

EYE SECRETS

SPY IN EVERY BLINK

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Modi, Ministers Discuss 100% Reach of Welfare Schemes



New Delhi, Sept 24

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his council of ministers on Thursday discussed ways to ensure that government welfare schemes reach all eligible beneficiaries as the two-day Chintan Shivir concluded in New Delhi.

For the second consecutive day, the ministers were divided into eight groups, with Modi interacting with each group besides addressing them collectively, sources said.

With around 40-45 government welfare schemes

under consideration, discussions focused on achieving saturation coverage and improving communication with citizens about welfare and development initiatives.

"Effective communication to the people is one area where the government will place stress in the coming days," sources said.

The first day of the conclave discussed governance, reforms and outreach to women and youth. Ministers also deliberated on improving delivery mechanisms through closer coordination among ministries and departments.

Modi took feedback from ministers and advised them on various aspects of governance, sources said.

The discussions also covered reforms, "Jan Vishwas Se Jan Aadhaar" and priorities for Viksit Bharat@2047.

The brainstorming session was aimed at taking stock of government programmes, improving coordination, setting the future agenda and reviewing welfare schemes and infrastructure projects.

Progress of government schemes, policy implementation, time management, inter-ministerial coordination and public service delivery were also on the agenda.

Rain Kills 8, Leave Trail Of Destruction Across AP

Amaravathi, Sept 24

Incessant rain caused by a deep depression over the Bay of Bengal claimed eight lives in different incidents and disrupted normal life across Andhra Pradesh over the past 48 hours.

Two women were killed of electric shock at Gollaveedhi in Nathavaram mandal of Anakapalli dis-

trict. The deceased were Gompa Manga, 55, and Rongala Janaki, 28.

ment complex at Kommadi in Madhurawada. Police launched a rescue operation and evacuated around 80 residents to safer locations.

Visakhapatnam collector Abhishik Kishore said 71 trees were uprooted in the city, of which 65 had been cleared. In ASR district, 71 kucha houses were damaged in the rains and overflowing streams disrupted road connectivity.



A car carrying PACS chairman and Telugu Desam Nunna president Kalakoti Srinivasa Reddy and his wife was swept away by floodwaters after the Pedda Vagu overflowed near China Kanchi in NTR district on the Vikas Group of Institutions-Nunna road on Thursday.

The coastline along RK Beach Road in Visakhapatnam suffered severe erosion, with the Coco Arena area also af-

ected.

Heavy rain and adverse weather conditions disrupted flight operations, with several flights diverted to other airports and others reportedly cancelled. Passengers faced inconvenience due to the disruptions.

In the Visakhapatnam region, the RTC cancelled 170 bus services.

The government declared a holiday on Thursday for educational institutions in Vizianagaram, Parvathipuram Manyam, Visakhapatnam, East and West Godavari and Eluru districts. Collectors of Visakhapatnam, Anakapalli and Eluru also announced holidays for all district schools on Friday.

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu reviewed the weather situation and directed districts to remain alert as rain was expected to continue on Friday. He asked officials to restore road connectivity immediately where roads were affected by heavy water flow and alert residents in areas vulnerable to landslides.

IMD said more rain was likely as the deep depression over north coastal Andhra Pradesh moved northwestwards and lay centred over north coastal Andhra Pradesh and adjoining south Odisha.

A poverty-free Telangana and more by 2033, promises DyCM Bhatti

Hyderabad, Sept24

The Congress-led Telangana government promised to accelerate development projects and make a "poverty-free" state by 2030 and the first state in the

country to achieve developed-economy status by 2033.



A high-level meeting, chaired by Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, was held on Thursday, September 24, to discuss the action plan for achieving the state's long-term economic and social development goals.

The meeting was attended by SP Tucker, former Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh and Global Forum for Sustainable Transformation Vice Chairman, along with officials from the Finance and Planning departments. Officials discussed methods to strengthen the state's development planning and implementation, enhance inter-departmental coordination, and design systems to monitor development outcomes.

A dedicated Project Management Unit (PMU) will

be established to handle formulating strategic plans for the state's priority development programs, coordinating across various departments, and overseeing the implementation, monitoring, and acceleration of these programs. Officials said the Telangana State Development Planning Society (TSDPS) should be further strengthened.

On 'Zero Poverty', the meeting discussed launching targeted programs to "transform" Telangana by 2030. Measures will be taken to identify families vulnerable to poverty, ensure the coordinated delivery of relevant government schemes and programs, and create sustainable livelihoods, officials said. A dedicated system will be established to monitor and measure the outcomes of poverty alleviation initiatives.

A focused strategy and action plan will be established to completely develop Telangana by 2033. This roadmap will capitalise on the state's core strengths, driving investment, innovation, job creation, and inclusive growth.

The Deputy Chief Minister suggested formulating comprehensive district development plans to translate state-level development goals into measurable outcomes at the district level. The Dy CM said seven 'Sectoral Growth Labs' will be established to bring government departments, sectoral experts, industries, educational institutions, development agencies, and other key stakeholders onto a single platform.

It was clarified during the meeting that the main objective of these decisions is to operationalise the state's development vision, thereby accelerating the achievement of goals.

Harish Rao appears in defamation case over 'black magic' allegations against him

Hyderabad: BRSMP deputy floor leader T Harish Rao appeared before the Nampally People's Representatives Court on Thursday and recorded his statement in the defamation case he filed against Congress MLCs B Mahesh Kumar Goud and Addanki Dayakar over allegations that he performed black

magic rituals. Book Walking ToursThe court had accepted his petition and the matter would come up again on September 30 for recording statements of Mahesh Kumar Goud and Dayakar. Speaking to media on the occasion, Harish Rao said the defamation case was filed with evidence and warned that he would pursue legal action against those making such baseless allegations.



Telangana Cabinet likely to clear 2 DA instalments on Oct 1

Hyderabad, Sept24

Following talks with employee representatives of the Joint Action Committee on Wednesday, September 23, the Telangana State Cabinet is expected to approve two of the six pending Dearness Allowance (DA) instalments at its October 1 meeting.

Under the proposed plan, one instalment will be cleared for Dasara, with another under consideration for Sankranti in January.

The first meeting with Chief Secretary Sanjay Jaju had failed to resolve the JAC's demands. However, in a subsequent meeting held alongside Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, leaders were assured that two pending DA instalments would be cleared during Dasara.

Officials assured the employee representatives that the Pay Revision Commission (PRC) report would be received within 15 days to decide on its implementation. To address pension concerns, a dedicated committee will soon be constituted to examine replacing the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) with the Old Pension Scheme (OPS)

The government also indicated that roughly Rs 10,000 crore in pending employee and pensioner dues would be cleared by March 2027. Following the statements, JAC leaders called off their planned emergency meeting on September 24 and suspended all upcoming protest programs.

Hyderabad CP warns over Ganesh songs; BRS calls it 'Hitler rule'

Hyderabad, Sept24

With Ganesh immersions in full swing, the Hyderabad City Police Commissioner, VC Sajjanar, has warned that strict action will be taken against those playing vulgar and provocative songs.



He was speaking at a press conference on Wednesday, September 23, to announce the security arrangements for Ganesh immersions. Responding to a reporter asking how the police would control political

songs played during processions, Sajjanar said their social media teams are constantly monitoring such reels and that strict action will be taken against those responsible after the festivities end.

"This is a festival that should be celebrated with devotion and reverence. If it is misused in any other way, we will definitely take action. Whether it is vulgar or obscene songs... our social media team has worked on this. We will definitely take action after the event, because we do not want to disturb or disrupt the festive atmosphere right now," the CP stated.

His reply comes as videos circulate online showing police officers allegedly stopping processions for playing songs associated with Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) supreme and former chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao.

The police had earlier warned against the use of DJ systems, sound mixers, high-decibel audio equipment, and firecrackers, citing Supreme Court guidelines. Violations would result in the immediate seizure of equipment and severe legal action against the organisers, police had said.

34 yrs ago in Ahmedabad, a chilling gangland killing – and a saga that continues



Back in the early 1990s, a former Congress leader and member of the Rajya Sabha named Rauf Valiullah was brought down by gunshots to his head outside Madhuban Building in Ahmedabad’s Ellisbridge area. It was one of the most sensational cases of gangland violence in the city at the time.Thirty-four years after that politically charged assassination, the Gujarat High Court has ruled that a member of the gang whose leader allegedly ordered the hit on Valiullah must continue to remain in jail.

