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DISSENT CANNOT BE DELETED

FDA Suspends Licences of Three Hotels

Action Taken Against Eight Hotels in Mahabaleshwar; Tourists Face Inconvenience



Mahabaleshwar, Correspondent: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has taken action against eight major hotel establishments in Mahabaleshwar after detecting violations of hygiene and sanitation regulations. The food business licences of three hotels have been suspended, while the remaining five have been served notices directing them to rectify the shortcomings.

However, the action, taken during the peak Diwali tourism season, has caused considerable inconvenience to hundreds of tourists who had made advance bookings at the affected hotels. Local business owners have also expressed dissatisfaction over the timing of the administrative action.

Following Tukaram Mundhe's assumption of responsibility for the department, the Food and Drug Administration has intensified enforcement activities across Maharashtra. Hotel operators in Mahabaleshwar have now been affected by this intensified drive during the busy Diwali holiday season.

An FDA inspection team led by Joint Commissioner Sanjay Shinde inspected the kitchens and restaurants of several hotels in the hill station. Although no serious irregularities were reportedly detected, the administration stated that violations of prescribed hygiene standards had been observed.

The food sales licences of the restaurants at three hotels have been suspended for a few days, forcing them to temporarily halt food sales operations.

Notably, tourists visiting Mahabaleshwar during the Diwali holidays typically book their hotel accommodation two to three months in advance. Consequently, the sudden action has affected not only hotel operators but also holidaymakers.

While some tourists have been forced to cancel their planned trips, many others are scrambling to find alternative accommodation at the last minute, adding to their difficulties during the festive holiday season.

Thousands celebrate Chhath Puja across Mumbai, MMR; prayers offered to setting Sun

MUMBAI, CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of devotees gathered at beaches, lakes and designated ghats across Mumbai and its neighbouring areas today evening to celebrate Chhath Puja, offering prayers to the setting Sun amid traditional rituals and devotional fervour.

Large gatherings were witnessed at several locations in Mumbai, Thane, Kalyan-Dombivli and Navi Mumbai, where devotees assembled with family members to perform Sandhya Arghya, an important ritual of the four-day festival.

Women observing the fast stood in water and offered traditional offerings, including fruits, sugarcane, coconuts and thekua, while praying for the well-being, prosperity and longevity of their families and children.

The celebration venues resonated with traditional Chhath songs, devotional music and religious chants. Community organisations and volunteers assisted devotees and made arrangements for lighting, drinking water, cleanliness, seating and crowd management.

In Kalyan-Dombivli, prominent gathering points included Ganesh Ghat, Nandivli, Umbarde, Atali, Mohane, Galegaon, Milapnagar, Mothagaon, Gandhari and Chinchpada. Devotees began arriving during the afternoon, with attendance increasing towards sunset.

Chhath Puja, dedicated to the worship of the Sun God and Chhathi Maiya, is observed over four days with strict rituals and fasting. The observance includes a rigorous 36-hour fast without food and water, reflecting the devotion and discipline associated with the festival.

The celebrations will conclude on Monday morning with Usha Arghya, when devotees will offer prayers to the rising Sun before breaking their fast.

The festival holds particular significance among people originating from Bihar, Jharkhand and eastern Uttar Pradesh, and has become an important expression of their cultural and religious traditions in Mumbai and the surrounding metropolitan region.

IndiGo flight from Pune to Guwahati makes emergency landing; everyone on board safe

Pune, Agency

An IndiGo flight from Pune to Guwahati made a safe emergency landing at Pune airport today morning after it developed a technical snag shortly after take-off. The aircraft's landing gear failed to retract, prompting the pilot to alert Air Traffic Control (ATC) and triggering a full emergency protocol at the airport.



The aircraft, operating as flight 6E 0623 (VT-IZE), was carrying a total of 192 people, including passengers and crew members. The pilot informed ATC that the landing gear had remained extended after take-off, leading to immediate emergency response measures by the airport authorities. The aircraft was reportedly flying at an altitude of approximately 31,000 feet when the technical issue was detected.

Following the alert, a full emergency was declared at Pune airport by the Indian Air Force.

Fire engines, ambulances and other emergency response teams were placed on high alert to handle any eventuality.

To assess the condition of the landing gear, the aircraft made a low pass over the runway. After coordinating with all concerned agencies, the pilot successfully landed the aircraft at Pune airport at 9.04 am.

The aircraft was subsequently escorted by three fire engines and two ambulances to bay number 7. After authorities confirmed that the aircraft was safe, the full emergency was withdrawn at 9.10 am.

An aerobridge was connected to the aircraft, and all passengers and crew members were safely evacuated. No injuries were reported, and all 192 people on board were confirmed safe.

IndiGo has arranged an alternative aircraft from Bengaluru to transport the stranded passengers to Guwahati.

The emergency operation was successfully handled through coordinated efforts by the Pune airport administration, Indian Air Force, Air Traffic Control and IndiGo, ensuring the safe return of the aircraft and the safety of everyone on board.

25 Crore Bridge to Connect Nimsakhar and Bangarde Across Nira River

Students' risky boat journeys set to end; project to boost connectivity between Indapur and Malshiras talukas

Baramati, Correspondent

A long-pending connectivity issue between Indapur and Malshiras talukas is finally set to be resolved, with ₹25 crore sanctioned under the Central Road Fund for the construction of a bridge across the Nira River connecting Nimsakhar village in Indapur taluka with Bangarde in Malshiras taluka.

The approval follows sustained efforts by Maharashtra Agriculture Minister Dattatray Bharne. The proposed bridge is expected to provide significant relief to residents of several villages, particularly students who have been forced to risk their lives by crossing the river in boats to reach educational institutions.

Nimsakhar has emerged as an important commercial and educational centre in the region, attracting students from several neighbouring villages. Residents of Bangarde, situated across the Nira River, depend heavily on Nimsakhar for education, shopping and other daily requirements. However, the absence of a bridge has made travel difficult, especially during the monsoon. Students have had to rely on boat services to cross the river, raising serious safety concerns among parents.

Apart from Bangarde, residents of Nimsakhar, Dagadwadi and Nirwangi also face difficulties travelling to Malshiras taluka. In the absence of a direct road connection, people are compelled to take longer routes, resulting in considerable wastage of time, money and effort.

The proposed bridge is expected to improve the transportation of agricultural produce, facilitate farmers' daily transactions and provide safer and faster access to educational institutions and markets. It will also strengthen economic and social connectivity between the two talukas.

Residents of Nimsakhar, Dagadwadi, Nirwangi and Bangarde had repeatedly raised the demand for the bridge with Agriculture Minister Dattatray Bharne. Recognising the importance of the project, Bharne pursued the matter with Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, seeking financial approval under the Central Road Fund, with the guidance of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Ministers Sunetra Pawar and Eknath Shinde.

The efforts have now resulted in the sanction of ₹25 crore for the project.

Speaking about the development, Agriculture Minister Dattatray Bharne said the Nimsakhar-Bangarde bridge would prove to be a lifeline for residents, farmers and, most importantly, students from both talukas. He added that the tendering process and necessary administrative formalities would be completed within the next three months, paving the way for the commencement of construction work.

The approval has raised hopes of ending a long-standing transportation problem in the region. Once completed, the bridge is expected to give a major boost to rural development and strengthen connectivity between Indapur and Malshiras talukas.

Shah likely to share stage with Sharad Pawar at Ajit statue unveiling event in Pune

MUMBAI, AGENCY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah who began his two-day tour of Pune today, is likely to share the stage with NCP founder Sharad Pawar on Monday (tomorrow), according to a printed invitation card handed out to those invited to the event.

The development has triggered fresh speculations about the likelihood of Shah engineering a merger of the two NCPs as well as Sharad Pawar-led NCP National Working President Supriya Sule's statement on Saturday hinting her support for the Delimitation Bill, for which the BJP government is short of around 15 votes of Lok Sabha MPs.

