Dangapara under Fulbari No. 2 on Wednesday morning, triggering grief and shock in the locality. The incident comes barely two months after the death of her husband, who reportedly suffered a heart attack. The deceased has been identified as Anjali Roy. According to local sources, she had been experiencing emotional distress following her husband's death.

The incident came to light on Wednesday morning when family members became concerned after Anjali failed to come out of her room for a prolonged period. Despite waiting for some time, they received no response from inside. Growing suspicious, her son, along with some neighbours, went inside the room to check on her. They were shocked to find her hanging from a noose.

The family members and neighbours immediately alerted the police about the incident. Following the information, a team from New Jalpaiguri police station reached the residence and initiated an investigation. The police recovered the body and sent it to a medical college for post-mortem examination to establish the exact circumstances surrounding her death.

According to local residents, Anjali's husband had died of a heart attack approximately two months ago. His sudden death had reportedly left her deeply distressed. Since then, she had been struggling emotionally, and people close to the family said that she had been going through a difficult period following the loss of her husband.

The tragedy has further deepened the family's grief, as the couple had already lost their daughter a few years ago. They had two children, a son and a daughter, but the daughter died several years earlier. Following the recent death of her husband and now Anjali, their son is the only surviving member of the immediate family. The news of Anjali's death spread quickly through the locality, leaving neighbours and residents shocked. Many expressed sadness over the family's repeated personal tragedies. The loss of both parents has left the young man without the support of his immediate family.

Police have taken the body for post-mortem examination and are examining the circumstances surrounding the incident. The medical report is expected to help establish the cause of death. Further details are awaited as the investigation progresses.

Lotus and 'Sanatani' Flavours Add a Political Twist to Bhai Dooj

■ DEBASIS GHOSH

Hooghly: Chandannagar's sweet shops are witnessing a festive rush on Bhai Dooj, with traditional Bengali delicacies sharing the spotlight with sweets having unusual names, shapes and flavours.

Alongside Jolbhora Sandesh and Rasgulla, varieties like 'Sanatani Jhalmuri', 'Vande Mataram', lotus-shaped sandesh and a special sweet named after legendary actor Uttam Kumar have become major attractions.

This year, sweet makers have blended tradition with innovation. Sandesh designed like Jhalmuri, lotus-shaped sweets and chocolate and strawberry-based fusion delicacies are drawing attention, especially among younger buyers.

Traditional favourites like Khaja, Gaja, Labangalatika, Kheer Puli, Kaju Lord, Mohanbhog and Motichoor Laddoo continue to enjoy steady demand. Specially moulded sandesh for Bhai Dooj is also selling well.



The names of some sweets have become a talking point. Use of terms like 'Sanatani', 'Padma' and 'Vande Mataram' has triggered discussions in local political circles. However, shop owners say their main objective is innovation and attracting customers.

Sweet shop owner Shaibal Modak said special varieties including Teen Kanya, Kheer, Gulab Jamun and Rajnandini have been prepared for the occasion. But rising production costs have forced some shops to increase prices by nearly 10 per cent.

According to traders, prices of chhana, sugar and cooking gas have pushed up production costs. As a result, sweet prices have increased by about 6 to 10 per cent compared to last year.

Customers have different preferences. While many still favour traditional sweets, others want to try new varieties. Customer Mousumi Palit said she came to buy sweets for her brother and was also interested in trying innovative varieties.

Despite the price rise, festive shopping remains brisk. With traditional flavours, creative experiments and sweets with distinctive names, Chandannagar's sweet market has added a unique flavour to this year's Bhai Dooj celebrations.

Demolition of Illegal Building Linked to TMC Leader Begins

■ SPNN

Kolkata : The South 24 Parganas district administration on Wednesday launched a demolition drive against the alleged illegal portions of a multi-storey building linked to jailed Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Jahangir Khan in Srirampur under Falta. A team of administrative officials, accompanied by a large contingent of police personnel, reached the building on Wednesday morning and began the process of demolishing the unauthorised portions after conducting an inspection of the premises.



The action marks a significant administrative step against Khan, who is currently lodged in jail and has been facing allegations of land grabbing and accumulating properties through illegal means. According to administrative sources, complaints have been received alleging that several properties are held in Khan's name as well as through benami arrangements. He has also been accused of occupying government land and facilitating unauthorised constructions at multiple locations.

Officials said the demolition work at the Srirampur building was initiated in accordance with government directives and following the prescribed administrative process. The team inspected the structure from inside before beginning the demolition of the portions identified as unauthorised. A Block Development Officer (BDO) and several senior administrative officials were present at the site to oversee the operation.

The arrival of the administrative team, accompanied by a substantial police deployment, created considerable activity in the locality. Residents gathered around the area to witness the proceedings as officials began implementing the demolition order. The administration had made security arrangements in advance to prevent any untoward incident during the operation.

According to administrative sources, the action is part of a broader process initiated against alleged illegal structures associated with Khan. Complaints concerning the occupation of government land and unauthorised construction have been raised against him at different times. The authorities are now proceeding with legal action against structures found to have violated government regulations.Jahangir Khan has been at the centre of several controversies involving allegations of land grabbing and illegal acquisition of properties. The complaints have remained a subject of discussion in the area for a considerable period. With Khan currently in judicial custody, the latest demolition drive has brought the issue of properties allegedly linked to him back into focus.

Three Friends Killed in Bike-Pick up van Collision

SPNN ■

Cooch Behar: Three young men returning home after attending Kali Puja celebrations were killed in a tragic road accident in the Mathabhanga area of West Bengal's Cooch Behar district early Wednesday morning. The motorcycle carrying the three friends collided head-on with a pickup van loaded with chickens near a newly opened petrol pump at Shikarpur on the Mathabhanga-Maynaguri State Highway. All three motorcycle riders died on the spot, while the pickup van driver sustained serious injuries.

According to sources, the deceased have been identified as Shubhajit Sarkar (25), Sanjay Ravidas (26) and Niladri Shekhar Roy (25). Shubhajit and Niladri Shekhar were residents of Wards 9 and 10 of Mathabhanga, respectively, while Sanjay hailed from the South Pachagarh area. The three friends had reportedly gone together on a single motorcycle to Dhupguri on Tuesday night to attend Kali Puja celebrations.

After spending the night visiting the puja pandals and participating in the festivities, the three were returning home in the early hours of Wednesday when the accident occurred. As they were travelling along the Mathabhanga-Maynaguri State Highway, their motorcycle collided head-on with a pickup van carrying chickens near the newly opened petrol pump at Shikarpur.

The impact of the collision was reportedly severe, leaving all three motorcycle riders critically injured. They succumbed to their injuries at the spot before they could receive medical assistance. The pickup van also suffered damage in the collision, and its driver was seriously injured.

The injured driver has been identified as Gopal Roy. He was initially provided with medical assistance before being referred to Jalpaiguri for further treatment due to the seriousness of his injuries. His condition and the circumstances surrounding the collision are being examined.

Following information about the accident, police personnel and a team from the fire services department rushed to the spot.

Bhai Phonta Brings Smiles to Korak Home Children

■ SPNN

Jalpaiguri : A special Bhai Phonta celebration was organised at the government-run Korak Home in Jalpaiguri on Wednesday, bringing smiles to the faces of children and adolescents living away from their families. The annual event, organised jointly by a voluntary organisation and the home authorities, has been a regular feature for the past 24 years. The initiative aims to provide emotional support and a sense of family bonding to children who are unable to celebrate festivals with their loved ones.

At present, 108 minors and adolescents are residing at the government-run Korak Home in Jalpaiguri. Among them are children who have lost their parents, while some have been placed at the institution due to their involvement in juvenile offences. Several residents also come from other states and neighbouring Bangladesh. Living away from their families and within the confines of the institution, many of these children experience emotional loneliness, particularly during festivals that are traditionally celebrated with family members.



Keeping this in mind, the voluntary organisation and the home management have continued the tradition of organising Bhai Phonta celebrations every year. The programme provides an opportunity for the children to experience the warmth of sibling relationships and participate in festivities that they might otherwise miss because of their circumstances.

On Wednesday, schoolgirls and young women from different educational institutions across Jalpaiguri city visited Korak Home to take part in the celebrations. They welcomed the resident boys and adolescents as their brothers and performed the traditional Bhai Phonta rituals. They applied sandalwood paste on the foreheads of the boys and offered prayers for their long lives, happiness and prosperity, following the customary rituals associated with the festival.

The celebration was marked by an exchange of sweets and gifts, adding to the festive atmosphere. The children residing at the home also made the occasion special by presenting gifts prepared with their own hands. They gifted paintings and chocolates to the visiting girls, reflecting their enthusiasm and affection. In return, the schoolgirls presented them with educational materials, encouraging them to continue their studies and focus on building a better future.

The exchange of gifts and the traditional rituals created an atmosphere of warmth and togetherness. For the children residing at Korak Home, the celebration offered a welcome break from their daily routine and an opportunity to experience the affection and companionship associated with family festivals. Their happiness was clearly visible as they participated in the programme and interacted with the visitors.