Iqbal Hussain Dhobi alias Laliyo Kasambhai, a convicted member of the Abdul Latif gang that struck terror in Ahmedabad three decades ago, had filed a plea seeking premature release after serving the sentence imposed on him in the 1992 murder case.Advocate Hemant Raval, appearing for Dhobi, argued that the former gangster had been acquitted in most of the other criminal cases registered against him – and that he was not the principal assailant in the Valiullah case, but only a co-accused.On October 9, 1992, Valiullah, who was general secretary of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee at the time, was shot in the head in broad daylight at close range outside Madhuban Building by an underworld hit team of several armed men.Valiullah, who was accompanied by an associate named Pradeep Dave at the time, was allegedly about to expose a deep criminal-politician nexus before the central leadership of the Congress party. He had come out of the building and was about to get in his car when the assailants struck.

The killing of Valiullah was allegedly ordered by gangster and bootlegger Abdul Latif, a man who started his criminal career as a gambler-turned-bootlegger, before going on to having a thriving career in organised crime, with the reputation of being the only known pointsman in Gujarat of Dawood Ibrahim.‘Raees’, the 2017 film by Rahul Dholakia that was set largely in Ahmedabad and starred Shah Rukh Khan, was seen to have close parallels with the life of Abdul Latif, even though the filmmaker and the actor had denied these connections.Latif, who was accused in dozens of cases including the 1993 Bombay blasts, was killed in an alleged police encounter in Ahmedabad in 1997. The Valiullah murder was one of the most sensational cases linked to the gangster – and as recently as in June this year, the Ahmedabad Crime Branch had swooped on another accused in the case, Mohammad Taslim Shaikh, who had jumped parole in 2019.Shaikh, the absconding accused in the Valiullah murder, was found to be living in Rajasthan with his family from a second wife.

Hemant Raval, counsel for Dhobi, told the HC that his client’s role could not be equated with that of the principal assailant. He stressed that Dhobi was a co-accused and had been acquitted in most of the other cases lodged against him.Raval also submitted that Dhobi had served more than 22 years in prison and had received a “good

conduct” report from the jail. He had been carrying out the tasks assigned to him in jail with responsibility, Raval submitted.The state government opposed Dhobi’s plea. Counsel for the state pointed to the case of Dhobi’s co-accused Sajid Ali alias Danny, and Mohmed Umar Majid Ahmed Pathan alias Mohmed Fighter alias Mohmed Pahelwan, both of whom had sought premature release after completing their sentences.The state said that Sajid Ali’s petition challenging the refusal of his release was pending before the Supreme Court.

Valiullah, the Congress Rajya Sabha MP, was 47 years old when he was killed. The murder was closely linked to the gunning down of nine persons on August 3, 1992, including Hansraj Trivedi, described by the prosecution as an alleged supplier of illicit liquor, at the Radhika Gymkhana Club in the Odhav area of Ahmedabad.Police registered a case in the Gymkhana murder, but the investigation drew public criticism over the failure to arrest Abdul Latif and members of his gang, who were perceived to be responsible for the killings.According to the prosecution, mounting public pressure on the police to nab the accused nudged Latif and his associates to devise a plan under which some peripheral members of the gang would surrender, allowing the principal accused to remain beyond the reach of the law.The prosecution alleged that Latif sought the assistance of local Congress party politician Hassankhan Shamsherkan Pathan, alias Hassanlala, to facilitate the surrender.Valiullah, who had allegedly learnt of their plan, was preparing a memorandum for the Congress party’s high command to expose what the prosecution described as “a criminal-political nexus” in the state.According to the prosecution, Valiullah’s opposition to the proposed arrangement led Abdul Latif and his gang to decide to eliminate him and ‘create such fear that no one else would step forward to oppose the plan”.The task of killing Valiullah, according to the prosecution, was entrusted to Rasoolkhan Yakubkhan Pathan alias Rasool Party and his associates. Rasool Party, who remains absconding, is also accused in the 2003 assassination of former BJP minister Haren Pandya as one of the conspirators.

Role of Dhobi, and what happened before the killingDhobi’s alleged role in the conspiracy figured in his confessional statement during the trial. According to the prosecution, he described his association with Rasool Party and recounted the events leading to Valiullah’s murder.The prosecution submitted that on October 9, 1992, Dhobi was summoned through another accused and given a revolver loaded with six bullets. He was allegedly instructed to shoot Valiullah if another accused, Mohmed Fighter alias Mohmed Pahelwan, failed to carry out the killing.Gang members allegedly tracked Valiullah for several days. On October 9, 1992, a group of accused was deputed to carry out the killing. Around 2.30 pm, Valiullah was shot at close range while entering a Maruti car parked outside Madhuban Building.Pradeep alias Bakkabhai Nautamlal Dave, who had accompanied Valiullah and was present at the spot, lodged the FIR at Ellisbridge police station.A case was registered for murder and criminal conspiracy, along with offences under the Arms Act and the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA).The investigation was initially handled by an Ahmedabad police team but was subsequently transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation. The CBI filed charges under various provisions of TADA, the Indian Penal Code and the Arms Act.Two subsequent charge sheets were also filed, and the three cases were eventually consolidated for trial before the designated TADA court.

YouTuber Ajeet Bharti booked for ‘derogatory remarks’ against MP Chandra Shekhar Aazad

The Delhi Police has booked YouTuber Ajeet Bharti for allegedly making derogatory remarks against Nagina MP Chandra Shekhar Aazad during his show — Andolan Hatao Nautanki — on his YouTube channel.

He was reportedly discussing the issue of reservation and the protests at Jantar Mantar.The case was registered at North Avenue Police Station on a complaint lodged by the Azad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) on Sunday. Chandra Shekhar is president of the party and founder of the Bhim Army.According to the FIR, Bharti allegedly used his public digital-media platform to publish content in which he repeatedly made “caste-based, abusive, humiliating, sexually degrading and potentially inflammatory statements” about the MP and Dr B R Ambedkar.

The screenshot annexed to the complaint identifies the accused as Ajeet Bharti (@ajeetbharti) and displays a verified X account.The video and screenshot also identify the programme as SB79: Resevation Hatao Andolan Nautanki & More | Saptahik Bakaiti. They display the date and time as August 22, 2026, at 10:11 pm, with approximately 23,100 views.The complaint stated that the video and screenshot have been submitted as prima facie electronic evidence identifying the account and establishing the public circulation of the material.

It further requested the investigating agency to obtain the original platform records, URL/permalink, account information, upload data, metadata, views, comments,



reposts and other relevant information directly from the platform concerned.According to the complaint, the impugned recording contains a continuous sequence of statements concerning caste, reservation, marriage and members of Scheduled Caste communities. It alleges that the accused repeatedly invoked caste identity in a derogatory and humiliating context.Police said Bharti has been booked under sections of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, as well as provisions relating to promoting enmity between different groups, criminal intimidation, and Section 67 of the Information Technology Act.A police officer said an investigation has been initiated and that Bharti may be called for questioning soon.

plies and moderating undue price volatility during the lean season, said sources.“Consistent with the strategy adopted in previous years, Onions are being released from buffer stock in calibrated manner based on continuous monitoring of prices and market conditions across states during the current year as well. The timing, quantity and destination of such releases are calibrated according to prevailing market conditions and identified requirements in consumption centres,” according to government sources.Moreover, initiatives such as Kanda Express (bulk transportation by rail rakes) enhance logistical efficiency and facilitate the large-scale movement of onions across the country.The Kanda Express initiative, launched in 2024-25, has been scaled up subsequently.

During 2024-25, onion buffer stocks were transported through 14 railway rakes carrying nearly 12,000 MT of onions to five cities. In 2025-26, operations expanded substantially, with 86 railway rakes transporting around 88,000 MT of onions to 16 major cities across the country.

Reel stars’ year-long feud, social media trolling end in midnight ambush at Pune cafe



A year-long grudge aggravated by relentless social media trolling between two local ‘reel stars’ culminated in an attempt to murder inside a Pune eatery on Independence Day, leading to the arrest of 12 people. Among those arrested are the main conspirators, a notorious history-sheeteer, and both the owner and manager of the eatery where the attack occurred.According to the Deccan police, the dispute originated about a year ago following a minor vehicular collision in the Kaas Pathar area of Satara district involving engineering student Madhavi Rajesh Kumbhar, 23, and Atharva Pramod Jagtap, 19. Both Madhavi and Atharva, residents of Kalepadal and Ambegaon respectively, command active followings on Instagram as content creators.

“Following the initial altercation, the duo engaged in a public feud, posting retaliatory videos targeting each other. The online trolling further fuelled the tension, prompting Madhavi and her associates to plot an ambush,” said Sub Inspector Yogesh More.The violent encounter happened in the early hours of August 15 at Cafe

Flying Gypsy in Shivajinagar on Shirole Road. Around 3.30 am, as Atharva prepared to leave the premises, the group allegedly ambushed him.Atharva attempted to enter the cafe for safety, but history-sheeteer Rahul Sitaram Waghmare, 20, allegedly pursued him inside and slashed him with a sharp weapon. Waghmare’s accomplices, including several minors, allegedly assaulted Atharva before fleeing the scene.A police team rushed to the spot, ensured the injured teenager received medical treatment, and began an investigation based on Atharva’s complaint. The Deccan police registered a case under charges of attempt to murder and other relevant provisions.