On Monday, Shah is scheduled to unveil the statue of the late Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar at Pune Zilla Parishad premises at Yashwantrao Chavan Bhavan on Wellesley Road, at the request of Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar.

The printed invitation card handed out for this event has surfaced, and it has mentioned that NCP founder and president Sharad Pawar, who is a Rajya Sabha MP, will share the stage with union Minister Amit Shah.

The Sunetra Ajit Pawar-led NCP is part of the BJP-led three-party Mahayuti ruling alliance in Maharashtra, while on the other hand, the Sharad Pawar-led NCP is part of the Congress-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) and the INDIA alliance.

Meanwhile, in another development, Natasha Awhad, the daughter of a senior leader of Sharad Pawar-led NCP MLA Jitendra Awhad, strongly criticised her party's support for the Delimitation Bill as indicated by Supriya Sule's pro-Delimitation Bill statement on Saturday

Tweeting her opposition to the Delimitation Bill from her X handle today, Natasha Awhad stated, "If the rumours that my party is considering supporting the Delimitation Bill are true, then I absolutely condemn this decision."

"While delimitation is imperative in light of the growing number of voters, the proposed Delimitation Bill is an unconstitutional attempt to limit the number of seats which the opposition can win, while simultaneously giving the BJP an unfair advantage," Natasha tweeted.

Amit Shah unveils cooperative sector development roadmap in Pune, Targets Congress and Rahul Gandhi

PUNE, CORRESPONDENT

Maharashtra, the birthplace of India's cooperative movement, is now emerging as the starting point for a new phase of development in the cooperative sector, union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday.

He credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government with establishing a separate Ministry of Cooperation at the Centre, claiming that the long-standing demand of farmers for an independent ministry had remained unfulfilled during the Congress regime.

Speaking at a programme in Pune, Shah outlined the Centre's roadmap for strengthening the cooperative sector in Maharashtra and across the country. He said the Modi government had provided the sector with a dedicated platform by establishing a separate ministry after nearly 70 years.

Shah also announced initiatives aimed at reviving sugar factories and promoting industrial development through cooperatives. He said several sugar factories had shut down during the Congress regime and efforts were now underway to revive them.

A manufacturing project spread across approximately 110 acres is being planned to produce machinery required by dairy units and sugar factories within the country. The project is expected to become operational by 2029.

Manufacturing of containers required for the railway and defence sectors is also being planned at the facility, he added.

Highlighting the government's efforts to expand cooperative-based services, Shah said the Centre was planning to introduce the Bharat Taxi service across the country. He alleged that private taxi companies were exploiting drivers and said the cooperative model would help empower drivers by providing them with a better platform.

The launch of Bharat Taxi and the inauguration of the Western Regional Office of cooperative institutions were also part of the programme in Pune.

Turning his attention to the Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi, Shah launched a sharp attack on the opposition party. He said the Congress had suffered electoral defeats three times and was therefore continuously criticising the government.

Shah accused Rahul Gandhi of making anti-India remarks during foreign visits and attempting to damage the country's international image. He alleged that several major scams had taken place during the Congress regime, while the opposition had failed to establish even a minor corruption charge against the Modi government during its 12 years in power.

Advising Rahul Gandhi to focus on grassroots politics, Shah said that attempting to gain power by defaming India would not succeed. He suggested that Gandhi should stop making foreign trips and instead travel to villages across the country to understand people's concerns.

Shah also condemned what he described as attempts by Rahul Gandhi to tarnish the image of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the country.

'Rupali Chakankar's condition is laughable'

Actress Deepali Sayyed hits back over film controversy

Pune, Agency

Actress Deepali Sayyed has strongly reacted to Maharashtra State Women's Commission chairperson Rupali Chakankar's reported objection to her portrayal in the upcoming film 'Maharashtra's Epstein Files'.

The controversy erupted after reports suggested that Sayyed would be playing a character based on Chakankar in the film. Chakankar had warned that she would initiate legal action if anyone used her name, photographs, identity or distinctive style for commercial purposes without her prior permission.

She also cautioned against the unauthorised use of her identity in films, videos, reels, teasers and promotional material.

Responding to the warning, Sayyed said Chakankar was unnecessarily inviting trouble and described her reaction as laughable. "Chakankar is in a situation of 'Aao bail mujhe maar' (inviting trouble unnecessarily). Women across households wear sarees and use hair clips. There are so many people named Rupali. How ridiculous is this objection? Who is advising Rupali Chakankar legally? Her trademark application has not yet been approved. The film will be released without being intimidated by such threats. By reacting this way, she is herself suggesting that the character is based on her," Sayyed remarked.

The actress further clarified that she was only performing a role as an artist and that audiences had accepted her portrayal. "I am an actress and have played various characters. People have appreciated and accepted my performances. By repeatedly making such statements, she is trying to establish that the character is actually her. The matter is already before the court. She filed an application for a trademark only on November 5, and it has not yet received approval. We are also responding through legal channels," Sayyed said.

Name Pune Ring Road after Ajit Pawar, announce CBI probe into air crash, Rohit Pawar urges Amit Shah

Pune, Agency

Ahead of union Home Minister Amit Shah's scheduled visit to Pune to unveil a statue of the late Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar today mounted pressure on the ruling establishment, demanding a CBI inquiry into the fatal Baramati plane crash and insisting that the ambitious Pune Ring Road be named after the departed leader.

In a strongly worded social media post that has sparked widespread debate across Maharashtra's political circles, Rohit Pawar warned of a massive agitation on Ajit Pawar's death anniversary if these demands are ignored.

Ajit Pawar was killed in a tragic plane crash near the Baramati airport while travelling from Mumbai, an incident that left no survivors and sent shockwaves through the state. Since the accident, Rohit Pawar has repeatedly raised serious questions regarding the circumstances of the crash, alleging potential foul play and calling for a thorough investigation.

While thanking the Pune Zilla Parishad leaders for erecting Ajit Pawar's statue, Rohit took a sharp swipe at state ministers who enjoy power due to the late leader's political clout. "Do those enjoying ministerial berths in the state government because of Ajit Dada not feel that the Pune Ring Road should be named after him?" he questioned. Highlighting Ajit Pawar's decade-long tenure as Pune's Guardian Minister and his immense contribution to the state's development, he asked whether certain individuals were deliberately opposing naming a major infrastructure project in his honour.

Urging Amit Shah not to limit Ajit Pawar's legacy to merely unveiling a statue, Rohit stated, "It would be much better if Shah Saheb announces naming the Pune Ring Road after Ajit Dada and orders a CBI inquiry into his plane crash. Otherwise, we will launch a massive agitation on Dada's death anniversary to ensure the Ring Road bears his name."

Reiterating his resolve to uncover whether the crash was a mere accident or a case of sabotage, Rohit affirmed that his efforts to bring out the truth would continue relentlessly. His remarks come amid heightened political activity and ongoing speculation regarding a potential reconciliation between the two factions of the Nationalist Congress Party.

DemocracyNow

Democratic Discomfort

The Congress conceived its Bharat Summit as an international platform to bring progressive political movements, intellectuals and policy-makers together to discuss the future of democracy and the emerging global order. But the circumstances surrounding the gathering have exposed a troubling contradiction in India's democratic credentials. A country aspiring to play a larger role in shaping international political discourse should not appear uncomfortable with the presence of those who question its government.

The reported exclusion of 113 foreign participants, out of 315 speakers cleared by the Ministry of External Affairs, raises questions extending well beyond the organisation of a political conference. The intervention attributed to the Ministry of Home Affairs, reportedly resulting in the retrospective withdrawal of clearances and visas, demands an explanation. If the government had legitimate security concerns, it was entitled to act. But the exercise of executive authority cannot be insulated from scrutiny merely by invoking administrative discretion.