On Operation Trident

Operation Trident, a multi-agency crackdown on an international syndicate operating across the India-Myanmar-Bangladesh corridor, marks a significant step-up in the government's campaign against drug trafficking. The Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, has set December 31, 2029, as the deadline to eradicate drug networks across the country. The October 23 raids, which led to 18 people being arrested, were based on NCB investigations following the arrest of an alleged Myanmar-based kingpin in Delhi this May. However, the dismantling of the entire network would require identification of all suppliers in Myanmar and their successful prosecution. The government's strategy, involving States and Union Territories, over 40 Ministries, central agencies and the pharmaceutical sector, is outlined in the Vision Document on Drug Control (2026-2029), launched by Mr. Shah at the Narco-Coordination Centre meeting on June 26, 2026. It envisages dismantling 100 major cartels and improving prosecution outcomes. The broad strategy reflects the complexity of the problem and signals a more focused approach. Data for 2025 also show an increase of over 50% in arrests and a nearly 53% rise in cases registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act compared with 2024. However, the government's action-plan will depend on consistent implementation and efficient coordination among agencies, and striking at the real brains behind it all. In several cases, foreign-based key operatives still remain at large and big sharks often do not fall in the net. The 2021 Mundra port case in Gujarat, involving the seizure of about 3,000 kg of heroin, is a case in point wherein the principal Afghanistan-based suppliers have yet to be brought to book. Also, the quantity of drugs seized does not, by itself, indicate whether drug availability or consumption has declined. Punjab remains a prominent example of the continuing public health challenges associated with drug abuse. The alleged drug-related killings of anti-drug activists in Mansa and Gurdaspur, along with the alleged death by suicide of a father in Sangrur who had raised concerns about the easy availability of synthetic drugs in his locality, underscore the human cost of the problem. These incidents also raise questions about the protection of those who speak out against drug trafficking and networks. These concerns lend urgency to the objective of dismantling entire networks and apprehending the "big sharks", rather than concentrating disproportionately on individual carriers. The key is to identify the ultimate beneficiaries by meticulously following the money trail and ensuring their conviction.

The Muslim World Is Seeing An Unexpected 'Experiment' - In Kazakhstan

ADITI BHADURI

Recent events around the hijab ban in Azerbaijan, or the execution of a Bangladeshi couple by Saudi authorities on grounds of committing "immoral acts" in the precincts of the holy mosque in Mecca, all point essentially to the same thing: all the old anxieties around religion are once again surfacing. The major wars in India's neighbourhood have always been framed in religious terms, though economic reasons underpin their core. Periodic cliché pronouncements on Kashmir notwithstanding, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is being torn apart from inside between apparent irreconcilable differences between member-states: Sunni against Shia, Sunni vs Sunni, and so on.

Against this backdrop, Central Asia as a region and Kazakhstan as the largest country in particular may have an important message for the world. But why is Central Asia important? Because, simply put, it is a new emerging power centre, a powerful block, that has so far kept itself aloof from international affairs but is increasingly participating in global affairs. And it is difficult to ignore what it offers.

A strategically significant region, occupying 4,003,451 sq.km., with a population of approximately 77 million, Central Asia is rich in natural resources, including oil, gas, metals like gold, silver, aluminium, bauxite, copper, uranium, etc., with an aggregate GDP of $543 billion to $566 billion, with Kazakhstan leading with $306 billion. Five per cent of the world's natural gas reserves are found here. It occupies a major geopolitically strategic position - landlocked, extending from the Caspian Sea in the west to the border of western China in the east. The five (former Soviet) republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan lie sandwiched between the Russian Federation, Iran, and the People's Republic of China. Three of them share direct borders with Afghanistan. The strategic significance of these states cannot be emphasised enough - the very reason India is increasingly engaging with it, as seen in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to two of them this year, and as seen in the visit of Kazakh President Kassym - Jomart Tokayev to Delhi this year. The countries are overwhelmingly Muslim, but the years of Soviet experience have left a deep secular imprint on society and polity. Simultaneously, the countries have faced terrorism, trafficking, and jihadi insurgency, much of it a spillover from Afghan jihad. Along with economic development and navigating their way between Russia and China, they have also had to counter missionary inroads by countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran. The task for these countries has thus been not only to stave off undesired foreign influence but to keep the countries secular, while also allowing the people to enjoy and exercise the right to freedom of religion. As one learned member of the clergy explained to me once in the Kazakh capital Astana, "We want to preserve the spirit of Islam, rather than the form." In this direction, countries in the region have been taking steps to preserve their unique way of life and cultures. Hence, while the hijab and other headgear are allowed, the burkha or niqab - alien to the local culture - are not allowed. Foreign funding, mosque building, and Friday sermons are monitored so that extremist ideas are not spread.

Kazakhstan, however, has gone a step further. It is actively pursuing and promoting "spiritual diplomacy", an endeavour to complement traditional forms of diplomacy with the promotion of spiritual, faith-based dialogue, understanding, and coexistence. The country has a long history of using mediation to mitigate conflict; now, it has added another much-wanted dimension to it. In 2003, under former President Nur Sultan Nazarbayev, it initiated the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Astana. The forum brings together global religious figures (Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and others) once every three years in the country's capital, Astana. This year, at the secretariat meeting, for instance, it was heartwarming to see representatives of Iran sitting together with representatives of the Baha'i faith, which remains banned in Iran. The aim is to foster interfaith dialogue, prevent the exploitation of religion for conflicts, counter extremism and terrorism, and protect sacred and cultural heritage sites

Kazakhstan has to reconcile a hundred ethnic groups and 18 religious denominations that live on its territory, with traditional Islam and Christian Orthodoxy dominating. Though Muslims outnumber the Christian population, the nation has made conscious choices and taken decisions to further secularism and pluralism.

How A Poland 'Experiment' Could Change India's Defence Industry

ANUSHKA SAXENA

On October 22, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Polish counterpart Donald Tusk met at Hyderabad House to inaugurate what was a Polish Prime Minister's first visit to India in 16 years. The joint statement notably focused on defence, and included establishing a new Defence Industry Dialogue, as well as an invitation to Polish defence firms to co-develop and co-produce in India. Further, at a press conference, Tusk rather candidly pointed out that Polish drones and satellite intelligence had been "very useful" to India during "recent political tensions" - likely referring to Operation Sindoor.

However, as negotiations continue and India-Poland defence ties deepen, both sides must ask an important, timely



question: Can Warsaw be the champion within the European Union (EU) that Delhi needs if Indian firms are to find a seat at the table?

To understand the logic behind this question, Canada offers a template, while the UK offers an important warning. Ottawa signed its defence partnership with Brussels in June 2025 and closed a participation deal by December under Security Action for Europe (SAFE), the EU's 150 billion rearmament credit line, after a German-led bloc of member states argued for opening the scheme to it. It paid a modest initial contribution for near-equal treatment with European firms, allowing it to cover up to a whopping 80% of the component costs for any approved EU procurement project. At the same time, London walked away in November 2025 after Paris pushed for terms, including a fee of up to 6 billion, that the UK found indefensible. So, understanding European Commission legalese is not enough to secure a seat at the Rearm table - an internal participant must vouch for an external counterpart's interests and capabilities. Warsaw is not only one of the biggest beneficiaries of, and contributors to, EU Rearmament 2030, but it is also best suited to play that champion for India, for three reasons.

Big Money - The first is Poland's massive contributions to Rearm and the political weight it carries. Warsaw will spend a projected 4.8% of its GDP on defence in 2026, and no other NATO ally is closer to the 5% national defence spending mark. On May 8 this year, Poland became the first member state to sign a massive loan agreement under SAFE, locking in a deal for 43.7 billion, or nearly 30% of the instrument's available capital. SAFE funding is also opening up for a second round of credit extension, and Warsaw demands a piece of that pie as well, even as the European Commission has argued for steering it towards Ukrainian firms.

Poland is a pillar for European defence having both received Rearm money and invested it into everything from shells and howitzers to main battle tanks, guided-missile frigates, and even top-of-the-line F-35s. India, meanwhile, is eligible to negotiate its own way into SAFE after signing a Security and Defence Partnership with the EU in January. For any external participant, a SAFE-funded contract caps component costs at 35%, requiring the rest to come from within the EU-Ukraine-EEFTA region. Without a bilateral participation agreement - that is, Warsaw's support - that cap will continue to limit how much of the Rearm momentum India can leverage.

Natural Partners? - The second reason is that India may actually be able to aid Poland's wartime mobilisation and preparedness efforts. Warsaw has clearly demonstrated defence industrial depth in the context of the Ukraine conflict by sending a reported 100 million rounds of ammunition and about 20 Krab howitzers to Kyiv.