Series of arrestsUsing CCTV footage from the cafe and surrounding areas, the police first arrested Madhavi, a diploma student in electronics and telecommunication, and her associate Snehal Sanjay Sonke, 20, a fellow content creator working in real estate.The police tracked down and arrested the main assailant Rahul Waghmare, who had a prior criminal record at the Kalewadi police station, along with co-accused Shivanand Talwar, 21; Aditya Bhalerao, 22; Priyanshu Bhosale, 22; and Prem alias Pamyia Salve, 22.On August 19, the police arrested cafe owner Hemant Patil, 42, and manager Prem Deepak Patil, 21. “The duo was charged with illegally operating the venue past permissible midnight hours and attempting to destroy evidence by scrubbing bloodstains from the crime scene,” said SI More.By August 21, three more suspects, Vaishnavi alias Siya Ravindra Bhaskar, 22, Samiksha Shailesh Shelke, 21, and Vaibhav Madhukar Bhagwat, 21, were taken into custody.The police also apprehended three minors and sent them to an observation home, while the adult accused have been remanded to magisterial custody at the Yerwada jail.

Offices advised WFH tomorrow, schools to hold online classes

Following heavy rain that inundated several parts of the Millenium City on Monday, the Gurgaon district administration urged all corporate offices, as well as government and private educational institutions, to switch to work from home (WFH) and online modes on Tuesday (August 25).The advisory was issued by District Magistrate-cum-Chairperson of the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Uttam Singh, to curb traffic snarls and facilitate road and drainage clearance by civic agencies.

“In view of the heavy rainfall in the district Gurugram on 24.08.2026, there are chances of waterlogging and traffic congestion. Therefore, all corporate offices and government and private schools/institutions in the district are advised to guide their employees to work from home from 25.08.2026, so that traffic congestion can be avoided and repair works of roads and drains can be carried out smoothly by civic agencies,” the official order stated.The DDMA has forwarded the directive to the District Education Officer (DEO) and District Elementary Education Officer (DEEO) to ensure necessary compliance across all government and private schools in the district, and to the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPRO) for wide public outreach.

Gurgaon records 75 mm rain in 9 hoursAccording to data shared by the district administration, Gurgaon tehsil recorded the highest rainfall in the district at 75 mm between 8 am and 5 pm on Monday.This was closely followed by Badshahpur at 65 mm and Wazirabad at 64



mm.Among other areas, Kadipur and Harsaru sub-tehsils recorded 40 mm of rainfall each, while Manesar clocked 36 mm. Sohna received 16 mm, Pataudi 12 mm, and Farrukhnagar recorded 7 mm of rainfall during the same period.The intense spell of rain led to heavy waterlogging on several major stretches, service lanes, and underpasses across the city, including key junctions along the Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway, Subhash Chowk — where school buses were stuck for three hours — and internal sector roads of Sector 45, 52, slowing traffic movement during peak hours.Teams from the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) and the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) have been deployed on ground with mobile pumps and machinery to drain waterlogged roads and de-silt overflowing storm drains.

Delhi rain disrupts flight operations; several flights diverted, airlines issue advisories

New Delhi: More than a dozen flights from Delhi Airport were rerouted as heavy rain and thunderstorms lashed Delhi-NCR on Monday, while airlines issued advisories urging passengers to check their flight status before heading to the airport, according to multiple reports.Taking to social media platform X, the airlines said adverse weather conditions were affecting flight operations and schedules.

IndiGo said it was closely monitoring the situation and advised passengers to check real-time flight updates and factor in extra travel time due to possible traffic delays.“Bad weather over #Delhi has impacted flight schedules. We are closely monitoring the weather and doing our best to get you where you need to be, safely and smoothly,” IndiGo wrote on X.Similarly, Air India cautioned that weather-related disruptions could impact flights to and from Delhi, urging travellers to verify their flight status before leaving for the airport.“Adverse weather conditions may impact flight operations to and from Delhi today,” the airline said.Akasa Air said severe weather in Delhi had affected certain flights across its network, while SpiceJet warned that arrivals, departures and connecting flights could face delays due to the conditions.“Due to severe weather conditions in Delhi, certain flights across our network have been impacted. We realize that this may inconvenience your travel plans and seek your patience and understanding. While this



situation is completely beyond our control, please rest assured that our teams are always ready to assist you,” Akasa Air posted on X.Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued weather alerts for Delhi, forecasting heavy rainfall, thunderstorms, lightning and strong gusty winds in parts of the capital.Earlier, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) issued travel guidelines for flyers.“Before you travel, stay informed about local weather conditions at your departure and arrival cities,” AAI said on X.It also advised travellers to arrive at the airport well in advance, as rain could affect road traffic. “Arrive at the airport well in advance to avoid delays,” the AAI said.

Bank strikes in September to disrupt services across India

Kolkata: Banking services across India are likely to be affected in September as the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), an umbrella body of nine bank employees’ and officers’ associations, has called for a nationwide strike in two separate spells.

The first strike is scheduled for September 11, followed by a three-day strike from September 28 to 30. The protests are expected to significantly disrupt banking operations, particularly in public sector banks.The disruption will be more pronounced towards the end of September, with bank branches already scheduled to remain closed on September 26, the fourth Saturday, and September 27, Sunday. The three-day strike on September 28, 29 and 30 will extend the disruption for five consecutive days.Banking services will also be affected from September 11 to 13, with the one-day strike on September 11 followed by the weekend holidays on September 12 and 13.The UFBU has also warned of an indefinite strike from October 26 if its demands are not addressed.

According to a statement issued by the UFBU on Monday, the four-day strike has been called primarily to press for the introduction of a five-day working week in the banking sector and withdrawal of the performance-linked incentive (PLI) system.Under the five-day working week demand, all Saturdays and Sundays would be declared holidays for bank employees. At present, banks generally remain closed on Sundays and the second and fourth Saturdays.The UFBU has termed the PLI system discriminatory and contrary to the understanding reached between bank employees’ unions and the Indian Banks’ Association (IBA).The unions have also raised concerns over several unresolved issues related to the next wage revision.

These include updating and improving pension benefits, introducing a uniform dearness allowance formula for all pensioners and settling other pending demands.The UFBU said its meeting on Sunday unanimously decided to launch protest actions to press the demands.

EYE SECRETS

Chaos continues in SIR process

Placing the burden of proof on voters is the key problematic area of the ongoing electoral rolls revision exercise in several States. Authorities are issuing notices at random, asking people to submit additional documents to prove they are genuine voters. Despite the Supreme Court’s intervention to simplify the process and provide relief to ordinary citizens from the stifling procedures, the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls remains mired in controversy. Some of the country’s most prominent citizens have received notices over discrepancies in their voter records. A look at the list would certainly leave one baffled. It includes former Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, former Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal. Ironic as it may seem, even Election Commissioner SS Sandhu has been issued a notice under this exercise being conducted by the Election Commission of India (ECI). If this is the situation befalling high-profile individuals, one can well imagine the plight of lesser mortals who are at risk of being removed from the rolls. While there should be no two opinions about the need for revision of electoral rolls as mandated under the Constitution, it is the manner in which the EC is going about the process that has raised concerns. The poll panel must adopt a more flexible approach so that all eligible voters can exercise their franchise. There are genuine concerns that unreasonable procedures and an ever-expanding set of additional documents could lead to mass disenfranchisement. Marginalised groups such as migrant labourers, women and the poor would be the most affected. This negates the very purpose of democracy, which is to facilitate accessibility, rather than raise barriers. Instead of inspiring confidence, the Election Commission’s hasty drive has created confusion among the people. More than 33 lakh notices have been issued in Delhi alone, particularly in cases where voters could not be mapped to the 2002 intensive revision. The ECI and Delhi’s Chief Electoral Officer have stressed that receiving a notice does not mean vote deletion. Voters are being given an opportunity to submit documents and respond, with final decisions subject to due process. Electoral rolls must be periodically updated to remove duplicate, ineligible or deceased voters while ensuring that eligible citizens are not excluded. Both objectives are equally important. However, the appearance of late economist Bibek Debroy’s name among those “unmapped with last SIR” — almost two years after his death — illustrates how database-driven exercises can produce glaring anomalies.