The case of Norwegian journalist Helle Lyng is consequential. Having received political clearance and a visa, she was informed of their cancellation just hours before her scheduled departure for India. Her earlier encounter with Prime Minister Modi in Oslo, where she challenged him, inevitably lends the episode a political dimension. Her subsequent criticism of the government and influential Indian businessmen has further fuelled suspicions of retaliation. These suspicions are not proof of the government's motives, but the absence of a convincing official explanation makes them difficult to dispel.

The larger issue concerns the relationship between political authority and the freedom to question it. A government may regulate the entry of foreign nationals, but democratic credibility depends on the transparency and consistency with which such powers are exercised.

When an individual receives the necessary permissions only to have them withdrawn at the eleventh hour, the burden falls on the authorities to explain what changed and why. The irony is that the Bharat Summit was intended to examine the worldwide advance of right-wing populism, political polarisation and intolerance. The Congress hoped to demonstrate that India could contribute to an alternative democratic vision. Instead, the controversy has shifted attention towards the government's own attitude to dissent.

Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression to Indian citizens. Although foreign journalists do not enjoy an identical constitutional entitlement, their treatment remains a measure of India's commitment to open democratic engagement.

The government cannot claim international democratic leadership while leaving unanswered questions about the exclusion of critical voices. Nor should the Congress mistake the controversy for proof of its own political revival. Its larger challenge remains to translate international solidarity into domestic political credibility.

Ultimately, democracies are judged not by the conferences they host or the declarations they issue, but by their willingness to accommodate scrutiny. A government confident in its democratic legitimacy should have nothing to fear from an inconvenient question. When questioning authority appears to carry consequences, the credibility of the authority itself becomes the issue.

Veto Politics

President Donald Trump's midterm setback has exposed a contradiction at the heart of his economic programme. He wants to reshape America through tariffs, tax cuts, immigration restrictions and rapid technological expansion, yet these ambitions depend on conditions a president cannot command. With Democrats taking control of both chambers of Congress, the question is whether Trumponomics' competing promises can be reconciled.

A divided government need not mean paralysis. Washington has negotiated across party lines when government funding or the debt ceiling threatened a crisis. Trump himself has previously reached agreements with Democrats. A deal over defence spending, healthcare tax credits and household support is possible. But if each side secures its priorities by adding expenditure rather than identifying savings, compromise will deepen the fiscal problem.

America already faces a large deficit and a growing interest bill. Tax reductions, higher military spending and expanded domestic programmes cannot indefinitely coexist without consequences. The political system has repeatedly postponed the argument over who pays and what the government can afford. A new Congress may change the bargaining, but not the arithmetic.

The more revealing contest may concern artificial intelligence. Data centres are essential to America's technological competition with China, but their electricity demand can impose costs on local communities. Residents facing higher power bills are unlikely to accept that every new facility automatically serves the national interest. Requiring technology companies to finance more of the generation and grid capacity they need is not hostility to innovation; it is a condition for its social legitimacy. A settlement could accelerate infrastructure while preventing households from subsidising private expansion.

Tariffs present a different test. They are central to Trump's political identity, but raise input costs, invite retaliation and unsettle investment. Courts can restrict the statutory routes used to impose them, while public dissatisfaction may make selective relief attractive. Any retreat, however, is likely to be tactical rather than philosophical. Protectionism will remain part of the administration's outlook.

The Federal Reserve and immigration reveal similar tensions. Presidential pressure for lower interest rates risks weakening confidence in monetary independence. Aggressive deportations can deprive agriculture, construction and hospitality of workers they rely upon, adding to costs even as the administration promises affordability. These are conflicts within the administration's own economic objectives, not merely disputes between parties.

Democrats can investigate, obstruct and negotiate, but cannot govern from Congress while Trump occupies the White House. Nor can they assume their victory represents a mandate for every element of their programme. The likely outcome is selective bargaining punctuated by confrontation.

The deeper test is whether Trump can accept limits without presenting every concession as surrender. Deals may keep government functioning and soften his policies. They will not resolve the contradictions between tax cuts and fiscal discipline, protectionism and lower prices, or technological ambition and affordable energy. Trumponomics may endure. Its promise of painless transformation is much less likely to.

Light, not smoke ~ II

Around the Vellode Bird Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu's Erode district, residents of more than a dozen villages have kept their festive season free of crackers for some two decades. The villagers took the decision themselves, because the sanctuary's nesting season, from October to March, overlaps with the festival, and the noise and smoke were driving away painted storks, ibises and migratory pelicans that arrive from as far as Siberia and Australia



Air pollution at least announces itself; the sky darkens and the throat burns. Noise is the subtler injury, and its victims are the least able to complain. On the same night that the air turned brown, the sound in many residential neighbourhoods ran far beyond anything the law permits, and kept running long after the permitted hours had ended.

The legal framework is not lax. Under India's noise rules, residential areas should not exceed 45 decibels at night, and hospital silence zones are held to a stricter 40. Even certified green crackers that make sound are capped at 125 decibels at the point of measurement. Each step of ten decibels represents roughly a tenfold rise in sound intensity, which is why the gap between a quiet bedroom and an exploding cracker is not a matter of degree but of kind.

For the elderly, the effects are not merely annoying. Sudden impulse noise raises heart rate and blood pressure, disturbs the sleep on which recovery from illness depends, and can trigger panic in those with dementia. For animals, whose hearing is far keener than ours, the experience is closer to bombardment. Municipal veterinary advisories routinely warn that fireworks can cause severe stress and, in extreme cases, death among pets and stray animals; anyone who has watched a street dog wedge itself under a parked car at midnight needs no advisory.

Birds suffer in ways that are only now being measured. A study published in the journal Conservation Letters in 2023, led by researchers at Germany's Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior and the Netherlands Institute of Ecology, fitted 347 wild geese with GPS trackers over eight New Year periods in Europe. On fireworks nights, the birds abandoned their roosts more often and flew on average five to 16 kilometres further and 40 to 150 metres higher than on ordinary nights. Particulate levels near their roosting sites rose by as much as 650 per cent. A radar study over an English city, published in Scientific Reports the same year, found more birds aloft, and flying higher, on every firework night it examined. Those were cold European nights, but the physiology of fear does not change at the border, and our own festive season coincides with the arrival of migratory birds across the subcontinent.

If the rules are sound and the harm is documented, why does nothing change? The honest answer is that enforcement during the festive season is treated as a matter of appeals rather than administration. Advisories are issued, helplines publicised, a handful of arrests announced, a few kilograms of illegal crackers seized. Then, on the night itself, in too many neighbourhoods, the system effectively stands down.

In one eastern metropolis this year, a state minister found it necessary to tour neighbourhoods personally late at night after residents complained that it was difficult to remain indoors. That a senior member of government had to do so speaks less to any individual's failing than to the absence of a machinery that should make such tours unnecessary. Nor do most authorities publish what happened afterwards: how many violations of the permitted hours were recorded, in which localities, and with what consequence. An order whose breach is never counted is an order that has quietly been abandoned.

The difficulty is real. No police force can post a constable on every rooftop, and heavy-handed enforcement against families celebrating at home would rightly provoke resentment. But this is an argument for intelligent enforcement, not for none. The decisive points of control lie not on the terrace but upstream: in the factories, warehouses and supply chains through which unapproved, high-decibel crackers reach the market, often across state borders that the regulations treat as walls and the trade treats as doorways. Certified green crackers help, but they are cleaner, not clean: by their developers' own testing, they emit roughly 30 to 40 per cent less particulate matter than conventional ones. A smaller dose of smoke on a night that multiplies it many times over is still a heavy dose.

Against this record of official drift stand examples that deserve to be better known. Around the Vellode Bird Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu's Erode district, residents of more than a dozen villages have kept their festive season free of crackers for some two decades. The wetland lies on the Central Asian Flyway and was designated a Ramsar site of international importance in 2022. The villagers took the decision themselves, because the sanctuary's nesting season, from October to March, overlaps with the festival, and the noise and smoke were driving away painted storks, ibises and migratory pelicans that arrive from as far as Siberia and Australia.