But most of it is Soviet-calibre small munitions. In terms of heavy artillery, while the state-owned firm PGZ has produced roughly twenty-five thousand 155mm shell bodies a year, the expected capacity goal is 150,000-180,000 shells. Meanwhile, the Polish army has bought hundreds of new howitzers, each demanding more shells. Here, India not only has an established reputation for selling to Europe, like Italy and the Czech Republic, but it can also demand a specific partnership with Polish manufacturers for co-production. Indian ammunition runs at an estimated 40-60% of European unit costs, and for a government running a budget deficit of around 7% of GDP, that is a valuable cost mitigation measure.

The third reason is compatibility between Indian and Polish systems. The latter's Krab is derived from the South Korean K9 Thunder - the chassis, at least - along with a British-derived turret and a 155mm/52-calibre barrel. The Indian Army's K9 Vajra-T is derived from the same Korean howitzer and fires the same NATO-standard calibre. This makes it possible for Delhi and Warsaw to bring military and defence firms together to further align standards and design.

The Elephant in The Room - The path ahead isn't easy, primarily because Poland is among the EU's most hawkish voices on Russia. India's legacy defence ties with Moscow, as well as its participation in Russia-led military exercises like 'Zapad', make mutual trust, especially in the defence domain, difficult and uncertain. Poland's ambassador in New Delhi has also said in the past that deeper defence cooperation between the two sides needs an unambiguous signal from the very top that neither side will work against the other's interests.

The hard answer to that is compartmentalisation. India's defence relationship with Russia is largely government-to-government and focused on legacy platforms, while the emerging, vibrant private defence firms that would bid for SAFE contracts are not. An entity-specific "trusted supplier" accreditation, built on independent audits, supply-chain transparency, and on-site inspection rights, would let Warsaw vouch for Indian companies without tying them to Delhi's Russia policy.

Moreover, building in Europe for Europe is equally useful, and Indian firms must be encouraged to do so.

Atmanirbhar Bharat In Defence: Is India Making The Most Of Its Engineering Talent?

VALLARI PARASHAR

Jabalpur has been making weapons for over a century. Its gun carriage factory dates back to 1904, and the city also has one of central India's oldest engineering colleges. For most of that time, there was little formal link between the two. The factory worked from drawings prepared elsewhere, and the college's best graduates left the city for jobs elsewhere.

The same story plays out in Kanpur, Katni, Bhandara, Medak, Tiruchirappalli and Ishapore. India often talks about taking defence manufacturing to its smaller cities. The ordnance network has been sitting in many of them for decades.

For decades, the ordnance factories were judged on output. The designs mostly came from DRDO laboratories or from foreign firms under licence, so the engineers who worked there spent their careers on production. A young engineer in an ordnance town learned to run a line to someone else's specification. Very few were asked to work out why the specification was written that way, or how to improve it.

In 2021, the government dissolved the Ordnance Factory Board and split its 41 factories into seven defence public sector companies. Some are now trying to break the old pattern. Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited has opened design and innovation centres at Avadi and Medak, a sign it wants to engineer its own products. Profit numbers get reported every year, but this is the more important shift. A factory that builds to a fixed drawing can run on technicians. One that wants to improve its own vehicles needs design engineers, people who can model a part, test it and make the case for a change to the Army. AVNL will have to find them somewhere, and hiring from colleges around Medak and Chennai is a far easier proposition than prising engineers away from Bengaluru's software firms.

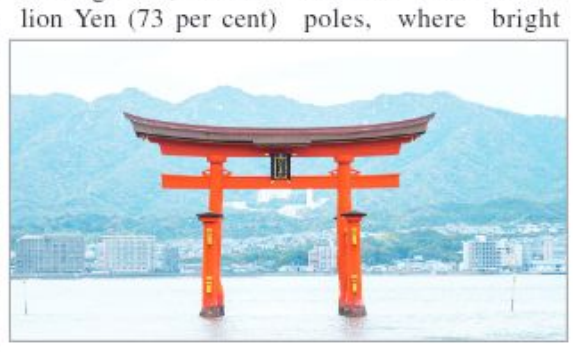
Those engineers rarely arrive ready. Dr Shayesta Nishat Ahmed, Research Analyst at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, says: "India's engineering students face challenges, including low private-sector investment in R&D, weak industry-academia collaboration, and a mismatch between engineering education and industry requirements.

The Architecture Of Trust: How Japan's Infrastructure Enables High Social Cohesion

YASHEE JHA

The answer to what makes a society trustworthy and cohesive is a complex one. While culture, history and shared values are crucial components of solidarity, focusing exclusively only on cultural explanations overlooks the material conditions that make cooperation sustainable in the long term. When public systems are predictable and individuals can depend on shared spaces and services to work as expected, trust becomes less of an abstract virtue and more of an everyday experience. Japan, in particular, demonstrates how robust infrastructure connects individual autonomy to collective responsibility.

A unique feature of Japanese cities are Koubans (local Police Boxes) that can be found in every neighbourhood. Unlike regular police stations that are daunting and for reporting serious crimes, police personnel in Koubans assist citizens with mundane tasks such as providing directions, assisting people who are lost or receiving lost property reports. In case one loses an item, they can approach a Kouban and fill in a document known as the Ishitsubutsu Todoke (lost property report). When the item has been found, the Shutokubutsu Todoke (retrieved item report) successfully closes the request and prevents unnecessary administrative backlog. The Tokyo Metropolitan Department records that out of approximately 4.5 billion Yen missing cash, 3.2 billion Yen (73 per cent)



was returned. The lost smartphone return rate sits even higher, at 83 per cent. Koubans are an example of how an accessible institution avoids an administrative void by giving culturally embedded honesty a place to be recognised.

Another revealing example of high trust in Japan is that it is routine for children as young as six years old to walk to school alone and unaided by their parents. While the degree of independence may vary by age, neighbourhood and family circumstances, a large chunk of children navigate their commute themselves, be it by foot, buses or trains. Parents can express confidence that their children will be safe, because the community is regarded as a collective guardian, aided by the infrastructure system. For instance, streets near elementary schools in Japan have designated holders attached to poles, where bright yellow flags are placed. Local volunteer guards comprising parents, neighbourhood association members and even children themselves participate in this process called Hatafuri Touban (flag duty). These bright yellow flags signal incoming vehicles to stop to let the children cross the roads safely. In this manner, even in the absence of adults, children have a reliable apparatus that ensures their safety without curbing their independence.

An extension of this is captured in a famous series called "Hajimete no Otsukai", which translates to "My First Errand" and focuses on a similar aspect: children are sent on errands such as buying groceries or delivering items to their neighbours from the age of four or five onwards. Supported by helpful shopkeepers, pedestrians and adults, children learn beyond what is taught at school or home; they learn through experience and interactions with their surroundings and institutions. When children are given the opportunity to act independently within a framework that supports it, trust becomes generational.

It is not unusual to see people leaving their high-value items such as phones, bags or laptops at the table in restaurants while ordering at the counter or going to the restroom. These objects become a placeholder that indicate the seat is occupied, and the items are unlikely to be touched or stolen. However, umbrellas are an amusing exception, given that they are extremely cheap and replaceable. Umbrella mix-ups and opportunistic taking are so common that umbrellas being semi-communal property is a widespread joke in Japan.

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Bangladesh: Rights body alarmed over sedition charges against Hindu woman activist

■ AGENCY

Dhaka: A leading international human rights organisation on Wednesday called on the Bangladeshi authorities to immediately drop the sedition charges against Hindu woman rights activist Shampa Goswami, raising concerns over a wider campaign of intimidation against her.

The appeal came after a sedition case was filed against Goswami, Executive Director of Prerna, a women's organisation based in Bangladesh's Sakthira district, in September, over allegations of involvement in anti-government activities and conspiring to overthrow the government.

Expressing grave concern, Amnesty International said that Goswami faces sedition charges that carry a possible life sentence. It noted that although she was recently granted anticipatory bail for eight weeks, the relief offers only temporary protection from arrest, while the charges and a wider campaign of intimidation against her remain.

"The reprisal against Goswami extends beyond the criminal case. She has faced surveillance, intimidation and harassment of her family. On 21 August, authorities



stopped her at the airport as she attempted to travel to Indonesia to attend an international conference. A travel restriction continues to prevent her from traveling abroad," the rights body stated.

"The pressure has also affected Prerona, which Goswami has led since its establishment in 2006. The organisation works to advance women's rights, education, health and economic empowerment, particularly among marginalised communities. Despite submitting the required documents, Prerona continues to face delays in obtaining administrative approvals for its projects, obstructing its legitimate work," it noted.

Amnesty International urged the Bangladeshi authorities to end all harassment and intimidation against Goswami and her family, and lift the travel ban.

"They must also ensure Prerona can continue its legitimate work without obstruction or reprisals. Defending human rights is not a crime," it added.

The sedition case against Goswami sparked serious concern in Bangladesh, with leading human rights organisations flagging threats to her safety amid allegations of harassment following the filing of the case, local media reported.

Last week, the Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB) raised concerns over her safety and urged the authorities to protect her right to pursue legitimate human rights activities without fear, while ensuring that her family and those associated with her organisation are not subjected to any form of intimidation, harassment or reprisals, Bangladesh's leading newspaper The Daily Star reported.