Eknath Shinde leaves iPhone on London-Mumbai flight, recovered in an hour

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde reportedly left his iPhone on a British Airways flight while returning to Mumbai from London, prompting a late-night search at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport. According to a Jansatta report, the flight landed in Mumbai at around 2 am after Shinde’s week-long London visit. He reportedly reached home before realising at around 3 am that his iPhone was missing. His team then alerted the police, who contacted the airline’s security personnel. The phone was reportedly located inside the aircraft and returned to Shinde at around 4 am — roughly an hour after the search began. Shinde had travelled to London on September 5 with close associates and spent about a week in the UK. During the visit, he attended several events and reportedly received three honours. His itinerary also included a meeting with cricketer Virat Kohli and a visit to the memorial at Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar’s former residence. The Maharashtra Deputy CM also drew attention during the trip after being seen eating vada pav in London. According to the report, Shinde regularly uses an iPhone for video calls and sometimes hands the device to his personal assistant during meetings. The incident was not reportedly the first time he had misplaced a mobile phone. Earlier, when he was the Maharashtra Chief Minister, Shinde had misplaced a phone which was later recovered.

Brain-dead farmer’s organs donated to three patients

Hyderabad: Family members of a 58-year-old farmer, Maddipati Hanumantha Rao from Tanuku, West Godavari, Andhra Pradesh, who was declared as brain dead, have donated his organs to needy patients under the State-run Jeevandan organ donation initiative. Hanumantha Rao suffered a serious neurological condition and underwent bifrontal decompressive craniectomy on September 14. Immediately his family members shifted him to a private hospital in Hyderabad for emergency treatment. With his health not improving, the attending team of doctors declared him as brain dead on Thursday, September 17. The brain dead farmer’s wife and son, Maddipati Suvarchala and Lalitha Shankar made the decision to donate his

GIFT City only Indian financial centre in Asia-Pacific top 15: Global index



Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) in Gandhinagar has climbed to 37th place in the latest Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI 40), making it the only Indian financial centre among the top 15 in the Asia-Pacific region and placing it ahead of Mumbai and Delhi. The smart city in Gujarat’s capital moved up 9 notches from the previous GFCI index, where it ranked 46. Mumbai improved by three points from last time but remains at 49, while Delhi fell to 56 from 54. The London-based think tank Z/Yen and the Shenzhen-based China Development Institute published the report. The think tanks compiled the latest index after the conflict in the Middle East began. They have been assessing financial centres since 2007, when then chief minister of Gujarat, now Prime Minister Narendra Modi, conceptualised GIFT City. It has also improved its position in the GFCI FinTech ranking to 26th from 29th in the previous report, indicating responses that show favourable growth prospects. This is based on a questionnaire asking respondents which centres they think will grow in significance over the next two to three years. The GFCI report assesses 115 financial centres on their FinTech offering and identifies an “innovation-supporting ecosystem, access to finance, skilled talent, the regulatory environment

and ICT infrastructure as important elements of a competitive FinTech centre,” the report stated. Zurich ranked in the top 10, while San Francisco fell out of the group in the index, which assessed 117 financial centres worldwide. New York is the only North American centre in the top 10; San Francisco, which was in fifth place in the last index, dropped to 11th. While New York continues to lead the rankings, followed by London, Hong Kong, and Singapore, other American centres — Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston and Washington, DC — featured in the top 20. “The largest fall in average ratings was in Eastern Europe & Central Asia, down 1.09%, and the largest increase was in Asia/Pacific, where average ratings were up 1.48%,” the report states. Among the top 15, seven are in the Asia/Pacific region while five are in the Middle East and Africa, highlighting the increasing importance of these regions in global finance. The report identifies digital infrastructure, including cloud services, data connectivity and cybersecurity resilience; the attraction of FinTech and digital asset businesses; stronger anti-money laundering and financial crime frameworks; and deeper capital markets, as priority areas for financial centres over the next five years. GFCI 40 draws on 144 instrumental factors and 39,531 assessments from 6,147 respondents to the GFCI online questionnaire. GIFT City is claimed to be India’s first International Financial Services Centre. It has several firsts to its credit, like the opening of the country’s first offshore foreign university, when Australia’s Deakin University opened its international branch campus in 2024. This was followed by the University of Wollongong (Australia), Queen’s University, Belfast (United Kingdom), and Coventry University (UK). The Gujarat Government also relaxed prohibition laws inside GIFT City in 2023, allowing wine-and-dine facilities in its hotels and the GIFT City club through easy drinking permits, making it more attractive for businesses and investment. The rest of Gujarat is under strict prohibition laws.

FTII students’ body slams CBFC over Umar Khalid film row



The Film and Television Institute of India Students’ Association (FTIISA) has expressed serious concern over the Central Board of Film Certification’s (CBFC) intervention in the screening of ‘Prisoner No. 626710 is Present’, a documentary on jailed activist Umar Khalid at IIIT Hyderabad. In a post on X on September 17, CBFC said that a ‘public screening’ of a documentary that has not been certified by the board is a violation of the Cinematography Act and urged IIIT Hyderabad authorities to take action. In a statement on the same day, the student association of India’s most prominent film school said that it was their duty to remind the CBFC that a university is not an exhibition venue to be patrolled by the board. “Ironically,

this is among the first public interventions of the newly reconstituted CBFC. In this act itself, the Board’s statutory function has been sought to be expanded into a general power to police the circulation and discussion of cinema according to the ideological preferences of the ruling regime,” the statement read. ‘Protect academic autonomy’ FTIISA also said that this was not the first time the documentary had been opposed by the “state”, with its screening at National Law School of India University, Bengaluru, also postponed due to opposition by a “state-affiliated student organisation”.

The statement added, “What is particularly new and concerning is the CBFC’s decision to intervene directly in a university screening, raising serious questions about the limits of its statutory mandate.” The FTIISA raised concerns over the CBFC tagging IIIT Hyderabad authorities calling upon them to take action. “Such an approach may serve the cinematic ideology of the regime, but it does not serve the cultivation of a critical and diverse cinematic culture,” the association said. The student body called upon educational institutes to protect student and academic autonomy and urged the CBFC to act as a statutory body contributing meaningfully to cinematic culture. ‘Prisoner No. 626710 is Present’ is a film based on the pre-trial incarceration of activist Umar Khalid, who has been behind bars for over six years in connection with the alleged larger conspiracy behind the 2020 Delhi riots.

After weeks-long standoff, Punjab approves 8% DA hike for employees, pensioners



The Punjab Government Friday announced an eight per cent hike in two instalments of dearness allowance (DA) from October, ending a weeks-long standoff with state employees. The issue had been at the centre of the employees’ agitation over the past few weeks, with employee and pensioner organisations demanding the release of pending DA instalments and arrears, along with other service-related demands. The decision followed a meeting in Chandigarh between Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and representatives of employee and pensioners’ organisations. Punjab Minister Aman Arora told reporters that the meeting was held in a “congenial environment”, and Mann had a “good discussion” with the employee representatives. The two four-per cent instalments will take the DA for government

employees and pensioners to 50 per cent. Arora said the decision to release the eight per cent DA would put an additional burden of Rs 248 crore every month on the state exchequer and require an additional Rs 1,750 crore over the remaining seven months of the current financial year. He said the court cases filed in connection with the dispute were also discussed, with both the Chief Minister and employee representatives saying they did not want to pursue them. While the DA issue has been resolved for now, the organisations have several other pending demands. Arora said they would take up these issues in separate monthly meetings with the employee organisations. The standoff had also led to a failed meeting between Mann and employee representatives in Jalandhar. Mann then maintained that employees should withdraw their agitation before talks could be held. The government had also invoked the “no work, no pay” principle during the agitation over employees’ absence from duty. The employee organisations refused to call off the protest and the Chief Minister left without holding the proposed meeting. The situation changed after representatives of the employee organisations met Chief Secretary KAP Sinha. This paved the way for a meeting with Mann Friday. Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema, Arora, and Cabinet Minister Dr Baljit Kaur attended Friday’s meeting. Twelve representatives of various employee and pensioner organisations participated in the meeting.