T KANNAN

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In Sivaganga district, the villages around the Vettangudi sanctuary have kept a similar silence for over three decades, extending it even to weddings and temple festivals. The children still get new clothes and sweets; the lamps are still lit; sparklers are allowed. What is given up is only the explosion. None of these villages was compelled by a court. They were persuaded by something they could see: birds returning to the trees each year. That is the most important policy lesson the season offers. Restraint is most durable when communities can see what it protects.

State governments, too, have shown that a middle path exists. Tamil Nadu, home to the country's largest fireworks industry, has in recent years urged communities to burst crackers collectively at designated places and fixed hours, to avoid the loudest chained crackers altogether, and to keep away from hospitals, schools, courts and places of worship. It is a model that respects both celebration and the people who make their living from it, and it can be replicated.

That livelihood question cannot be wished away. Lakhs of workers depend on the fireworks trade, many of them in a single region of Tamil Nadu. A policy that bans abruptly and offers nothing in return will be resisted, and fairly so. Any serious reform must include a transition: support for the move to certified low-emission products, credit for retooling, and a phased timetable that the industry can plan around.

What, concretely, should policymakers do? Six measures would change the story within a few seasons. First, treat the festive night as a forecastable public-health emergency, with a joint plan from the pollution boards, police, municipal bodies and health departments published weeks in advance and reviewed publicly afterwards, with hospitals staffed for the surge and permitted hours tightened automatically when forecasts show stagnant air. Second, move enforcement upstream, using the existing system of coded, certified green crackers to trace and shut down the supply of illegal stock before it reaches the shops. Third, publish real-time noise readings alongside air quality, so that citizens and courts alike can see where the law is being broken. Fourth, close the data gaps; a monitoring network that loses a large share of its readings on its most important night is not fit for purpose. Fifth, encourage community displays, or light and drone shows, at designated grounds, away from hospitals, sanctuaries and wetlands, so that spectacle is concentrated and managed rather than scattered across every lane. Sixth, reward the villages and neighbourhoods that choose quiet celebration, through recognition and modest civic incentives, so that the Vellode example becomes a template rather than a curiosity.

To these one may add a seventh, which costs nothing: that those who hold elected office, of every party and in every state, speak on matters of public health only from the evidence. Their words travel further than any advisory. Pollution is no respecter of boundaries. The smoke of one city drifts into the next, which is why clean air must be planned by airshed, the shared basin of wind, and not municipality by municipality. The WHO estimates that 99 per cent of humanity already breathes air that fails its guidelines. India's case abroad is stronger when its record at home is cleaner.

The lamp is the oldest symbol of the season, and it makes no noise at all. Two decades ago, a cluster of villages in Erode decided that the birds nesting beside their fields mattered more than one night of explosions. The birds are still there. The question for our cities, and for those who govern them, is whether we can learn what those villages already know: that light was always the point, and the smoke never was.

(Concluded)

How many Nepalis are one flood away from poverty?

Poverty is Nepal's inheritance, and a stubborn one. For decades, it has been a defining feature of Nepal's identity. State policy and the grit of families have pushed the rate down over time, but not by nearly enough. Many things hold back progress. Disasters are among the cruellest. The National Planning Commission has found that poverty rose by 2.7 percentage points in the municipalities hit by the Bhotekoshi flood on August 26. The figure covers only the affected areas. Still, it confirms what Nepal has been slow to admit: disasters are a major reason poverty does not fall faster. The structural causes are familiar. Farming is expensive and pays little. Industry has failed to take root. Infrastructure projects drag on for years, and jobs are scarce. The climate for investors and entrepreneurs is hardly encouraging. The state's presence in social security is thin, and many announced programmes are ineffective or have failed outright.

Out-of-pocket health spending pushes roughly 600,000 people into poverty every year. Corruption, opacity, misgovernance and delay make everything worse.

Then come the shocks. The 2015 earthquake pushed about 700,000 people below the poverty line. The Covid-19 pandemic pushed about 1.2 million more, and an estimated 1.6 million people lost their jobs, according to the commission. Madhesh, Sudurpaschim and Karnali are already poorer than the rest of the country, so disasters land hardest there. Many who have crossed the poverty line did so through years of state effort, a dose of luck and plenty of personal initiative. They have little saved. A small jolt, even a spike in prices or a poor harvest, can send them back. A disaster can take everything at once. And a family's own effort may not be enough to climb out again. None of this erases real progress. Poverty fell from 41.76 percent in 1995/96 to 20.27 percent in 2022/23, helped by investment in education and health, urbanisation, globalisation, new sources of income, social security and foreign employment. But those are slow, steady gains. A single flood can undo them in a night. The timing of this reminder matters. Nepal is celebrating Tihar, the festival of lights and prosperity. In the municipalities touched by the Bhotekoshi flood, poverty is higher than it was before the water came. Prosperity is easy to celebrate, and harder to protect. Protecting it requires work well before disaster strikes. The state should identify hazard-prone areas and reduce human presence and activity in them.

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Decisions on where people settle and where roads, bridges and power projects go need serious study. Public and private buildings must be disaster-resilient, earthquake-resistant ones above all. That is the cheapest way to cut losses of life and property. When disasters do strike, relief and rescue must come first. Survivors then need both temporary and permanent rehabilitation. All three tiers of government should run strategic programmes to restore them to where they stood before. The private sector can help by connecting the affected with jobs and entrepreneurship. International finance that follows climate-induced disasters should be tied to resilience.

Economic opportunity is the best defence. The more of it a country has, the stronger its people's capacity to absorb a blow, and the sooner they can act against poverty on their own. Nepal needs both: growth that thickens household savings, and a state that shields those savings from the next flood.

Letters To The Editor | editor@thestatesman.com

Indiscretions

Sir, The controversy surrounding Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang's reported extramarital affair raises serious questions that go beyond personal morality and touch upon corporate governance and national security.

Media reports have raised concerns about his association with Alice Huang, a former executive of Megaspeed International, who has reportedly come under scrutiny over alleged connections with Chinese intelligence. Although these allegations remain unproven, the episode has prompted Nvidia's board to initiate an independent investigation into whether its chief executive was targeted by a foreign intelligence operation.

History offers several reminders of how personal relationships can expose powerful individuals to manipulation. The Profumo affair in Britain and the Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky controversy illustrate how private indiscretions can develop into major political and institutional crises.

As an old saying suggests, no individual, however powerful, accomplished or intellectually gifted, is entirely immune to the vulnerabilities of personal relationships. When judgement is compromised, such vulnerabilities can potentially become instruments of coercion, blackmail or espionage.

Today, artificial intelligence and advanced semiconductors are strategic national assets rather than merely commercial products. Consequently, the personal conduct and security awareness of corporate leaders managing these technologies have implications far beyond their private lives.

Corporate boards must strengthen executive oversight, succession planning, conflict-of-interest safeguards and awareness of foreign intelligence threats. Ultimately, protecting national technological interests requires not only secure systems but also responsible and vigilant leadership.

Yours, etc., Vidyasagar Reddy Kethiri,
New Delhi, 11 November.

Surprising

Sir, It is unsurprising that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has raised questions following the release of Congress leader Sonia Gandhi's memoir, Belonging: A Journey of Love, which narrates some of the defining chapters of our nation's history. BJP's Rae Bareli MLC Dinesh Pratap Singh has publicly challenged her account, alleging that then-President APJ Abdul Kalam deemed her ineligible for the prime ministership due to her foreign origins and that her "sacrifice" was merely a political narrative.

However, Rashtrapati Bhavan records and Dr. Kalam's own book, Turning Points, directly contradict these claims. While Dr. Kalam noted that several leaders - including Subramanian Swamy - urged him not to appoint Mrs. Gandhi, he clarified that denying her the post would have been constitutionally untenable.

In fact, when Mrs. Gandhi presented letters of support from coalition allies on 18 May 2004, Rashtrapati Bhavan had already prepared her formal invitation letter and was ready to swear her in.