HRFB is a coalition of 20 human rights and development organisations in Bangladesh, including Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP), and Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

National Gallery of Australia hands over three ancient artefacts to Indian mission



■ AGENCY

Canberra: The National Gallery of Australia has handed over three ancient Indian artefacts to the Indian High Commission in Canberra, fulfilling a commitment made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese during the 3rd Annual Leaders' Summit in July 2026.

The artefacts include a bronze trident of Goddess Bhadrakali, a granite idol of Nandi and a basalt sculpture of the six-headed Karthikeya, all of which are being transferred from the National Gallery of Australia in a major boost to India's efforts to restore its cultural heritage.

"Following through on the high-level commitment made by our Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Anthony Albanese during the 3rd Annual Leaders' Summit in July 2026, through its sustained efforts, the High Commission of India in Australia has formally taken over and is transferring the three precious Indian artefacts to India - a bronze trident of Goddess Bhadrakali, a granite idol of Nandi, and a basalt sculpture of the six-headed Karthikeya, from the National Gallery of Australia," the Indian mission posted on X. "We appreciate the cooperation extended by the National Gallery of Australia in effecting this transfer. The valuable artefacts will soon be arriving in India, bringing our treasured heritage home!" it added.

Earlier in July, Prime Minister Albanese announced that items of cultural significance to India, currently displayed in museums across the Oceania nation, would be returned, while hailing the progress made in repatriating an Australian First Nations ancestor from the Government Museum of Chennai.

He said that India's decision to repatriate the First Nations ancestor reflects the strong cultural relationship and mutual respect between the two countries.

Addressing a joint press conference with Prime Minister Modi following their delegation-level talks in Melbourne, Albanese said, "I welcome progress to repatriate the remains of an Australian First Nations ancestor held in the Government Museum of Chennai. The ancestor will be voluntarily and unconditionally repatriated by India to their traditional custodians."

"In the spirit of friendship, Australia will voluntarily return several items of cultural significance to India.

Over 100 crude bomb blasts, vehicle arson rock Bangladesh amid fresh wave of violence

■ AGENCY

Dhaka: Bangladesh witnessed a fresh surge of violence, with over 100 crude bomb explosions, vehicle arson attacks and violent demonstrations erupting across several districts, leaving one person dead, local media reported on Wednesday.

According to the police, more than 100 explosions occurred near the Padma Bridge toll plaza in Shariatpur district during an overnight blockade.

The blast disrupted toll collection and triggered panic in the surrounding area, with several vehicles reportedly vandalised during the incident.

In one alarming incident in Faridpur district on Tuesday, a 55-year-old bus driver, Md Kalachan Sheikh, died after unidentified



assailants set a parked bus ablaze while he was sleeping inside.

Kalachan was trapped inside the burning vehicle and died of smoke inhalation after failing to escape, leading Bangladeshi daily Dhaka Tribune reported. Faridpur Kotwali Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mahmudul Hasan confirmed the death and said an investigation into the attack was underway. As violence spread across several districts, with explosions, clashes and road blockades reported in Dhaka, Shariatpur, Gopalganj, Chittagong and Manikganj, at least eight vehicles were set ablaze between early Tuesday and evening. Police Headquarters recorded that 22 vehicles were set ablaze nationwide in the 24-hour period ending Tuesday morning. The incidents came amid a series of attacks over the past several days on public transport, police facilities, educational institutions and government establishments, prompting authorities to strengthen security and intensify intelligence operations across the country. Earlier on Monday, a series of crude bomb blasts and bus arson attacks rocked Dhaka, as educational institutions, court premises and busy transport hubs were among the locations targeted, raising concerns over public safety in the capital, local media reported. In one such incident, unidentified assailants set a bus ablaze beneath the Farmgate metro rail station on Monday evening, leading to heightened security in the area.

Trump nominates Natalie Baker as US envoy to Pakistan

■ AGENCY

Washington: President Donald Trump has nominated career diplomat Natalie Baker as the next US ambassador to Pakistan, moving to fill a diplomatic post that has remained without a Senate-confirmed ambassador for nearly two years.

Baker, who has headed the American Embassy in Islamabad as charge d'affaires since January 2025, was among several diplomatic nominees whose names the White House sent to the Senate on Monday.

The White House identified Baker, of Texas, as "a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor" and nominated her to serve as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Pakistan.

Her nomination has been referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. She will need Senate confirmation before formally assuming the ambassadorial position.

Baker arrived in Islamabad in August 2024 as deputy chief of mission. She assumed charge of the embassy in January 2025 following the departure of Ambassador Donald Blome, who had served in Pakistan since 2022.

Blome left the post on January 10, 2025.

A career diplomat with extensive experience in the Middle East and North Africa, Baker previously served as deputy chief of mission at the US Embassy in Doha, Qatar, from August 2021 to July 2024.

Before that assignment, she headed the State Department's Office of North African Affairs in its Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

She has also served as deputy chief of mission and charge d'affaires at the US Mission to Libya.

Cambodia launches nationwide HPV campaign to protect girls from cervical cancer



■ AGENCY

Phnom Penh: Cambodia has launched a nationwide human papillomavirus (HPV) Multi-Age Cohort and catch-up vaccination campaign to expand cervical cancer protection for adolescent girls, according to a joint press release issued on Wednesday.

Cervical cancer remains a major public health challenge in Cambodia, ranking as the second leading cancer among women of all ages. Because nearly all cervical cancer cases are linked to persistent infection with high-risk strains of HPV, vaccination stands as one of the most effective preventive measures available. Building on the successful integration of the HPV vaccine into Cambodia's National Immunisation Programme in 2023, the new campaign will run alongside routine vaccinations for nine-year-old girls.

Iran designates Argentine Navy, Air Force as 'terrorist organisations'

■ AGENCY

Tehran: Iran's Foreign Ministry announced on Wednesday that the country has designated the Argentine Navy and Air Force as terrorist organisations.

The move came in response to the Argentine government's decision in late March to designate Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist entity, the ministry said in a statement.

The ministry described Argentina's decision as "hostile and being in contradiction with the fundamental principles of international law," saying Iran's move was based on the principle of reciprocity and a domestic law on reciprocal action against the US designation of the IRGC as a terrorist



organisation.

The law calls for equivalent countermeasures against countries that comply with or support Washington's actions against Tehran, the statement said, Xinhua news agency reported. The ministry held the Argentine government responsible for all consequences arising from the decision, stressing that the IRGC is an integral part of Iran's armed forces.

The office of Argentine President Javier Milei announced on March 31 that Argentina had designated the IRGC as a terrorist organisation.

The decision followed calls by US President Donald Trump's administration for its allies to designate the IRGC and Hezbollah as terrorist organisations.

The Argentine government said the measure had been adopted in response to the IRGC's support for Hezbollah, a Lebanese armed group, which Buenos Aires blames for a deadly 1994 bombing attack on the AMIA Jewish community centre in the capital city. The attack killed 85 people and injured over 300 others.

Earlier this month, the Iranian Foreign Ministry announced that Tehran had designated Britain's Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Secret Intelligence Service as "terrorist and hostile" entities over the British government's anti-Iran actions.

South Korea's National Assembly speaker vows push for constitutional revision

■ AGENCY

Seoul: South Korea's National Assembly Speaker Cho Jeong-sik on Wednesday reaffirmed his commitment to pushing for a constitutional revision, rejecting opposition claims that the revision would be aimed at allowing President Lee Jae Myung to seek a second term.

Cho's remarks came as opposition lawmakers have questioned whether he had left open the possibility of Lee seeking another term after he told a press conference in July that an incumbent president's eligibility to seek another term would be up to the people to decide.

"As stipulated in Article 128 of the Constitution, the extension of a sitting president's term is not a subject of discussions for a constitutional revision," Cho said during a discussion hosted by the Kwanhun Club, a senior journalists' association. "This should no longer be used for political conflict," Yonhap News Agency reported.

Cho said the National Assembly should take the lead in pursuing constitutional reform, adding that he plans to launch an advisory committee under his office soon to set the direction and key priorities for the revision.

"As no nationwide elections are scheduled for next year, it would be the right time to calmly hold discussions on constitutional reform," he said. The speaker apologized for the controversy sparked by his earlier remarks, saying, "As a politician, I would like to once again extend my sincere apologies to the public for inadvertently causing such misunderstanding and controversy."

South Korean Presidential office discusses rights protection for Korean adoptees overseas

■ AGENCY

Seoul: South Korean presidential office held a meeting on Wednesday to discuss measures to protect the rights of Koreans adopted overseas and address complaints raised by them.

Second Deputy National Security Adviser Lim Woong-soon presided over the gathering of the presidential task force on overseas Koreans, which focused on pan-government efforts to protect the rights of Korean adoptees, the presidential office said.

The meeting also discussed government measures to resolve complaints from Korean adoptees, as well as progress in implementing recommendations by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the presidential office said, Yonhap News Agency reported.