Blinkit delivery partner assaulted in Himachal Pradesh over delayed order

Blinkit delivery partner assault Blinkit delivery partner Anup Chauhan told the police he was assaulted by a customer after an argument over a delay in delivering an order. (Photo: Himachal Pradesh Police. Image enhanced using AI) A Blinkit delivery partner was allegedly assaulted by a customer in Himachal Pradesh’s Solan following a dispute over the delayed delivery of an order, the police said on Friday. According to the police, around 2 am on Thursday, delivery partner Anup Chauhan informed officials at the city police post that he had been assaulted by a customer. Identifying the customer initially posed a challenge as his mobile number was not displayed on the Blinkit app. Following an investigation, he was identified as Puneet Sharma, 32, of Lakkar Bazaar in Solan. The investigation revealed that on Wednesday night, Sharma had placed an order through Blinkit. As there was some

delay in delivering the order, an argument reportedly broke out between Sharma and Chauhan over the phone. Later, Sharma reached the Thodo Ground bus stop to collect his order, where the two allegedly got involved in a minor physical altercation over the earlier dispute. The police examined CCTV footage from the area and analysed available technical evidence. “The complainant was medically examined, following which his medico-legal certificate was obtained,” Sai Dattatreya Verma, Superintendent of Police, Solan, said. “The delivery partner had alleged in the morning that Sharma had shown him a pistol during the altercation. However, the allegation could not be corroborated during the investigation. Subsequently, he told the police that a mobile phone had fallen from Sharma’s pocket onto the ground during the scuffle and that he had initially mistaken the object for a pistol or revolver,” Verma added.

Mamata camp backs Congress in Nandigram bypoll after candidate withdraws nomination



Former West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday announced that her party will support the Congress in the Nandigram assembly bypoll, hours after her camp’s candidate withdrew from the contest following a meeting with CM Suvenhu Adhikari. The move comes hours after the Election Commission assigned the Mamata Banerjee-led faction a new party name and symbol for the October 6 bypolls, effectively ending its immediate claim to the Trinamool Congress’ traditional identity.

Banerjee also hit out at the Election Commission over its decision to freeze the TMC’s name and symbol, and said the move was “arbitrary”. She accused the BJP of trying to “destroy opposition parties” in the country. Describing the development as a “black day for democracy”, Banerjee questioned the EC’s decision to freeze the party’s traditional ‘Jora Ghash Phul’ (twin flowers and grass) symbol, which she said had been associated with the organisation for 28 years. “How can they (EC) freeze my symbol, which has been with us since the beginning for the last 28 years?” she said. The EC on Friday allotted the Banerjee-led faction the name ‘Mamata All India Trinamool Congress’ and the ‘Football Player’ symbol for the October 6 bypolls, while the rival Arup Roy-led group was given the name ‘Democratic Trinamool Congress’ and the ‘Envelope’ symbol.

Eknath Shinde’s missing phone prompts late-night search on aircraft



Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde’s return from a week-long London visit turned into a brief late-night search for his mobile phone after he realised that he had left it on a British Airways flight. The phone was found following a search on the flight. Eknath Shinde’s flight landed at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport after a nine-hour return journey from London, the United Kingdom. Shiv Sena MLAs Prakash Surve, Murji Patel and Tukaram Kate, along with party workers, were at the airport to receive him. Television crews were also present.

Shinde spent considerable time accepting bouquets and speaking with television channels about the awards he had received during his London visit. He then left the airport and reached home. It was only after he reached his residence that he realised his phone was missing. His security team was immediately informed. The police contacted the British Airways security office at the airport and sought a thorough check of the aircraft. They found the phone within an hour and handed it over to Shinde. A source close to Shinde said the incident was hardly unusual for him. His personal assistants usually handle his phones. “He is always surrounded by people, handling files, reading and signing papers, often with a pen in his hand, and meeting people continuously. In the middle of all this, he sometimes forgets where he has kept his phone. The recent incident was just another instance of what he normally does,” the source said. This was also not the first time Shinde had misplaced his phone. He once lost his mobile phone when he was serving as the chief minister. It was recovered later. Shinde had left for London on September 5. During the visit, he received three awards: the ‘Commonwealth Leadership Recognition’ at the House of Lords, the ‘Statesmanship’ award at the House of Commons, and the ‘Global Pride of Maharashtra’ award from Maharashtra Mandal. He also met cricketer Virat Kohli, visited a memorial associated with Dr BR Ambedkar, and even had a vada pav on the streets of London. He came back on September 12.

AI-powered cardiac monitoring technology to launch in India on September 26

Hyderabad: Czech health-tech firm Kardi Ai is set to launch its AI-powered long-term cardiac monitoring technology in India, with its official debut scheduled for September 26 in Hyderabad. The technology was announced at the Federation of Telangana Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FTCCI) by Dr Ramana Jagarlamudi and Dr Raghavendra Rao. The prescription-grade system combines a lightweight wearable ECG chest strap, mobile connectivity and AI analytics. Facilitated by Eurasia Medical Technologies LLP, the innovation addresses a major diagnostic gap by detecting intermittent heart abnormalities that may be missed by brief ECGs or 24-hour Holter monitoring, a press release said. Holding an Indian MD-15 licence and EU MDR Class IIa certification, the device is designed to assist physicians without replacing clinical judgment. With cardiovascular disease being India’s leading cause of death and 220 million citizens battling hypertension

No plot, no premeditation; Badal attack was ‘spur-of-the-moment’ act, say cops



Nearly 10 days after 63-year-old Jaspal Singh was arrested for allegedly attacking Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader and former Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal at Gurdwara Mata Sahib Devan Ji in Nanded, the police investigation has found no evidence of a wider conspiracy. Singh appears to have acted alone, with the attack being a spur-of-the-moment decision after a meditation session, according to police.

Singh told investigators that he felt morally compelled to attack Badal, whom he blamed for the worsening drug crisis in Punjab during the SAD-BJP government's decade in power. Police said they independently examined his claims through technical evidence, interrogation, and statements from people around him before concluding that he acted alone. "He is a deeply religious person who is known to be involved in meditation sessions and prayers most of the time. He blamed Badal for the worsening

Punjab man shot while delivering pizza in US, family seeks help to bring body

A 28-year-old man from Punjab's Kapurthala district was shot dead in the United States on Saturday while reportedly on his way to deliver a pizza, leaving behind a debt-ridden family that had borrowed lakhs of rupees to send him abroad hoping to improve its financial condition. Gurdeep Singh, who hailed from Jabbowal village near Begowal in Kapurthala, went to the US around 10 years ago and worked as a pizza delivery worker in New York for several years. The family said Gurdeep's cousin Sahil, who lived with him in the US, informed it of the incident after receiving information from pizza company officials.

"Sahil told us that Gurdeep was attacked by armed assailants while he was going to deliver a pizza. He was taken to hospital with injuries but could not survive," said a family source. His father Pyara Lal said the family was poor and had borrowed around Rs 30 lakh to send Gurdeep to the US. The family survives on daily-wage labour and owns no agricultural land. "We had taken a huge loan to send him abroad, and even after all these years, the debt has not been fully repaid," he said. Pyara Lal said Gurdeep was going to deliver a pizza when he was surrounded by some people. The family was told that the attackers had come to rob him and shot him when they were unable to loot him.

His uncle Daler Chand said Gurdeep was unmar-

ried and was expected to visit the family next year. Gurdeep has a brother, who lives in the village and takes care of the family. Family's appeal to central and state governmentsThe family has appealed to the state and Union governments to provide assistance in bringing Gurdeep's body back to India at the earliest. They have also sought the intervention of the authorities to coordinate with the US administration, ensure a fair investigation into the killing, arrest those responsible, and ensure they are punished. North American Punjabi Association (NAPA) executive director Satnam Singh Chahal demanded justice for Gurdeep. Chahal said the exact motive behind his murder should be brought out and that the incident should not be seen as an isolated one.



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70-year-old UP man arrested for raping, impregnating minor granddaughter



A 70-year-old man was arrested for allegedly raping his granddaughter at his home in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh, over the past three months. The police said the girl is now two months pregnant. The matter came to light after the girl complained of stomach pain and was found

to be pregnant.

"We have arrested the victim's grandfather in the case. The victim's detailed medical examination is being conducted," a police officer said. The girl's mother died six years ago, and her father is a labourer. She had been staying at her maternal uncle's house and returned home around four months ago. The police said the girl complained of severe stomach pain to neighbours on Saturday. They informed her father, who was away at work. He took his daughter to a nearby private clinic, where a doctor conducted a test and found that she was pregnant. The girl subsequently told her father about the alleged sexual assault. Also on Saturday, the girl went to the police station with her father and filed a complaint, stating that her grandfather first raped her a few days after she returned from her maternal uncle's house. Other family members were away at the time. Despite her protests, he allegedly continued to sexually assault her on subsequent occasions.