Her decision to nominate Dr. Manmohan Singh instead came as a genuine surprise to President Kalam, requiring his secretariat to rework the official appointment letter at the last minute. People wonder why even after Kalam's clarification the BJP defames Sonia Gandhi.

Yours, etc., Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee,
Faridabad, 11 November.

DemocracyNow Maharashtra

PM Modi unveils 246 tribal projects worth Rs 3,000 crore on 'Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas'



Gadchiroli, 15 November

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday virtually addressed the Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas celebrations held in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, marking the 151st birth anniversary of tribal freedom fighter Bhagwan Birsa Munda.

During the programme, Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for 246 tribal development projects worth around Rs 3,000 crore across the country.

Of the total projects, 173 were inaugurated, while foundation stones were laid for 73 new initiatives. The inaugurated projects include 38 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), 100 multi-purpose centres under the PM-JANMAN scheme, a Tribal Research Institute building in Itanagar and the Ropuiliani Tribal Freedom Fighter Museum in Aizawl.

The 73 - new initiatives include 19 Eklavya Model Residential Schools, 12 -Tribal Multipurpose Marketing Centres and 42 -projects under the PM-JANMAN and Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA).

Addressing the gathering, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis paid tribute to Bhagwan Birsa Munda, recalling his struggle against British colonial rule to safeguard the rights of tribal communities over land, forests and water.

Fadnavis thanked the central government for selecting Gadchiroli to host the national-level celebrations and credited Prime Minister Modi with bringing recognition to tribal freedom fighters whose contributions had remained largely forgotten.

The programme was attended by Maharashtra Governor Jishnu Dev Varma, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram and state Tribal Development Minister Ashok Uike, among other dignitaries.

The event also marked the culmination of the nationwide Janjatiya Gaurav Pakhwada celebrations.

Massive fire breaks out at school in Nashik's Satpur; Firecrackers suspected to be the cause

Nasik, 15 November

A massive fire broke out at a school in the Satpur area of Nashik around midnight, triggering panic among local residents. The incident occurred at a school located behind the Nashik Municipal Corporation Satpur divisional office. According to preliminary information, someone was reportedly bursting firecrackers and engaging in fireworks late at night in or near the school premises.

A spark from the fireworks is suspected to have landed inside the school compound, triggering the fire. Within minutes, the flames intensified and spread rapidly.

Huge flames and thick plumes of smoke were visible from a considerable distance. After noticing the fire, local residents immediately alerted the fire brigade and Satpur police.

Fire engines rushed to the spot soon after receiving the alert. Firefighters launched an immediate operation and made strenuous efforts to bring the blaze under control.

Since the incident occurred late at night, no students or staff members were present inside the school, thereby averting a major tragedy. Fortunately, no casualties have been reported so far.

However, there are concerns that school furniture, equipment and other educational materials may have been damaged in the fire. The exact extent of the damage is yet to be ascertained.

Satpur police also reached the spot, cleared the area of crowds and assisted the fire brigade in carrying out the firefighting operation.

Police and fire department officials are investigating whether firecrackers were indeed responsible for the blaze or if there was another cause.

Despite Diwali having ended, incidents of bursting firecrackers and conducting fireworks continue to be reported in several areas. Residents have expressed anger over such incidents, particularly when authorities have repeatedly appealed to people not to burst firecrackers near schools, hospitals and crowded places.

Intellectual Naxalism more dangerous than armed extremism: Fadnavis



Gadchiroli, 15 November

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis today noted intellectual Naxalism, which is gradually taking root in society at the ideological level, is more dangerous than armed Naxalism.

Speaking to the media during his visit to Gadchiroli for the celebration of Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas, marking the 151st birth anniversary of tribal freedom fighter Bhagwan Birsa Munda, he alleged that efforts were being made to create a new generation that rejects the Constitution and the established democratic system.

Fadnavis said that although the influence of armed Naxalism was declining, the ideological challenge posed by such forces could not be ignored.

He stressed that the response to these tendencies must remain within the framework of the Constitution.

The Constitution has the capacity to ensure justice and equal opportunities for every citizen of the country, he said, emphasising the need to continuously communicate this message to society.

The Chief Minister also highlighted the importance of using social media to showcase Gadchiroli's transformation and development to the rest of the country.

He said content creators, writers and social media influencers from different parts of the country had been touring the district over the past three days to experience its changing landscape.

During their visit, they interacted with surrendered Naxalites and families affected by Naxalism and also explored the district's industrial potential, mining activities, skill development initiatives and natural resources.

Prince William, Kate to arrive in Mumbai on Nov 16 for Earthshot

Mumbai, 15 November

Britain's Prince William and Princess Catherine will arrive in Mumbai on November 16 for a three-day visit, with the city hosting the sixth edition of the Earthshot Prize Awards on November 17.

The prestigious environmental awards, founded by Prince William, will be organised in India for the first time.

Five selected winners will receive £1 million each in recognition of innovative solutions aimed at tackling climate change and addressing environmental challenges.The visit is particularly significant for Princess Kate as it marks her first major joint international engagement with Prince William since undergoing cancer treatment in 2024.

Aaditya Thackeray backs Rahul Gandhi's on phone-tapping claims, Target BJP



Mumbai, 15 November

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray on Sunday backed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's allegations of phone tapping, accusing the BJP-led government of misusing state machinery against political opponents and journalists while neglecting pressing issues facing Maharashtra.

"The machinery currently being deployed against political opponents and journalists would serve the government and the nation far better if it were used to track terrorists and criminals," he said, recalling similar instances of surveillance in Maharashtra, where Congress leader Nana Patole had earlier read out the names of alleged targets on the floor of the State Assembly.

Taking a swipe at the ruling dispensation over its political activities, Thackeray challenged the BJP to focus on governance rather than engineering political defections and launching operations such as 'Operation Tiger'.

He highlighted concerns over water scarcity, rising pollution and the shifting of industries out of Maharashtra, alleging that the government is failing to address the state's economic and environmental challenges.

"Stop breaking parties and felling trees, and actually get some work done," he said, accusing the BJP of pushing the privatisation of public assets. He also alleged that government assets would eventually be handed over to industrialist Gautam Adani.

Thackeray further accused the ruling party of deliberately creating social divisions in Mumbai to divert public attention from issues such as inflation and the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Clarifying that there was no genuine dispute over Chhath Puja, he alleged that attempts are being made to create tensions between communities and fuel a Marathi versus non-Marathi divide for political gains.

On speculation about a possible merger involving the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Thackeray dismissed the reports as BJP-sponsored propaganda. He said Sharad Pawar's party had made no such announcement and questioned the repeated doubts being raised over its political position.

The Sena (UBT) leader also demanded that the Women's Reservation Bill be implemented by 2029 without linking it to the delimitation exercise. He alleged that the BJP is not genuinely interested in ensuring greater political representation for women.

20-year-old arrested for spying at sensitive sites in Mumbai

Mumbai, 15 November

In a major operation, the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) has arrested a youth for allegedly conducting reconnaissance of sensitive sites in Mumbai, including the Chabad House in Colaba, officials said.

The Chabad House, also known as the Nariman House, was one of the primary targets during the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack.

The accused, identified as 20-year-old Yash Singh, had allegedly been conducting reconnaissance of one of Mumbai's most sensitive locations, the Chabad House/Synagogue in Colaba,

CNG price hiked by Rs 1.50 per kg in Mumbai, auto unions demand fare revision



Mumbai, 15 November

Commuters, motorists and public transport operators in Mumbai and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) faced an additional financial burden on Sunday as Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) prices were increased by Rs 1.50 per kg, taking the retail rate to Rs 91.50 per kg.

The revised price came into effect from midnight on Saturday and was applicable at CNG filling stations across Mumbai and adjoining areas from Sunday morning.

The latest hike follows a Re 1 per kg increase on November 1, taking the cumulative rise to Rs 5.50 per kg over the past 75 days. CNG, which was priced at Rs 80.50 per kg at the beginning of the year, has now become costlier by Rs 11 per kg.