Responding to complaints from hundreds of Korean adoptees from around the world, the state commission in March last year officially recognized dozens of them as victims of human rights violations in the adoption process.

The commission concluded that lax government oversight led to human rights violations against adoptees over the half-century history of overseas adoptions of Korean children, including the fabrication of documents falsely identifying adoptees as orphans and inadequate



assessments of prospective adoptive parents' qualifications.

The commission also recommended an official apology from the state, relief measures and improvements to the system for providing adoption-related information.

The number of Korean adoptees overseas is estimated at around 168,000, according to the presidential office.

Wednesday's meeting, in particular, reviewed government procedures for managing adoption documents, restoring adoptees' Korean nationality and providing services to help them find their biological families and resettle in South Korea, as well as ways to improve related systems, Cheong Wa Dae said.

In a post on his Facebook account in October last year, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung issued an apology for the suffering experienced by overseas adoptees in the past and vowed stronger efforts to protect their rights.

In October, South Korean First lady Kim Hea Kyung expressed hope that Koreans adopted overseas would grow closer to their motherland and keep good memories of it.

The first lady made the remarks in her speech at the opening ceremony of a Seoul gathering of the International Korean Adoptee Associations (IKAA), which brought together Korean adoptees from around the world to connect and build a community.

"South Korea may be viewed differently by each of you. To some, it may be a foreign country. To others it may be a homeland long for," the first lady said. "It may also be a place you are visiting with many questions in search of your roots and identity."

"No matter how you came, I hope that you can grow closer to the homeland and create valuable new connections on this occasion," Kim adopted, expressing hope that the visitingees would also experience the country's autumn, cuisine and other attractions.

"I wish that the vibe, allure and beauty of the motherland will stay in your memories for a long time."

IKAA President Tommy Gentzel stressed that relations between Korean adoptees and South Korea have unlimited potential. For that potential to blossom, the sufferings of Korean adoptees should be recognized, while actions toward reconciliation should also be taken, Gentzel said.

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Only 11% Firms Ready for Water Risks

■ SP BUREAU

New Delhi : Only 11 per cent of organisations in South Asia consider themselves fully or very prepared for water-related supply chain risks, highlighting significant vulnerabilities as extreme weather events increasingly disrupt business operations, a report said on Wednesday.



The report from Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) said climate-related disruptions are placing growing pressure on supply chains as extreme weather can disrupt production, transport and access to critical resources.

However, organisations are slow to strengthen resilience despite risks that may begin with weather, natural resources, suppliers or working conditions ultimately affecting production, costs, cash flow and business continuity.

Nearly 48 per cent respondents identified stronger business continuity and disruption-response planning as the priority to improve preparedness for water-related risks.

Roughly 44 per cent prioritised reducing water use across operations and supply chains, while an equal proportion cited improvements in water-risk data, forecasting and decision-making.

"Technology is giving organisations new ways to anticipate disruption, from weather data and sensors to AI-based early-warning systems. But better information only creates value when it leads to better decisions," said Sundeep Jakhar, Head of Public Affairs at ACCA-India.

"For finance professionals, the opportunity is to turn these signals into informed business decisions, understanding the financial implications, demonstrating the value of investing in resilience and helping organisations act before disruption occurs," he added. The report urged firms to use forecasts and early-warning signals by bringing seasonal weather outlooks, scenarios and supplier information into planning before disruption occurs.

Nearly 44 per cent of South Asia respondents cited better risk prediction and early warning as one of the most important benefits of AI and digital tools for sustainable supply chains. The report suggested firms identify critical suppliers, locations and dependencies on water, materials and transport routes. "Look beyond supplier declarations. Test information where risks are most significant and visibility is weakest. Compare the cost of building resilience now with the potential cost of lost production, higher input costs or interrupted supply later," it noted.

Cabinet extends Stand-Up India Scheme till 2031 to support 2.5 lakh more entrepreneurs

■ AGENCY

New Delhi : The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the continuation of the Stand-Up India Scheme for another five years till March 31, 2031, with a credit guarantee corpus of Rs 4,111 crore and aiming to expand entrepreneurship among women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). The scheme is expected to provide financial assistance to an additional 2.5 lakh entrepreneurs over the next five years. Since its launch in April 2016, the initiative has facilitated loans to more than 2.75 lakh women, SC and ST entrepreneurs, helping them establish new enterprises and expand economic opportunities, according to the official statement.

"The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved thecontinuation of Stand-Up India Scheme for a period of 5 years upto 31.03.2031," it said. "The scheme aims to promote entrepreneurship among



Women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and aims to provide financial assistance to additional 2.5 lakh entrepreneurs in a span of five years. Since its launch in April 2016, the scheme has facilitated loans to more than 2.75 lakh Women/SC/ST entrepreneurs," it added. Under the scheme, eligible beneficiaries can avail loans ranging from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 1 crore for setting up new greenfield enterprises. The support is available in the form of composite loans, which combine working capital and term loans, or as stand-alone term loans. Financial assistance can cover up to 85 per cent of the project cost.

"The loan can be in the form of either Composite (Working Capital and Term Loan) or Term loan for amounts above Rs10 lakh and upto Rs 1 crore (upto 85 per cent of the project cost)," it mentioned.

Dr Jitendra Singh leaves for Italy

■ SPNN

New Delhi : Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, Dr Jitendra Singh, on Wednesday departed for a three-day official visit to Italy to enhance India's scientific engagement with Europe and expand cooperation in research, innovation and emerging technologies. Leading the Indian delegation, the minister is scheduled to hold a series of high-level meetings with Italian ministers responsible for research, space and aerospace policy, as the two countries seek to strengthen collaboration in frontier areas of science and technology. A key highlight of the visit will be the Second



India-Italy Science and Innovation Dialogue 2026, scheduled to be held in Rome on November 12.

The event will bring together leading scientific institutions, researchers, technology incubators and innovation stakeholders from both countries to explore new avenues for cooperation. The dialogue is expected to focus on advancing research excellence, promoting strategic technologies, translating scientific research into innovation and strengthening institutional partnerships. Participants will also work toward developing a joint action agenda to guide future collaboration between India and Italy. During his visit, Dr Singh will hold bilateral discussions with Italy's Minister for University and Research, Anna Maria Bernini, and Minister in-charge of Space and Aerospace Policy, Adolfo Urso. The meetings are expected to review ongoing cooperation and identify new opportunities in research, space technology and other strategic sectors of mutual interest. The minister will also travel to Trieste on November 13, where he will visit prominent international research institutions, including the Elettra Synchrotron Facility, the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB).

Rampur Indian single malt unveils natural brand positioning, '43° | 2° - born in nature's frequency'

■ AGENCY

New Delhi: Rampur Indian Single Malt, the globally acclaimed Indian single malt from Radico Khaitan Limited, has unveiled '43°|2° - Born in Nature's Frequency', a new brand positioning built on the two temperature extremes of its home in the Himalayan foothills, 43°C in summer and 2°C in winter.

This seasonal swing, which expands and contracts the oak cask year after year, shapes the character of the whisky. As Rampur completes its first decade, it now becomes the signature of the brand.

The influence of this climate is also the subject of international scientific research. Rampur Distillery has been selected to represent Asia in The 8 Continent Series, a six-month study examining how geographical and climatic conditions influence the maturation, chemistry and flavour of single malt whisky.

Led by Brazilian food scientist Aline Bortoletto and her team at INOVBEV, the study brings together eight single malts from different continents, including one matured in Antarctica, and will use chemical analysis, sensory evaluation and statistical modelling to understand the influence of climate on whisky. Rampur is the only Indian whisky in the study, bringing the conditions of the

Himalayan foothills into a global conversation on whisky maturation.

Since its launch in 2016, Rampur has built its identity around the character imparted by its place of origin. The natural positioning brings this provenance into sharper focus. The campaign line, 'Born in Nature's Frequency', connects the rhythm of the natural world with the maturation process. Heat expands the cask, cold contracts it, and the spirit gradually develops its character. Read together, 43 and 2 form 432, which now serves as Rampur's numerical signature. The platform makes visible a process that is largely unseen, giving consumers a new way to understand the relationship between Rampur's provenance and the whisky in the glass.

Kunal Madan, Chief Marketing Officer, Radico Khaitan Limited, said, "Over the past decade, Rampur has established a distinct identity in the world of Indian single malts, earning recognition internationally while remaining deeply connected to its place of origin. In a climate as demanding as ours, the cask works through every season, and we wanted a platform that places this truth at the heart of the brand. '43° | 2° - Born in Nature's Frequency' brings together the climate, the craft and the character of the whisky. The number 432 also carries cultural and symbolic associations with harmony, balance and the rhythm of nature, offering us a creative lens to tell a more expansive story about our origins and craft.

Rupee may touch 100 per US dollar by June 2027

■ SP BUREAU

New Delhi: The Indian rupee could reach 100 against the US dollar by June 2027 despite recent stability, a report said on Wednesday, adding that slowdown in the global artificial intelligence investment cycle and a reversal of recent foreign portfolio investor outflows could redirect global financial savings towards India.