Doctors warn against antibiotic self-medication as monsoon illnesses rise

New Delhi: Amid a spike in monsoon-related illnesses, doctors have said people should avoid self-medication with antibiotics as fever does not automatically mean a bacterial infection and that indiscriminate use of the drugs can contribute to antimicrobial resistance. Physicians stressed that fever is a symptom rather than a diagnosis and could be caused by viral infections, dengue, malaria, typhoid and several other conditions. Treatment should be guided by the clinical assessment, duration of illness, associated symptoms and appropriate diagnostic investigations, wherever indicated. "Patients frequently come to us after taking multiple medicines, including antibiotics, simply because they have developed fever. Fever by itself is not an indication for an antibiotic. The first step is to determine what is causing the fever," Dr Sujeet K Choudhary, Chief Medical Officer, Internal Medicine, Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science and Research, said. Antibiotics are designed to treat bacterial infections and have no effect against viral illnesses, he said. Taking them unnecessarily can cause avoidable side effects and, more importantly, contribute to the emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), making infections harder to treat in the future. Dr Neeraj Nischal, Professor in the Department of Medicine at AIIMS, Delhi, said symptoms of several monsoon-related illnesses can overlap, making it important for people to avoid self-diagnosis and self-medication. "Fever, body ache, headache, weakness and gastrointestinal symptoms can occur in a number of infections. Management should be guided by the patient's clinical condition and,

where required, appropriate investigations," Dr Nischal said. He also cautioned people against using leftover antibiotics from previous prescriptions or taking antibiotics prescribed for someone else. "Antibiotics should not be started, stopped or modified without medical advice. People should not change the dose, duration or frequency on their own. If symptoms persist, fail to improve or worsen, the patient should be reassessed rather than simply adding another antibiotic," Dr Nischal said. Dr Mayank Uppal, senior consultant, Internal Medicine at Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science and Research said antimicrobial resistance was increasingly making treatment of infections more challenging. "Antibiotic resistance is not a future threat; it is already affecting clinical practice. When antibiotics are used unnecessarily or incorrectly, they exert pressure that allows resistant organisms to survive and spread," Dr Uppal said. He, however, stressed that the answer was not to avoid antibiotics when they are genuinely required. "Antibiotics remain lifesaving medicines. The objective is not to reduce their use indiscriminately but to ensure that the right patient receives the appropriate drug, dose and duration based on the clinical situation," Dr Uppal said. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) guidelines on antimicrobial use emphasise appropriate antibiotic selection and caution against indiscriminate empirical treatment, particularly when a bacterial infection has not been established. Doctors said patients with persistent or worsening fever, breathing difficulty, altered consciousness, severe dehydration

Rohtak MP Deepender Hooda regrets Sajjan Kumar remarks, says words were twisted



Facing backlash for his comments expressing condolences on the death of 1984 anti-Sikh riots convict Sajjan Kumar, Rohtak Congress MP Deepender Hooda Sunday expressed regret to the Sikh community for his remarks. He also denied referring to Sajjan Kumar as a 'role model' and said his words have been twisted by the BJP's IT cell to discredit him. "For the past two days, I have been observing that my statement is being twisted and presented to people. An English word is also being inserted into my statement – one that I never uttered, nor did I mean anything remotely like that," said Hooda in a statement put out on X.

He further said, "I had no intention whatsoever of hurting any of our brothers. I cannot even think of hurting our brothers from the Sikh community. Nor did I ever have any such feeling. Even so, the Sikh community is our own

family. If any brother's feelings have been hurt, then I am your brother, and I express my regret. My intention and purpose were never to hurt anyone's heart." He further said the Sikh community is a glorious community and he takes pride in such a community that has made sacrifices that can never be forgotten. "Whether it is the defence of the country's borders today or the struggle for the country's independence, the sacrifices the Sikh community has made for the nation fill us with pride. We share a family-like relationship with the Sikh community. Whenever the need arose, we always stood together like younger and elder brothers – that is the nature of our bond."

The Rohtak MP added that in 1908, during the 'Pagri Sambhal Jatta' movement in Punjab, his own great-grandfather Chaudhary Maturam was sentenced to Kala Pani along with Shahid-e-Azam Bhagat Singh's uncle Sardar Ajit Singh. "From then onwards, right up to the farmers' movement, when our farmer brothers from Punjab came, I myself was among the first to stand with them. We have always been together in every struggle. And regarding what happened in 1984, we stand with the Sikh community in their fight for justice as well. They must get justice; no guilty person should be spared," he said. Hooda's remarks on Thursday while expressing condolences on 1984 anti-Sikh riot convict Sajjan Kumar's death had kicked up a storm in Punjab. While Hooda was one of many Haryana Congress leaders who expressed condolences, former Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi referred

‘Don’t leave home’: Kolkata man duped of Rs 3.26 crore in ‘digital arrest’ fraud

Scammers impersonating Mumbai Crime Branch officers allegedly duped a Kolkata resident of Rs 3.26 crore in a 'digital arrest' fraud. The fraudsters allegedly exerted extreme pressure on the victim, producing forged Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) orders to force the transfer of shares, mutual funds, and cash. The Bidhannagar cybercrime police have arrested three men in connection with the scam: Biku Kumar, 24, Durant Patra, 28, and Mohammad Zayed, 46. According to the police, all three suspects are residents of Kolkata and Howrah.

The victim initially filed a complaint at the New Town police station in January this year, after which the case was transferred to the cybercrime unit. Following a seven-month investigation, the police traced and apprehended the trio. They are currently undergoing interrogation. The police revealed that the fraudsters first contacted the victim, claiming to be Mumbai Crime Branch officers and alleging that his Aadhaar details were linked to criminal complaints filed against 24 people. When the victim insisted he did not own any Mumbai-registered SIM card, the callers escalated their intimidation tactics. The accused allegedly sent 'digital arrest' notices and fraudulent bank account freeze orders, informing the victim that he was under a joint CBI-police investigation. He was ordered not to leave his home without permission and was threatened with immediate physical arrest if he failed to comply.

Fearing legal action, the victim followed the scammers' instructions step by step. Over the course of the ordeal, he transferred a total of Rs 3,26,84,000, comprising liquidated shares, mutual funds, and cash, into bank accounts controlled by the syndicate. After realising he had been defrauded, the victim approached the Bidhannagar Police. Cybercrime investigators tracked the money trail across multiple bank accounts and technical clues, ultimately identifying and arresting the suspects.



The incident comes amidst a growing push against such crimes. In July 2025, a West Bengal court sentenced nine people to life imprisonment in a digital arrest fraud case, marking the first such conviction in the state and across India. Despite extensive public awareness campaigns run by law enforcement agencies, fraudsters continue to exploit psychologically vulnerable victims. "The language they choose sounds administrative and official rather than suspicious," a senior police officer explained. "By the time they start demanding money, many victims have already spent hours on calls trying to prove their innocence. They are exhausted, intimidated, and on the back foot." Following the arrest, the police issued an advisory detailing key indicators that distinguish legitimate law enforcement procedures from fraudulent 'digital arrests'. Government and law enforcement agencies never keep individuals on hours-long video calls or place them under virtual detention. Transferring money or liquidating assets is never a part of any legitimate criminal investigation. The police will never demand that a citizen keep an ongoing inquiry secret from their family or legal counsel.

‘Spreading pseudoscience: Prashant Bhushan attacks government at Dabholkar lecture



Prashant Bhushan Supreme Court advocate Prashant Bhushan accused the Modi government of promoting pseudoscience and undermining scientific temper while delivering the Dabholkar Memorial Lecture in Pune (Express photo/Special arrangement). Delivering the Shaheed Dr Narendra Dabholkar Memorial Lecture in Pune on August 22, Supreme Court advocate Prashant Bhushan accused the Narendra Modi government of spreading pseudoscience instead of promoting scientific temper.

The memorial lecture, titled 'Attacks on Scientific Temper and India Today', was organised by the Maharashtra Andhashradha Nirmoolan Samiti (MANS). Dr Narendra Dabholkar, a prominent rationalist and anti-superstition campaigner, was shot dead in Pune on August 20, 2013. Criticising the political leadership, Bhushan said, "What Dr Dabholkar tried to do and what the current ruling dispensation is doing are exact opposites. The Prime Minister makes completely unscientific statements and spreads falsehoods... Sometimes he claims he is non-biological and sent directly by God. While inaugurating a hospital in Mumbai, he claimed that Lord Ganesha's trunk was attached using plastic surgery and that Karna from the Mahabharata was a test-tube baby. He even suggested that radars do not work through clouds—statements that are completely unscientific." Emphasising the importance of rational thinking, Bhushan added: "Scientific temper requires logical thought and reasoning. Science and technology emerge from reasoned thought, driving progress. It is only through reasoning that we can determine whether what we are told is true or false." During the event, Bhushan released English translations of 10 booklets originally written in Marathi by Dr Dabholkar, translated by Professor Rahi Dahake.

The lecture was attended by several MANS dignitaries alongside Dr Hamid Dabholkar and Mukta Dabholkar, the son and daughter of the slain rationalist. The event coincided with recent developments in the murder case, as the Bombay High Court recently granted bail to Sachin Andure, a convict in Dr Dabholkar's killing. Over-reliance on modern technology Bhushan also cautioned the audience against over-reliance on modern technology. He noted that while artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming daily life, human curiosity, scientific temper, and rationality remain indispensable. He urged citizens to stay vigilant, warning that multinational corporations often exploit technology and advertising to push unscientific narratives for commercial gain.