The successive price increases are expected to hit auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers, who depend heavily on CNG for their daily operations. Private motorists and operators of CNG-powered commercial vehicles will also have to shell out more for every refill.

The latest revision has once again triggered demands from autorickshaw unions for a hike in passenger fares, with representatives arguing that repeated increases in fuel prices have eroded their earnings.

Thampy Kurien of the Mumbai Rickshawmen's union said that the successive CNG price hikes have reduced the financial benefits of the recent fare revision.

The union has demanded an increase of Rs 2 in the minimum autorickshaw fare, from the existing Rs 27 to Rs 29 for the first 1.5 kilometres. The demand comes at a time when the process of recalibrating autorickshaw meters following the previous fare revision is still underway.

According to estimates, around 12.93 lakh CNG-powered vehicles operate across the MMR, including autorickshaws, taxis, private cars and public transport vehicles.

Mahanagar Gas Limited (MGL), which supplies CNG in the region, has attributed the latest price revision to higher gas procurement costs, reduced allocation of domestically produced natural gas and increased dependence on imported regasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG).

Maha to name Pune Ring Road after Ajit Pawar; order CBI probe

Pune, 15 November

Ahead of union Home Minister Amit Shah's scheduled visit to Pune to unveil a statue of the late Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar today mounted pressure on the ruling establishment, demanding a CBI inquiry into the fatal Baramati plane crash and insisting that the ambitious Pune Ring Road be named after the departed leader.

In a strongly worded social media post that has sparked widespread debate across Maharashtra's political circles, Rohit Pawar warned of a massive agitation on Ajit Pawar's death anniversary if these demands are ignored.

IN A STRONGLY WORDED SOCIAL MEDIA POST THAT HAS SPARKED WIDESPREAD DEBATE ACROSS MAHARASHTRA'S POLITICAL CIRCLES, ROHIT PAWAR WARNED OF A MASSIVE AGITATION ON AJIT PAWAR'S DEATH ANNIVERSARY IF THESE DEMANDS ARE IGNORED.

Ajit Pawar was killed in a tragic plane crash near the Baramati airport while travelling from Mumbai, an incident that left no survivors and sent shockwaves through the state. Since the accident, Rohit Pawar has repeatedly raised serious questions regarding the circumstances of the crash, alleging potential foul play and calling for a thorough investigation.

While thanking the Pune Zilla Parishad leaders for erecting Ajit Pawar's statue, Rohit took a sharp swipe at state ministers who enjoy power due to the late leader's political clout. "Do those enjoying ministerial berths in the state government because of Ajit Dada not feel that the Pune Ring Road should be named after him?" he questioned. Highlighting Ajit Pawar's decade-long tenure as Pune's Guardian Minister and his immense contribution to the state's development, he asked whether certain individuals were deliberately opposing naming a major infrastructure project in his honour.

Daily Sindhudurg-Navi Mumbai flight service to commence from Monday

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
Kolhapur (Sindhudurg), 15 November

Maharashtra Minister for Fisheries and Ports Development Nitesh Rane has announced that FLY91's flight service between Sindhudurg (Chipi) and Navi Mumbai will commence from Monday, with daily flights operating seven days a week.

Addressing the people of Sindhudurg, Rane, who is also the Guardian Minister of Sindhudurg district, said that the launch of the daily flight service would give a new impetus to tourism development and economic prosperity in the district. He expressed confidence that the service would also generate new employment opportunities, particularly in the tourism sector.

Rane said that, in the subsequent years, former minister Narayan Rane and former Guardian Ministers Deepak Kesarkar, Uday Samant and Ravindra Chavan had also made efforts to ensure that the airport remained fully operational. He added that, as the Guardian Minister, he had continued to hold meetings with concerned officials and follow up on issues such as night landing facilities, road connectivity and power supply in the vicinity of the airport to resolve technical difficulties.

Navnath Ban targets Sanjay Raut, accuses Uddhav faction of serving Congress interests

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
Nagpur, 15 November



BJP chief spokesperson Navnath Ban on Sunday launched a scathing attack on Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut, accusing him of blindly following the Congress leadership and abandoning the ideology of Hindutva.

Addressing a press conference here, Ban extended birthday wishes to Raut but said he should return to the principles of Hindutva and 'Nation First'.

Referring to Raut's earlier slogan 'Aandhi Nahi, Toofan Hai Modi', he said the Shiv Sena (UBT) leader should give up what he termed as his servitude to the Congress and once again repose faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

Taking a dig at the Uddhav Thackeray faction, Ban said it had ceased to be a political party and had become a 'self-help group', which was waiting to merge with the Congress.

He also questioned the relationship between the two parties and alleged that Raut was worried about his political future if Sharad Pawar and Supriya Sule joined the NDA.

On the Chhath Puja controversy, Ban said it was a Hindu festival and questioned whether Raut opposed its celebration.

He also sought clarification from Congress leaders in Maharashtra on whether they supported Raut's alleged opposition to the festival.

At the same time, he asserted that Marathi songs should be played at railway platforms during Ganeshotsav and Navratri, accusing the Uddhav Thackeray faction of attempting to create divisions between Marathi and North Indian communities for political gains.

Defending Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Ban said the people of Maharashtra had endorsed his leadership in the 2014, 2019 and 2024 elections.

Challenging Raut to demonstrate his own electoral strength, he asked him to first ensure the election of a corporator from the Uddhav Thackeray faction in Bhandup before criticising Fadnavis.

Criticising the opposition to infrastructure projects, Ban said the Uddhav Thackeray faction had opposed the Samruddhi Expressway, Mumbai Coastal Road and Metro projects without understanding their importance.

The Samruddhi Expressway had improved connectivity to Vidarbha and reduced travel time between the region and Mumbai to around seven hours, he said.

He alleged that the faction was now opposing green energy projects as well.

On the Mumbai-Gujarat issue, Ban accused Raut of double standards, pointing to slogans such as 'Kem Chho Worli' and 'Jilebi Fafda, Uddhav Thackeray Aapda' used during political campaigns.

Delhi BJP pays tribute to Bhagwan Birsa Munda on his 151st birth anniversary



New Delhi, 15 November

The Delhi BJP on Sunday paid floral tributes to tribal freedom fighter Bhagwan Birsa Munda on his 151st birth anniversary at a programme organised at the party's state office here, with leaders recalling his contribution to the struggle against British rule and his fight for the rights and dignity of tribal communities.

Delhi BJP president and Union Minister of State Harsh Malhotra, along with South Delhi MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri and senior party functionaries, garlanded his portrait and paid homage to the revolutionary leader, popularly known as 'Dharti Aaba'.

Speaking on the occasion, Malhotra said Birsa Munda was not merely a revolutionary but also an enduring symbol of social harmony, environmental conservation and the protection of tribal rights over water, forests and land. He said Birsa Munda's 'Ulgulan' movement had challenged the foundations of British rule and reflected his determination to fight injustice and safeguard the self-respect of tribal communities.

"Today, on the 151st birth anniversary of Dharti Aaba Bhagwan Birsa Munda Ji, we bow to him with utmost reverence. He raised his voice against injustice at a very young age and sacrificed everything for the protection of water, forests and land. He remains an inspiration not only for tribal communities but also for the youth across the country," Malhotra said. He noted that the Centre, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had declared November 15 as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas to honour Birsa Munda and recognise the contributions of tribal freedom fighters.

Highlighting initiatives for tribal welfare, Malhotra referred to Eklavya Model Residential Schools and the Van Dhan Yojana, saying these programmes reflected efforts towards the socio-economic development of tribal communities.

He also said the BJP government in Delhi, led by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, was committed to the welfare of tribal and Purvanchal communities living in the national capital.

Appealing to people to draw inspiration from Birsa Munda's life, Malhotra urged them to imbibe the values of self-respect, public service and conservation of nature. Addressing the gathering, Bidhuri said Birsa Munda's life embodied courage, sacrifice, patriotism and resistance against injustice.