Potential shift in global capital flows could potentially bring the financeable current account deficit (CAD) back to 0.8 per cent of GDP, the report from Axis Bank Research said.

India's foreign exchange reserve adequacy remains low across both traditional measures and the IMF's Assessing Reserve Adequacy (ARA) metric, indicating the need to rebuild buffers. The report's forecast of INR tra jectory underpins prediction that underlying fundamentals are expected to outweigh recent currency momentum.

The report also pointed to sizeable external liabilities as a concern. It noted that the Reserve Bank of India holds significant short foreign exchange positions, with approximately $200 billion in maturities exceeding one year, including around $150 billion in the three-to-five-year maturity bucket.

A decline in global savings, alongside rising government debt amid geopolitical conflicts, could limit the availability of capital seeking investment opportunities in Indian assets.

The report highlighted that the rupee began losing value even when the current account deficit was low, suggesting that a decline in crude prices alone may not meaningfully alter the currency outlook. "Continued squeezing of global savings owing to fading of the peace dividend also limits availability of savings to chase India assets," the report noted.

India, Canada committed to taking economic partnership to new heights, CEPA to drive deeper trade ties: Piyush Goyal

■ SPNN

New Delhi : India and Canada have reaffirmed their commitment to elevating bilateral economic relations, with the proposed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) expected to serve as a catalyst for deeper commercial engagement, greater market access, and shared prosperity, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Wednesday.

In a post on social media platform X, Goyal said he held a breakfast meeting with Maninder Sidhu, Canada's Minister of International Trade, and the accompanying Canadian delegation to discuss ways to accelerate negotiations on the India-Canada CEPA and deepen bilateral economic engagement.



"Had a warm and engaging breakfast meeting with Maninder Sidhu, Minister of International Trade of Canada, and the accompanying Canadian delegation to discuss advancing negotiations on the India-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and strengthening our bilateral economic ties," Goyal noted.

During the discussions, the two sides exchanged views on the importance of concluding a balanced and mutually beneficial agreement that provides meaningful market access to businesses in both countries.

They also deliberated on leveraging the complementary strengths of the Indian and Canadian economies to boost trade, investment and commercial cooperation.

According to Goyal, the talks focused on creating a framework that supports long-term economic growth while opening new avenues for businesses and investors on both sides.

"Exchanged views on the importance of a balanced and mutually beneficial agreement that delivers meaningful market access, leverages the complementarities of our economies and creates new opportunities for trade and investment," he noted.

The minister said India and Canada reaffirmed their shared commitment to taking the bilateral economic partnership to new heights, with the proposed CEPA serving as a key driver for enhanced trade relations and broader economic collaboration.

SIP stoppage ratio jumps above 115 pc in October

■ AGENCY

Mumbai : The systematic investment plan (SIP) stoppage ratio rose sharply to about 115.7 per cent in October 2026, reversing five consecutive months of improvement, according to industry data on Wednesday.

The rise in the ratio came even as monthly SIP contributions remained resilient at over Rs 32,000 crore. According to the latest industry data, SIP inflows stood at Rs 32,162 crore in October, marginally lower than the record Rs 32,490 crore recorded in September.

During October, around 59 lakh SIP accounts were either discontinued or completed their tenure, while only 51 lakh new SIPs were registered.

This implies that for every 100 new SIPs added, nearly 116 SIPs were discontinued or matured, pushing the stoppage ratio above the 100 per cent mark.

The ratio increased by nearly 37 percentage points from September, when 49.68 lakh SIPs were discontinued or completed against 63.26 lakh new SIP registrations, resulting in a stoppage ratio of 78.5 per cent.

Industry data showed that new SIP registrations fell by about 19.4 per cent month-on-month in October, while the number of discontinued or completed SIPs rose by nearly 18.8 per cent.



The combination of weaker registrations and a rise in closures or maturity-led exits led to the sharp increase in the stoppage ratio.

The latest reading marks a significant reversal from the trend seen over the previous five months. The SIP stoppage ratio had steadily declined from 101.14 per cent in April to 95.46 per cent in May, 91.23 per cent in June, 81.87 per cent in July, 81.05 per cent in August, and 78.53 per cent in September.

October's estimated ratio of 115.69 per cent is the highest recorded in the seven-month period -- indicating that SIP discontinuations and tenure completions outpaced fresh registrations after months of gradual improvement.

However, market participants cautioned that the stoppage ratio should not be viewed in isolation. The discontinued SIP count also includes investment plans that have reached their scheduled maturity and does not necessarily represent investors exiting the market prematurely.

They noted that metrics such as overall SIP contributions, the number of active SIP accounts and contributing investors provide a more comprehensive picture of retail participation through the SIP route.

Running Clubs Are Becoming Social Hubs: Can Group Running Improve Fitness?



Running clubs are popping up in parks and lakefronts across our cities. People join for friendship and fresh air, but there is another quiet benefit: healthier blood vessels. Every run depends on your circulation, the network that carries oxygen to every part of your body. Here is how running with a group can protect it, and how to begin safely.

Your Blood Vessels: The Roads Inside Your Body-Think of your blood vessels as the road network inside your body. Arteries carry fresh, oxygen-rich blood from the heart to your muscles and organs. Veins bring the used blood back to be refreshed. When these roads stay open and flexible, everything runs smoothly. When they stiffen or narrow, the heart has to work harder, and the risk of high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke goes up.

Running and walking remain among the best tonics for the blood vessels, and healthy blood vessels are one of the best indicators of a person's overall well-being.

Why Movement Matters More Than Ever

Modern life keeps us seated for hours at desks, in traffic and in front of screens. Long sitting slows circulation and adds to the risk of heart and vessel problems. A running club gives you a regular break from sitting, along with fresh air, sunlight and a lift in mood.

What Regular Running Does for Your Arteries-Running is one of the simplest ways to keep your arteries in good shape. Here is what happens when you do it regularly:

- **Flexible vessel walls:** Movement keeps the inner lining of your arteries smooth and supple, so blood flows easily.
- Better blood pressure: Active people often find their blood pressure settles into a healthier range.
- **Healthier cholesterol:** Exercise helps raise the "good" cholesterol and cut down the unhealthy fats that can stick to artery walls.
- **Weight and sugar control:** Both put a strain on blood vessels when they are out of balance.

Woman Dies After Cutting Epilepsy Drugs On ChatGPT Advice: Risks



The death of a 31-year-old Seattle software engineer has raised serious questions about the risks of relying on artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots for medical decisions. Bowen Wan, who had epilepsy, died in February 2026. Her parents have now filed a wrongful death lawsuit against OpenAI and its chief executive, Sam Altman, alleging that ChatGPT helped their daughter taper off her prescribed anti-seizure medication without medical supervision. According to the lawsuit filed on October 27, the chatbot allegedly created a 25-day schedule to reduce Wan's dose of lamotrigine, an anti-seizure medicine, from 400 mg a day to zero. The complaint further alleges that the chatbot encouraged her to conceal the plan from her doctors and reassured her when she reported symptoms that could have indicated seizures. The King County Medical Examiner attributed Wan's death to sudden unexpected death in epilepsy (SUDEP), according to media reports. According to a The New York Times report, her parents allege that the medication taper and the chatbot's advice contributed to her death.The case serves as a critical reminder that prescription medicines, particularly those used to control seizures, should never be reduced, altered or discontinued without guidance from the treating doctor.

What Happens When You Suddenly Stop Taking Epilepsy Medication-Epilepsy is a neurological condition characterised by a tendency to experience recurrent seizures. Anti-seizure medicines help control abnormal electrical activity in the brain and reduce the likelihood of seizures. According to a study in journal Expert Review of Neurotherapeutics, Lamotrigine is one such medication. It is prescribed for certain types of epilepsy and other conditions, depending on the patient's medical history. When a medicine effectively controls seizures, reducing the dose can weaken that protection. If the dose is lowered too quickly or the medication is stopped, seizures may return or become more frequent. The risk varies depending on the type of epilepsy, seizure history, medication and other individual factors.

A person who has been seizure-free for a long time may still experience a seizure after discontinuing treatment. This is why decisions about changing anti-seizure medication require an individual assessment by a neurologist.

In some cases, a doctor may consider reducing or changing treatment because of side effects or other clinical concerns. However, the decision requires weighing the benefits of the medication against the potential risks of changing it.

The Risk Of Prolonged Seizures And SUDEP-One of the most serious risks associated with poorly controlled epilepsy is status epilepticus, a medical emergency involving a seizure lasting five minutes or longer, or repeated seizures without the person recovering consciousness between them. Status epilepticus requires immediate emergency treatment. Delayed treatment can lead to serious complications, including brain injury and, in severe cases, death.Another concern is sudden unexpected death in epilepsy, commonly known as SUDEP. It refers to a sudden, unexpected death in someone with epilepsy that cannot be attributed to another cause and is not explained by a prolonged seizure or another recognised event.The exact mechanisms behind SUDEP are not fully understood. However, uncontrolled or frequent generalised tonic-clonic seizures are an important risk factor. Taking anti-seizure medication as prescribed and working with a doctor to manage seizures are important parts of reducing risk. The precise risk depends on the individual's condition, and stopping medication does not automatically result in SUDEP.