Bhushan criticised the infiltration of pseudoscience into premier educational institutions and condemned irresponsible remarks by high-ranking academics. He cited the director of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mandi, who publicly claimed to have seen ghosts and attributed landslides to meat consumption. Concluding his address, Bhushan raised concerns about recent curriculum revisions, alleging that educational bodies have removed core scientific concepts such as Darwin's theory of evolution and the periodic table, along with key chapters on Mughal history, and have introduced unscientific subjects like astrology into academic curricula.

Doctors warn against antibiotic self-medication as monsoon illnesses rise

New Delhi: Amid a spike in monsoon-related illnesses, doctors have said people should avoid self-medication with antibiotics as fever does not automatically mean a bacterial infection and that indiscriminate use of the drugs can contribute to antimicrobial resistance. Physicians stressed that fever is a symptom rather than a diagnosis and could be caused by viral infections, dengue, malaria, typhoid and several other conditions. Treatment should be guided by the clinical assessment, duration of illness, associated symptoms and appropriate diagnostic investigations, wherever indicated. "Patients frequently come to us after taking multiple medicines, including antibiotics, simply because they have developed fever.

Marathi movie Gondhal is India’s official entry for Oscars 2027



Marathi cinema has secured a place in India’s Oscar campaign this year, with Santosh Davakhkar’s Gondhal selected as the country’s official entry for the 99th Academy Awards. The Film Federation of India (FFI) announced the decision on Friday, with the film chosen from a field of 33 submissions for the Best International Feature Film category.The Marathi thriller, which draws heavily from Maharashtra’s traditional Gondhal ritual and folk-performance tradition, had already received a major festival recognition before its Oscar selection. The film’s director Davakhar won the Silver Peacock for Best Director at the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in 2025.

What is Gondhal about?

Set in rural Maharashtra, Gondhal unfolds over a single night against the backdrop of the traditional midnight Gondhal ritual, a performance that brings together music, dance, mythology and religious elements. The film centres on Suman, a woman trapped in an unhappy marriage to Anand, a wealthy man.Suman falls in love with Saheba, a Gondhali performer, and begins looking for a way out of her marriage. Her plan draws Anand’s obsessive cousin Sarjerao into a dangerous scheme. What begins as an attempt to escape her circumstances soon turns into a story of murder, deception, desire and survival.The

film stars Ishita Deshmukh as Suman, along with Kishor Kadam, Yogesh Sohoni, Nishad Bhoir and Anuj Prabhu.The Film Federation of India (FFI) selection committee considered 33 films for India’s official entry to the 99th Academy Awards. The submissions included films in several Indian languages, with Hindi accounting for 14 entries. Marathi, Telugu and Gujarati each had four submissions, while Tamil had three. Malayalam and Nagamese had one entry each, alongside a silent film.Among the films in contention were Main Vaapas Aaunga, Border 2, Dhurandhar, Dug Dug, Haq, Bhamardo, 120 Bahadur, Sing Geetham, Tera Mera Nata, Ladoo, Ohh My Dog, Balan The Boy, Deool Band 2, Tighi, Peddi, Irumudi, Khoonta, Gandhi Talks, Bison Kalaamadan, Shape of Momo, Governer, 2020 Delhi, Commando Vin Love Story, Ikkis, Pravas, Man Aatale Manaatile, Obsess, Egwa, Angh and Hanuman Ansh, among others.The jury was chaired by P Sheshadri and included Vijay Patkar, Hutu Kanodia, Shanti Kumar, Sandeep Parashar, Sanjay Patil, Sabu Joseph, Anil Thomas, Vivek Vaswani, Bijon Dasgupta, Haasan, Vasan and Tannishtha Chatterjee.

Gondhal is the fourth Marathi film chosen as India’s Oscar entryGondhal becomes the fourth Marathi-language film to be selected as India’s official Oscar entry. It follows Shwaas (2005), Harishchandrachi Factory (2009) and Court (2015).India is yet to win the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film, a category formerly known as Best Foreign Language Film. Only three Indian submissions have secured nominations in the category — Mehboob Khan’s Mother India, Mira Nair’s Salaam Bombay and Ashutosh Gowariker’s Lagaan. Deepa Mehta’s Water, starring John Abraham and Lisa Ray, was also nominated, but represented Canada after being selected as the country’s official entry.Last year, Neeraj Ghaywan’s Homebound, starring Ishaan Khatter, Vishal Jethwa and Janhvi Kapoor, was chosen as India’s official entry but did not make the Academy’s shortlist.Gondhal will now enter the Academy’s International Feature Film selection process, which will lead to a 15-film shortlist before the final

‘Will I stand out among them?’: Mohitt Maalik recalls fear of being overshadowed in Mirzapur

Mohitt Maalik is riding high on the success of Mirzapur: The Movie, the big-screen extension of the popular OTT franchise Mirzapur. The success of the series paved the way for its transition from the digital space to the big screen, with Pankaj Tripathi a returning as Kaleen Bhaiyya, Ali Fazal as Guddu Pandit and Divyenndu Sharma as Munna, alongside several new characters. Among them is Mohitt Maalik’s Birju Lohar, a jilted lover whose portrayal has earned the actor praise and even the tag of “love idol”. In an exclusive conversation with SCREEN, Mohit revisited his experience of filming Mirzapur: The Movie.Every actor aspires to have an unforgettable song picturised on them, and Mohitt Maalik and Rasika Dugal (Chhatankki, his love interest) had the iconic “Saanson Ki Maala” by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. “Rasika always wanted a song. It was never my dream or goal to have a song picturised on me, but it’s an add-on for me. This song has been close to me since my school days because my mother would always listen to it, and now to have that song on me is divine,” shared the actor.

‘Main dikhunga na inke beech mein?’

Those who have watched Mirzapur: The Movie might remember the climax scene where Birju smiles during his final moments. Upon being asked about the interpretation of that smile, Mohitt Maalik said that he would leave it to people’s interpretation and wouldn’t want to reveal his own. He shared that the climax scene was his first shot for the movie. The actor said, “It was my first day, and the first scene of Mirzapur. It’s special because you have to say a lot of stuff without saying anything.”Usually, actors crave more dialogues and screen space, but Mohitt, on the contrary, feels that having less screen space and dialogues is a “boon”. “I am lucky that I didn’t have many lines. It’s a boon. I just had a few moments in the film. I appeared for nearly 12-13 minutes on screen, and that was a challenge for me to stand between all these big characters and actors and prove your mettle. Obviously, I had taken this challenge in my head; otherwise, I wouldn’t have been able to perform. I worked on my character with a lot of passion.”Speaking about securing his own place in this vast Mirzapur universe, Mohitt said, “Of course, I had the fear of trying to create my own place. Even a day before the release, I would just ask my director, ‘Main dikhunga na inke beech mein?’ (I’ll be seen amid them, right?), and Gurmmeet (Singh) would ask me if I’d lost my mind to even ask such a question. He would assure me by saying, ‘You’ve done a great job.’”Those pre-release doubts, however, soon gave way to appreciation for his performance, with Birju Lohar emerging as one of the film’s talked-about characters. “I am very grateful for all the love that is coming my way for Birju’s character, but my hunger for good work has also increased. I have become very hungry now, and I want to do more work.”The appreciation for Mohitt has come alongside Mirzapur The Movie’s strong run at the box office. As per trade tracker Sacnilk, the film has earned over Rs 250 crore globally. Speaking about its success, an innocently unaware Mohitt exclaimed, “Wow! Numbers don’t affect me much; they affect the producers. I’m just happy that my work is acknowledged and loved. Numbers – it’s their (producers’) math. I am not getting anything out of it (laughs). But I am happy that the film is working, and my producer is happy. I so wanted this film to work because Guru paaji (Gurmmeet Singh) is a part of this, and he deserves this.”Mohitt Maalik shared most of his scenes with Ravi Kishan, but off screen, the two are like chalk and cheese. Opening up about how they bonded on set despite their contrasting personalities, Mohitt laughed and said, “The jodi was very interesting, and he carries a great energy because he’s very spiritual. Not many people know, but he is highly inclined towards spirituality, and a big believer of ‘Mahadev’ (Lord Shiva), and we had great conversations about Mahadev. I also believe in Shiv Shakti, and I read a lot about Shiv Shakti. He was carrying a shivling (a symbol of Shiva) with him, and asked me to come to his room and take darshan (blessings). We’ve spent a great amount of time together. Yes, before the shots, sometimes, I had to tell



him, ‘Sir, take hone vala hai, thoda chup ho jaate hain’ (Sir, my take is about to start, let’s stay quiet for some time) because he really talks a lot and loves to talk a lot. Sometimes, I would also tell him, ‘Sorry, Ravi ji, I’ll just move to that corner and sit.’ It doesn’t come across as good behaviour, but it was needed for me.”