"Bhagwan Birsa Munda Ji taught us never to bow down in the face of oppression," he said, adding that the Delhi BJP was committed to following his ideals and ensuring that the benefits of development reached the last person in society.

CM Gupta pays tribute to Bhagwan Birsa Munda on 151st birth anniversary at Baansera Park

New Delhi, 15 November

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday paid floral tributes to tribal freedom fighter Bhagwan Birsa Munda at Baansera Park on his 151st birth anniversary, observed as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas, and described his life as an enduring inspiration in the fight against injustice, exploitation and oppression.

Garlanding the statue of the tribal leader, popularly known as 'Dharti Aaba', Gupta recalled his courage, sacrifice and contribution to protecting the rights, dignity and cultural identity of tribal communities.

She also listened to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address on the occasion in the presence of other dignitaries, including MLA Tarvinder Singh Marwah and several prominent personalities.

The Chief Minister said Birsa Munda's life remained a powerful example of patriotism and an inspiration for generations to stand against injustice and exploitation while preserving their cultural roots and traditions.

She said Birsa Munda had mobilised tribal communities and led a determined struggle for their rights and self-respect, making his contribution an important chapter in India's freedom movement and cultural history.

Observing that Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas was an opportunity to take his ideals and legacy to younger generations, Gupta said the occasion was not merely about remembering a historical personality but also recognising the sacrifices and contributions of tribal communities to the country's freedom struggle and nation-building.

Highlighting the Centre's initiatives for tribal welfare, the Chief Minister said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was making historic efforts to bring communities that had remained neglected for decades into the mainstream of development.



GARLANDING THE STATUE OF THE TRIBAL LEADER, POPULARLY KNOWN AS 'DHARTI AABA', GUPTA RECALLED HIS COURAGE, SACRIFICE AND CONTRIBUTION TO PROTECTING THE RIGHTS, DIGNITY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES.

She said the government had accorded greater recognition to tribal heroes, traditions and cultural heritage, while focusing on improving the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities.

Referring to the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) and the Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan, Gupta said these initiatives were aimed at extending basic amenities, improving living standards and ensuring that tribal communities received equitable development opportunities.

She said the programmes reflected the government's commitment to safeguarding the dignity and rights of tribal communities while ensuring their meaningful participation in the country's development journey. Gupta further said the legacy of Bhagwan Birsa Munda belonged not only to tribal communities but was an invaluable part of India's national heritage.

His ideals, she said, reminded citizens of the importance of taking pride in their roots, culture and traditions and standing firmly against injustice.

The Chief Minister called for collective efforts to preserve the history, identity and contributions of tribal communities and pass their rich legacy on to future generations.

Two arrested from Uttarakhand for defrauding man of ₹2.75 lakh at Kashmere Gate Metro station

New Delhi, 15 November



In a challenging overnight operation spanning Delhi and Uttarakhand, the Delhi Police arrested two men accused of duping a person of ₹2.75 lakh at the Kashmere Gate Metro station. The police tracked the accused through CCTV footage and technical surveillance, finally apprehen- ding them in Chamoli district while they were travelling toward Badrinath.

The arrests were made by a joint team from the Special Staff Metro and Kashmere Gate Metro police station following an extensive investigation that involved analyzing multiple CCTV recordings and technical inputs.

According to the police, the incident occurred on November 10 near Gate No. 6 of Kashmere Gate Metro station, close to the X-ray screening machine. An FIR under Section 318(4) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita was registered on November 11, and an investigation was initiated. During the probe, investigators identified the two suspects and tracked their movements. The police found that the duo had allegedly fled on a newly purchased motorcycle and were heading towards Badrinath in Uttarakhand.

Acting on the leads, the joint team followed their route and searched several hotels and accommodation facilities across Chamoli district. After an overnight pursuit, police apprehended both accused.

The arrested accused have been identified as Mohit Mishra (24), a resident of Gonda in Uttar Pradesh, currently living in Sonia Vihar, Delhi, and Satyam Singh (25), also from Gonda and residing in Sonia Vihar. Mishra was working as a private car driver in Shakarpur, while Singh had earlier worked as a security guard in Sadar Bazar.

Police said Satyam Singh was previously involved in a robbery case registered at Shastri Park police station in 2022. One motorcycle and ₹20,500 in cash have been recovered from the accused. The police are now investigating the case to recover the remaining cheated amount of ₹2.75 lakh and ascertain whether the duo was involved in other similar offences.

The operation was conducted under the supervision of the Inspector, Special Staff Metro, with the guidance of the DCP, Metro. Further investigation is underway.

Crime Branch busts family-run heroin cartel with the arrest of six; 2.25 kg drug worth ₹5 crore seized

New Delhi, 15 November

The Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) of the Delhi Police Crime Branch busted an interstate family-run heroin supply network, arresting six people and recovering 2.25 kg of heroin, estimated to be worth around ₹5 crore in the illegal market. The police also seized ₹73,400 in suspected drug proceeds, two Mahindra Thar SUVs, two motorcycles, a scooty and five mobile phones.

Significantly, this case is the first FIR registered at the newly-notified ANTF police station of the Crime Branch, which became operational on September 10, 2026.

The operation began on September 11 following a tip-off that Rohit Divakar, his wife and his brother Vishal were allegedly transporting heroin on two-wheelers from Signature Bridge towards Khajuri Khas. A police team intercepted them near the U-turn on Main Wazirabad Road around 8.55 am. During a search, 2.006 kg of heroin was recovered from a backpack carried by Vishal. The three were arrested and two motorcycles seized.

Further investigation led the police to Afroj Ali, the alleged receiver of the consignment, who was arrested from a guest house in Roorkee, Uttarakhand, on September 15. During interrogation, he disclosed that he had procured heroin from Rohit and his wife and concealed a portion at his flat in Shalimar Garden, Ghaziabad. A subsequent search led to the recovery of another 104 grams of heroin.

The police subsequently arrested another accused, Chirag (23), from Burari on September 25. During his search, ₹37,400 suspected to be proceeds of drug trafficking was recovered. Another 140 grams of heroin was seized from a packet concealed in a bathroom adjoining his premises. A scooty was also taken into possession. Police said Chirag was previously involved in two NDPS cases registered in 2025 and 2026 and had allegedly resumed drug trafficking while out on interim bail on medical grounds.

The sixth accused, Gaurav, was arrested from Shalimar Garden Extension-I in Ghaziabad on November 10. Though no narcotics were recovered from him, police seized ₹36,000 suspected to be drug money and a Mahindra Thar allegedly purchased using proceeds of narcotics trade. He reportedly disclosed that he procured heroin from Afroj Ali and sold it in small packets in the Nand Gram area of Ghaziabad.

Investigators have also uncovered extensive family connections among the accused and their alleged involvement in other narcotics cases. Police said Afroj Ali is related to several accused and wanted persons in other Crime Branch NDPS cases. The mother and sister of Rohit's wife are also allegedly accused in another narcotics case.

The three persons initially arrested had no previous criminal involvement, but investigators found that other members of their extended family were allegedly involved in drug trafficking.

Fire breaks out at scooter spare parts shop near Green Park Metro Station; two women rescued

New Delhi, 15 November



A fire broke out at a scooter spare parts and accessories shop on the ground floor of a three-storey building near Green Park Metro station on Sunday afternoon, prompting the Delhi Fire Service (DFS) to deploy nine emergency vehicles.

Two women trapped on the upper floors were safely rescued by fire personnel. A Tata Nano car was also damaged in the blaze. No casualties were reported.

According to the Delhi Fire Service, a call reporting the fire at R-1, near Green Park Metro station, was received at around 3.10 pm. Initially, two water tenders, a water bowser and a breathing support vehicle were rushed to the spot.

As the fire spread, additional resources were mobilised, taking the total deployment to nine units, including four water tenders, three water bowsers, one breathing support vehicle and one multipurpose vehicle.