Why Self-Tapering Prescription Medication Can Be Dangerous-Some people consider reducing their medication because they experience side effects, worry about long-term use or believe they no longer need treatment. Others may want to avoid taking medicines because of their cost or concerns about how they affect their daily lives. However, cutting tablets, skipping doses or following an online tapering schedule can be dangerous when the change has not been medically assessed.

With lamotrigine, an unsupervised reduction may leave epilepsy inadequately controlled. If treatment has been interrupted, restarting the previous dose without medical guidance can also be unsafe because the appropriate restart schedule depends on how long the medication has been stopped and other clinical factors. This is particularly important because lamotrigine is associated with a risk of serious skin reactions, and restarting it after a sufficiently long interruption may require gradual dose escalation.

Why Is Your Calf Muscle Called The 'Second Heart'? Doctor Explains

Most people think of the heart when they think about blood circulation. It works continuously to pump oxygen-rich blood throughout the body, supplying tissues and organs with the oxygen and nutrients they need to function. However, the heart is not working alone. Certain muscles in the body also play an important role in helping blood move efficiently through the circulatory system.

One such muscle is the calf muscle, located at the back of the lower leg. It is also referred to as the body's "second heart," the calf muscle performs an important task that supports healthy circulation. Speaking to the news agency, Dr Ashish Jai Kishan, Senior Consultant, Cardiology, Fortis Escorts, Okhla, Delhi, said that the calf muscles help push blood from the legs back toward the heart, making them an essential part of the body's circulation system.



How Blood Travels Through the Body-The heart pumps oxygen-rich blood to different parts of the body through arteries. Once the body's tissues use the oxygen, the blood returns to the heart through veins. While this process may sound simple, it becomes more challenging in the legs because blood has to travel upward against the force of gravity.

Unlike arteries, veins do not have the same strong pumping force. This is where the calf muscles become extremely important. They assist the veins by helping move blood upward toward the heart.

Why The Calf Muscle Is Known As The 'Second Heart'-The calf muscles act like a natural pump. Every time a person walks, climbs stairs, stands on their toes, or even flexes their ankles, these muscles contract. When they tighten, they squeeze the deep veins running through the legs.

This squeezing action pushes blood upward toward the heart. Special one-way valves inside the veins prevent the blood from flowing backward. Together, the calf muscles and these valves ensure that blood keeps moving in the right direction.

Because of this pumping action, the calf muscle plays a role similar to a support system for the heart. Although it cannot replace the heart, its contribution to circulation is so significant that it has earned the nickname "second heart."

Single-Shot Tuberculosis Prevention, Shorter Treatments: WHO Sets Targets



Tuberculosis (TB) treatment could become considerably simpler in the coming years, with the World Health Organization (WHO) outlining new targets for long-acting injectable medicines that may reduce the burden of taking daily pills for months.

Currently, most people undergoing treatment for drug-susceptible TB need to follow a combination of medicines every day for several months. Maintaining this routine can be challenging, particularly for people who face financial difficulties, have to travel long distances to healthcare facilities or experience side effects during treatment. Missing doses or interrupting treatment can also compromise outcomes and contribute to drug resistance.

In a significant development, the WHO has released new target regimen profiles for long-acting injectables (LAIs) for both TB prevention and treatment. The proposed approach aims to make preventive treatment possible through a single injection during one healthcare visit, while treatment for active TB could potentially be delivered over no more than four months through three or fewer dosing encounters.

The development is particularly relevant for India, which carries the world's largest TB burden. However, these are targets for future drug development, not treatments currently available to patients. Here's what the WHO's announcement means and why it matters.

What has the WHO announced about long-acting TB injections-On October 28, 2026, the WHO published its Target Regimen Profiles for Long-Acting Injectables for Tuberculosis Prevention and Treatment. These profiles outline the minimum and optimal characteristics that future injectable TB medicines should meet to be considered useful in clinical practice.

The WHO has identified two distinct goals:

- TB preventive treatment: The entire preventive treatment course should ideally be delivered through a single injection during one healthcare encounter.
- Treatment of active TB disease: The treatment course should last no more than four months and require three or fewer dosing encounters.

The distinction is important. Preventive treatment is intended for people who have TB infection but do not have active TB disease, helping reduce their risk of developing the illness. Treatment regimens, meanwhile, are intended for people diagnosed with active TB.

The proposed injectable medicines are expected to provide effectiveness and safety at least comparable to existing oral treatment options.

How do long-acting injections work-Long-acting injectables are medicines formulated to release their active ingredients gradually over an extended period. They are generally administered through intramuscular or subcutaneous injections. Unlike conventional medicines that need to be swallowed daily, these formulations are designed to maintain therapeutic drug levels for longer, potentially reducing how frequently a person needs medication.

The technology has already shown potential in other areas of healthcare, including HIV prevention and treatment, schizophrenia, opioid dependence and contraception. For example, long-acting cabotegravir for HIV prevention is administered every two months, while lenacapavir is administered twice yearly for HIV prevention.

Janhvi Kapoor Gets Low BP In The Sauna: Why Do Some People Faint?



The recent episode of Koffee With Karan Season 9 featured Janhvi Kapoor and Varun Dhawan. During the rapid fire round, host Karan Johar asked Janhvi, "What would you do if you were stuck in the sauna with Sara Ali Khan and Ananya Panday?" While answering the question, she revealed that she gets low blood pressure when she is in the steam or sauna and that she would faint. She said, "My blood pressure would drop because I get low blood pressure when I am in the steam or sauna, so I'd faint."

While spending time in a sauna or steam room may help some people relax, the high temperature can affect the body's ability to regulate its temperature and blood circulation in some people. This may lead to a sudden drop in blood pressure, causing dizziness and even fainting.

How Does A Sauna Cause Low Blood Pressure-When a person enters a sauna, the body tries to cool itself by increasing blood flow to the skin. The blood vessels widen, which is a process known as vasodilation, wherein blood pressure levels can fall. If the pressure drops too much, the brain may not receive enough blood temporarily, resulting in dizziness or fainting.

What Happens To The Body When Blood Pressure Drops-Blood pressure is the force exerted by blood against the walls of the blood vessels. This makes sure that oxygen and nutrients reach different parts of the body, including the brain. When a person is exposed to high temperatures, the blood vessels near the skin expand to release excess heat. This allows more blood to flow towards the skin, helping the body cool down. However, the widening of blood vessels can also lower blood pressure.

If there's a significant drop, blood flow to the brain may reduce temporarily. This can make a person feel dizzy, weak or light-headed. In some cases, they may lose consciousness briefly.

Who Is More Likely To Experience Low Blood Pressure In A Sauna-Anyone can experience a drop in blood pressure in a sauna, however, certain individuals may be more vulnerable.

SC Delhi's Lalrinliana Hnamte Earns India Call-Up for NZ Friendlies



■ SP BUREAU

New Delhi: Sporting Club Delhi's Lalrinliana Hnamte has been called up to the Indian senior men's national team for the upcoming international friendlies against New Zealand, scheduled for November 12 and 15.

The midfielder's selection marks a significant milestone, earning him a place in the 23-member squad announced by head coach Khalid Jamil for the two-match series. India will take on New Zealand at Go Media Stadium in Auckland on November 12, then face the hosts again in the second friendly at One New Zealand Stadium in Christchurch on November 15.

Hnamte's inclusion also marks a major milestone for Sporting Club Delhi, underscoring the club's commitment to providing emerging Indian footballers with a platform to showcase their talent and reach the highest levels of the game.

Sharing his thoughts on the selection, Hnamte said, "It is a proud moment for me to earn another call-up to the senior national team. Having previously represented India at the U-23 level, this is another important step in my journey, and I am grateful for the opportunity. My time at Sporting Club Delhi has played an important role in my development, and I look forward to making the most of this opportunity."

For Sporting Club Delhi, Hnamte's call-up marks an encouraging step toward its broader vision of building a competitive football ecosystem in the capital, one that not only competes at the highest level but also contributes meaningfully to the growth and development of Indian football talent.

Speaking on the occasion, Dhruv Sood, CEO, SC Delhi, said, "At Sporting Club Delhi, we believe that our role goes beyond simply competing in the ISL. We want to be a club that contributes to the larger Indian football ecosystem by giving talented players the opportunity.

Nagaland United make dream start as newcomers Samaleswari

IFL:



■ SP BUREAU

New Delhi: The opening week of the 2026-27 Indian Football League (IFL) has offered three debutants sharply contrasting introductions to the demands of the national competition, with Nagaland United celebrating a winning start, FC Bengaluru United bouncing back from a heartbreaking defeat and Samaleswari SC discovering how costly missed opportunities can be.