Previously, the film’s makers openly admitted that they feared Ravi Kishan’s Babban Bua might overpower Kaleen Bhaiyya, Guddu Pandit and Munna. Reacting to this, Mohitt said, “That can never happen. Kaleen Bhaiyya is another level. Ravi ji has performed very well, but I feel they are the OGs, yaar. Pankaj ji has immersed himself completely in Kaleen Bhaiyya’s character. It just flows through him. He doesn’t need to do anything. He is Kaleen Bhaiyya, and Ravi ji, also, it’s his whole body and the whole mannerisms of that belt. It’s his genre, and it is very comfortable for him. He has done a great job.”Talking about Pankaj Tripathi, Mohitt Maalik said, “He is an adorable guy. He is a saint, he is an institution, he is everything. He has guided me so many times, saying, ‘Yeh kar le, isko aise kar le’ (Do this, and do it this way), and I would say, ‘Main abhi naya naya aaya hoon, kuch kharab na ho jaaye’ (I am a newcomer here, I fear getting something wrong).”Mohitt then recalled an incident from the film’s climax that showed how Pankaj encouraged him to trust his instincts as an actor. “There was a shot in the climax where he called me and said, ‘Isko aise yahan par add kar de’ (Add this in the shot). I said, ‘Sir, aapka idea accha hai lekin main...’ (Sir, your idea is great, but how can I?). This was the shot with all the dancers in the frame, and I had to cross. So he told me, ‘Do something there.’ It wasn’t written in the script; we were just improvising. I wanted to improvise, but I was also scared. ‘What if the shot doesn’t go as expected? Everyone, including the dancers, would have to retake the whole scene.’ I didn’t do it, and then Pankaj ji called me and said, ‘Do it in the next take.’ I shared my inhibitions with him, saying that it shouldn’t spoil the scene. And he encouraged me by saying, ‘Kar liya kar, kuch kharab nahi hoga. Aise jab impulse aaye toh kar hi liya kar, poocha mat kar’ (You should improvise your scenes, nothing will go wrong. Whenever you feel the instinct, just do it, don’t wait to ask). At the most, what will go wrong? We’ll retake the shots.”“For me, this was something different because it’s a new world, a big film, with big stars, and I am doing something different. ‘Vahan thoda sa risky ho jaata’ (It would’ve been a little risky). Now, I can take the calls of improvising the shots because I know them all very well,” Mohit added.The gesture boosted Mohitt’s confidence.

‘I am strong, but it still hits you’: Karishma Tanna on dealing with postpartum depression



Actor Karishma Tanna and her husband Varun Bangera welcomed their first child, son Ved, in July. In a recent interview, Karishma opened up about her experience of motherhood and spoke about postpartum depression, stressing that it is “real” and revealing that she had prepared herself for the possibility.In a conversation with The Times of India, Karishma, who had earlier revealed

that maternal instincts did not come naturally to her, said her perspective changed after welcoming Ved. Calling the experience “amazing,” she recalled feeling an immediate sense of responsibility and emotional connection after giving birth, as though the baby was a part of her own body. “Motherhood is not easy, but it’s beautiful,” she said.

The actor added that motherhood had given her a new understanding of strength. Praising women for the strength it takes to give birth, Karishma said, “If you can survive this and if you can do this, trust me, you have the superpower.”Karishma Tanna said she did not remain in denial about the emotional lows that can accompany the postpartum period and had mentally prepared herself for them rather than feeling guilty. “It is real, and I am strong. However, after all this, it still hits you, and it is not in your control. You still have to go through it,” she said.The Scoop actor also shared advice for new mothers: “You can’t judge yourself and put yourself on that guilt trip. Whatever you’re doing, it’s just perfect for you and your baby. A happy mother leads to a happy child.” Karishma further spoke about the strength motherhood demands, from caring for a baby while recovering from childbirth to navigating a range of emotions and hormonal changes. Recalling how her emotions could shift from happiness to extreme lows within seconds, she described the experience as “unimaginable”. “There are times when you find yourself crying over every little thing, and yet you keep going,” she said.Karishma Tanna and Varun Bangera welcomed their first child, a baby boy, in Mumbai on July 29. Announcing his birth in a social media post, the couple wrote, “Born on the sacred day of Guru Purnima. Our greatest blessing is here. Welcome to our world, little one.” A few days later, they revealed their son’s name, Ved Tanna Bangera, in another post.

Law and Order movie review: Ranjith turns Mammootty’s most iconic character into a joke



wrongAlthough the film gives almost as much screen time to the five young cops as Balagopal, if not more, none of them is fleshed out. In a way, one could say they look like amateurish sketches of ACP Anbuselvan IPS (Suriya) and his gang from Gautham Vasudev Menon’s Kaakha Kaakha (2023). Yet, they come across as stereotypical youngsters often found in Malayalam cinema from the 2000s, who frequently deliver nonsensical lines, and crack lame jokes and laugh among themselves, compensating for the audience’s lack of reaction.

Law and Order also proves that it takes immense skill to extract the best performances from actors — knowing their strengths and weaknesses — which not many filmmakers possess. I mean, how else can one explain Prakash Varma going from a phenomenal job as CI George in Thudaram (2025) to whatever he has done here?Udaykrishna is one of the most unpredictable writers in Malayalam cinema. Just when we thought we had seen his absolute worst writing in Bandra (2023), he has proved everyone wrong, showing there’s still a long way to go before he hits rock bottom. The insipid dialogues in Law and Order alone underscore this.

There’s a moment in the film where, following his son’s death, Balagopal is set to end his life and holds his service revolver to his face. Suddenly, his wife walks in and bluntly asks, “Will it have one more bullet?” Not even kidding, but that shot reminded me of meme-ers’ favourite line, “Kurach kanji edukkatte Manikka?” from Mohanlal’s Odiyan (2018).Udaykrishna’s writing is so bad that even the dialogues he utters during his brief appearance are abysmal. I mean, how much time would it have taken him to come up with a name other than Marvel University, which sounds like the Marvel (Cinematic) Universe, for the educational institution shown in the movie?

In between, he and Ranjith also, out of the blue, peddle the “Hindi is our national language, and everyone must learn it” narrative for no reason at all. If the film had been even a bit better, we could have analysed its problematic aspects, but Law and Order simply doesn’t deserve that kind of discussion.Even its promotional posters were so execrable that it felt like literally no one cared about the movie. Or worse, the film’s entire cast and crew were in a strange competition to see who could do the shoddiest job. While Prakash Varma made the first move with an uninspired performance, the poster designers matched him.Meanwhile, composers Joe Daniel and Bijibal entered the scene and briefly took over the top position with infuriating songs and background scores, respectively, before cinematographer Prasanth Raveendran dethroned them with visuals that look as amateurish as 80s and 90s’ Kerala wedding videos.Just when we thought Udaykrishna’s poor writing would emerge as the ultimate champion, Ranjith swooped in and took over the throne by not only tarnishing the legacy of his iconic film Black (2004) and Mammootty’s legendary character in it, Shanmughan, but also by delivering an abomination that ranks among Malayalam cinema’s absolute worst of 2026.

While the central female characters have virtually no role in the story’s progress, the only time Ranjith and cinematographer Prasanth Raveendran focus on the women on screen is during party scenes, when the film seeks to objectify and sexualise them.Even Law and Order’s camera angles are, in general, so poor that they prove a large part of Black’s brilliance was courtesy of its cinematographer, Amal Neerad, who captured Kochi, its dark alleys, and Shanmughan so brilliantly.Plus, I don’t understand the reasoning behind discarding the iconic background score Rajamani gave Karikkamuri Shanmughan in Black for a comical recreation of the 2004 movie’s hit track “Ambalakkara” in Law and Order.Also, when will our stunt choreographers stop creating hackneyed action scenes where glasses and tables break one after another, with nothing fresh to offer? I mean, the sheer number of glasses and tables broken here by the five young cops here is shocking.Law and Order is so bad that it literally made me want to ask Ranjith what Chandramouli (Mohanlal) asked Maharaja (Suraj Venjaramoodu) in the same director’s Rock n’ Roll (2007): “Those superhit songs credited to your name, were they actually created by you?” I mean, how can someone who is said to have made Black, Kaiyoppu (2007), Thirakkatha (2008), and Paleri Manikyam: Oru Pathirakolapathakathinte Katha (2009) create something so dreadful?Besides, why did Ranjith pull Mammootty also into this hellhole