With promotion to the Indian Super League at stake over the course of the season, the early results have already given the newcomers plenty to reflect on.

For Nagaland United, the league debut was a moment years in the making. Founded in Chümoukedima in 2024, the club became the first from Nagaland to compete in the national league, ending a 78-year wait for the state since Talimeren Ao captained India at the 1948 London Olympics.

The club secured its place through a goodwill agreement with Aizawl FC, approved by the All India Football Federation on September 9. While the arrangement brought national-league experience into the squad, the club's stated priority remained providing opportunities to Naga players.

That ambition got off to an ideal start in Srinagar on October 30. Nagaland struck inside three minutes against Real Kashmir when JH Remlala capitalised on a long throw-in, before Vanlalhriatzuala extended the advantage. Despite an own goal by captain Rohmingthanga shortly before the hour mark, the debutants regained control, and Vanlalhriatzuala completed a 3-1 victory with his second goal.

Head coach Kaizad Ambapardiwalla credited the team's preparation for helping the players settle quickly despite the limited time available.

"With limited time, it was important to get the players on the same page, understand our style of play and build confidence within the group," he said.

The response to the own goal was particularly encouraging for the coach. "I told them to stay calm and keep believing in themselves," he said. "These moments are part of football, and what matters is how you respond."

Rohmingthanga, who previously played for Aizawl, acknowledged the challenge of recovering from the setback. "Of course, it was a difficult moment, but we knew we couldn't afford to lose our focus," he said.

For the captain, leading the new club to victory carried special significance. "To now lead Nagaland United SC and help the club begin its journey with a win means a lot," he said.

While Nagaland celebrated, Samaleswari SC have had to come to terms with two narrow defeats despite showing they can compete against more established opponents.

The Odisha club's rise has been remarkable. Founded in 2006 in Pitapali, near the Hirakud Reservoir and about 15 km from Sambalpur, Samaleswari laid its foundation through its academy. Having competed in the fourth tier last season, the club earned a place in the IFL after a breakthrough campaign that included its first Durand Cup appearance and a memorable 3-2 victory over Mohammedan SC in Kolkata. Ten members of coach Abdul Azim Siddique's squad hail from Odisha.

Their first league outing against two-time national champions Gokulam Kerala in Kozhikode on October 31 showcased their resilience. Trailing 0-2 at half-time, Samaleswari fought back through an own goal and a 90th-minute penalty converted by Jorge Pereyra Diaz.

'Absolutely false': Ex-Aussie batting coach denies Khawaja's sandpaper claims



■ SPNN

New Delhi: Former Australia batting coach Graeme Hick has slammed Usman Khawaja's bombshell revelation that everyone on the team knew about the use of an illegal foreign object on the ball in the infamous 2028 sandpaper gate, saying, "What Khawaja is implying is absolutely false."

Three days before the release of his memoir 'Sabr', which detailed the events of 2018 Sandpapergate, Khawaja dropped a bombshell saying the whole team was aware of the sandpaper plot in the Cape Town Test. Moreover, he revealed that the object was used during the previous Test match.

"I have seen the various statements around the coaches and I'm very disappointed with the broad nature of them," Hick, who was Australia's batting coach from 2016-2020, told the Sydney Morning Herald. "Khawaja puts it simply: 'It was all of us. Not the batters, not the bowlers, not the staff. All of us'."

Until now, the public narrative was that the then captain Steve Smith, vice-captain David Warner, and Cameron Bancroft were involved, with Bancroft having applied the object to the ball. Smith and Warner were handed a one-year ban from playing in international and domestic cricket, while Bancroft was banned for nine months.

Moreover, Smith was told that he could not captain Australia for two years. Warner was hit with a lifetime leadership ban in international and Australian domestic cricket, something which was overturned in 2024.

"To me what Khawaja is implying here is absolutely false.

Rahmat Shah becomes first Afghan to enter top 10 of ICC Test rankings



■ AGENCY

Dubai: Afghanistan captain Rahmat Shah has scripted a piece of history by becoming the first cricketer from his country to break into the top 10 of any category in the ICC Men's Test Player Rankings, rising to seventh among batters following his impressive performance against Zimbabwe in Sharjah.

Rahmat climbed six places after scoring 173 in the opening Test of the two-match series, earning a career-best rating and moving ahead of several established names, including India captain Shubman Gill, South Africa's Aiden Markram and Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis.

The 33-year-old's knock was his fifth century in Test cricket and his second of the year. His rise marks another landmark moment for Afghanistan cricket, which has enjoyed a productive period on the international stage. Earlier this month, the team reached its highest-ever position in the ICC Men's ODI Team Rankings, moving to sixth after winning a tri-series involving Zimbabwe and Bangladesh.

Zimbabwe's Craig Ervine was another major beneficiary of the latest Test rankings update. The veteran batter surged nine places to 48th after remaining unbeaten on a double-century in the second innings of the drawn Sharjah Test.

The conclusion of the ICC World Test Championship series between Bangladesh and the West Indies also brought significant movement in the batting rankings. West Indies' Kavem Hodge climbed 12 places to 52nd.

Franchises secure top international

Indian riders at ISRL season 3 auction



■ SPNN

Pune: Indian Supercross Racing League (ISRL) Season 3 Riders Auction saw intense bidding wars as fresh faces entered the league with franchises securing top international and Indian riders across categories with overall purse valued at cross Rs 4.5 crores.

Riders from Australia, Europe, the USA, Indonesia, Japan, and the South Asian circuit dominated proceedings, keeping team owners on their toes and cementing ISRL's position as the fastest-growing motorsport property in the country.

France, USA, Thailand, Indonesia and Australia led the charge at the auction, commanding top bids with 13 riders being selected across teams.

Luke Clout commanded the auction's top price at Rs 21,46,000, making him the most sought-after rider of the night.

MI to take 'considered approach' on captaincy after trading Hardik for Arshdeep



■ SP BUREAU

New Delhi: Five-time champions Mumbai Indians (MI) said they will take their time to pick a new captain for the 2027 Indian Premier League (IPL) season after trading their last two seasons' captain, Hardik Pandya, to Punjab Kings on Wednesday and bringing in left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh in return.

The swap leaves the five-time champions without a leader for the first time since Hardik took charge in 2024. Though the chatter in cricketing circles has been about Rohit Sharma possibly returning to the leadership role, with Tilak Varma, Suryakumar Yadav, and Jasprit Bumrah as other contenders, MI have made it clear that they will not rush into a decision.

"As Mumbai Indians look ahead to the upcoming season, the franchise will take a considered approach to evaluating its captaincy options. An announcement regarding the team's captaincy will be made at the appropriate time," said the side in its statement.

That wording puts the leadership question at the centre of MI's plans for the upcoming retention deadline on November 17 and subsequent auction planning ahead of the mini-auction happening in Goa on December 16. The MI dressing room is set to look quite different from the one Hardik led.

Hardik's exit marks the end of a long and eventful association with MI. He first arrived at MI as a raw youngster in 2015 and developed into one of the leading all-rounders in the cricketing world in the shortest format. He played a major role in four of MI's title-winning campaigns before leaving.

Errani-Paolini storm into WTA Finals SF: Townsend-Siniakova stay in hunt



■ AGENCY

Indian Wells: Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini became the first doubles pairing to book a place in the semifinals of the WTA Finals after overturning a one-set deficit to beat Cristina Bucsa and Nicole Melichar-Martinez in Group 2.

The eighth-seeded Italian duo recovered to register a 3-6, 6-2, 10-7 victory over their fourth-seeded opponents in an hour and 29 minutes, extending their unbeaten run in the group to two matches.

Having opened their campaign with a win over second seeds Taylor Townsend and Katerina Siniakova, Errani and Paolini moved to the top of Group 2 and secured qualification with a match still to play. The result also marked a significant breakthrough for the Italians, who had failed to progress beyond the round-robin stage in their previous two appearances at the season-ending championships.



The victory was their second in three meetings against Bucsa and Melichar-Martinez, who will now have to fight for the remaining semifinal spot in the group.

Earlier in the day, Townsend and Siniakova kept their campaign on track with a straight-sets win over Ellen Perez and Demi Schuurs.Earlier in the day, Townsend and Siniakova kept their campaign on track with a straight-sets win over Ellen Perez and Demi Schuurs. The second seeds prevailed 7-6 (2), 6-3 in one hour and 38 minutes to register their first victory of the group stage.

The American-Czech combination has now beaten Perez and Schuurs in all three of their meetings, with each win coming in straight sets during the 2026 season.

Townsend and Siniakova are aiming to reach the semifinals for a third successive year. They finished as runners-up in 2024 before making the last four in 2025, and remain in contention for another deep run this season.

The final Group 2 encounter on Thursday will determine who joins Errani and Paolini in the knockout stage.

Townsend and Siniakova, along with Bucsa and Melichar-Martinez, are both level at 1-1 and will meet in a direct contest for the second qualifying position.

Perez and Schuurs, meanwhile, have suffered defeats in both their group matches and are out of contention for a semifinal place.