On reaching the spot, firefighters found that the blaze had broken out in a ground-floor shop dealing in scooter spare parts and accessories. Helmets, furniture, documents and other items kept inside the shop were gutted in the fire.

During the operation, two women trapped on the first and second floors of the G+2 building were safely rescued by DFS personnel using a ladder. They were identified as Shobha Devi (61) and Beena (32).

The fire also engulfed a Tata Nano car bearing registration number DL 3C BN 1861, which was parked on the premises.

The blaze was brought under control by around 3.45 pm. The fire service units returned to their base at around 6 pm after completing the operation under the supervision of Station Officer Mukul Bharadwaj.

The exact cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained.



Odisha Pavilion

People visit stalls at the Odisha Pavilion during the India International Trade Fair (ITTF) at Bharat Mandapam, in New Delhi on Sunday. ANI

DDA to celebrate World Heritage Week from November 19-21 with walks, cultural performances and workshops

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi, 15 November



The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) will organise a three-day celebration of World Heritage Week from November 19 to 21 at three prominent heritage sites in the national capital, featuring guided heritage walks, cultural performances and workshops on traditional art forms.

The celebrations, being organised in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi' and on the directions of Delhi Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu, aim to promote awareness about the city's historical legacy and encourage greater public participation in heritage conservation.

will cover Deer Park in Hauz Khas on November 19, Mehrauli Archaeological Park on November 20 and Coronation Park on November 21, with activities designed to engage school students, university students and the general public.

The inaugural programme on November 19 will feature a at Deer Park, organised in association with the INTACH Delhi Chapter. Participants will explore historical structures, including Bagh-I-Alam ka Gumbad, Kali Gumti, Tohfe Wala Gumbad and Munda Gumbad, besides the Hauz Khas Tank and Fort.

The walk will familiarise and architectural significance of these monuments, while also highlighting the importance of conserving and rejuvenating traditional water bodies.

On November 20, a guided heritage walk for the general public will be organised at Mehrauli Archaeological Park. The walk will cover prominent sites such as Jamali Kamali, Metcalfe Folly, Balban's Tomb, Metcalfe Boathouse and Quli Khan's Tomb, besides the Mehrauli Interpretation Centre.

The day's programme will conclude with a cultural evening featuring a performance by internationally renowned violinist Johar Ali Khan.

The final day, November 21, will focus on the relationship between heritage and creativity at Coronation Park. A heritage University and Dr BR Ambedkar University will explore themes of heritage and sustainability, including iconography in Indian art and architectural heritage.

Students will also participate in hands-on block printing and calligraphy workshops, offering them an opportunity to experience traditional Indian art forms.

The latest initiative builds on DDA's efforts to involve citizens, particularly younger generations, in understanding and preserving Delhi's cultural and architectural legacy.

Earlier in April, the authority observed the International Day of Monuments and Sites at Mehrauli Archaeological Park through activities aimed at familiarising students and visitors with the capital's

Delhi Police traces and reunites three missing children with families under 'Operation Milap'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi, 15 November

In three separate operations, the Central District Police traced three missing children and reunited them with their families under Operation Milap. The children, aged 11, 15 and another minor with a mental disability, were found safe through swift police action, public coordination, inter-station assistance and detailed CCTV footage analysis. In one case, police traced an 11-year-old boy within just 55 minutes of receiving information about his disappearance.

In the first case, reported on November 12, an 11-year-old boy went missing after leaving his residence in Sita Ram Bazar that morning. A team from Hauz Qazi police station immediately launched a search, alerted neighbouring police child's details through local residents' welfare associations, market associations and social media groups. After questioning residents, shopkeepers and children in the area, the police traced him in Lal Kuan within 55 minutes. He was subsequently reunited with his parents after verification and necessary formalities.

In the second incident, a father approached Hauz Qazi police station around 12.30 am on November 13, reporting that his son, who has a mental disability, had been missing since November 11. Police registered an FIR under Section 137(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and circulated the child's details through wireless messages and other communication channels. Police subsequently traced the child with the assistance of Welcome police station. A with his father and brought him back safely. After a medical examination, he was handed over to his family.

Following a complaint, police registered an FIR at the Hauz Qazi police station on November 12. A team examined CCTV footage from the area where the boy was last seen and tracked his movements camera-to-camera. Following a complaint, an FIR was registered with the Hauz Qazi police, who traced and recovered the boy on November 14.

He was found safe and unharmed and was reunited with his father after a medical examination and completion of legal formalities. The operations were carried out by separate teams from Hauz Qazi police station under the supervision of SHO Amrendra Kumar Suman and the guidance of ACP Sanjeev

CM offers prayers to setting sun on Yamuna banks, reviews Chhath arrangements at Sonia Vihar

New Delhi, 15 November


SUBRATA DUTTA

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday offered prayers to the setting sun at the Chhath Ghat on the banks of the Yamuna in Sonia Vihar, praying for the happiness, prosperity and good health of all residents of the national capital as thousands of devotees celebrated the festival of Chhath.

The Chief Minister performed rituals and offered arghya to Lord Surya and prayed to Chhathi Maiya for the well-being of every family. She also inspected Chhath ghats along the Yamuna by boat, interacted with devotees and extended festive greetings to those gathered at the riverbanks.

Describing Chhath as a festival that reflects India's cultural traditions and collective spirit, Gupta said it was not merely a religious observance but also a celebration of faith, discipline, cleanliness, dedication and social harmony. "Chhath is a unique celebration of faith, discipline, cleanliness, dedication and social harmony. The festival teaches us to respect nature and the environment. The tradition of worshipping both the setting and the rising sun conveys the message of expressing gratitude for every phase of life," she elaborated.

The Chief Minister noted that the festival brings entire communities together, with people participating in the rituals and celebrations irrespective of their backgrounds.

Emphasising the contribution of the Purvanchali community to Delhi's growth, Gupta said the government was committed to ensuring that people celebrating Chhath in the capital felt at home and had access to adequate facilities. "Delhi is home to every Purvanchali. The community has made a significant contribution to the development and growth of the capital through its hard work and dedication. Providing them with a sense of belonging and better facilities during festivals is the government's commit- ment," she asserted.

She said the Delhi government had undertaken measures to improve facilities at Chhath ghats along the Yamuna, with a focus on providing devotees clean surroundings, better infrastructure and convenient access to designated locations for performing rituals.

The development of a Chhath Ghat along the Munak Canal in North Delhi, she said, was another initiative aimed at addressing the long-standing demands and sentiments of the Purvanchali community.

The government was working towards ensuring that devotees had access to organised Chhath ghats in different parts of the city so that they would not have to travel long distances to offer prayers, she added.

Gupta also highlighted the arrangements made for people travelling to Bihar to celebrate the festival with their families, saying special buses had been arranged between Delhi and Bihar to facilitate their journeys.

"It is natural for people to wish to visit their home states and be with their families during festivals. Keeping this in mind, special buses have been arranged between Delhi and Bihar so that people can celebrate Chhath with their loved ones and return to the capital conveniently," she said.

The Chief Minister said the government's efforts were aimed not only at providing infrastructure and transport facilities but also at ensuring that people celebrating Chhath in Delhi experienced the warmth of their homes and cultural traditions.

Vijender Gupta joins devotees in Chhath Puja, stresses safe and dignified arrangements at ghats

New Delhi, 15 November

Delhi Assembly Speaker and Rohini MLA Vijender Gupta on Sunday participated in Chhath Puja celebrations and joined devotees in offering prayers to the setting Sun, emphasising the need for safe, clean and dignified arrangements at the ghats for those observing the festival.

Describing Chhath Mahaparv as a profound expression of faith, discipline and reverence for nature, Gupta said every devotee should be able to perform the sacred rituals with dignity, safety and convenience.

"Chhath Mahaparv reflects the enduring strength of our cultural traditions and the deep spiritual bond between humanity and nature. Every devotee must be able to perform the sacred rituals with dignity, safety and convenience," he said. During his visit to the ghats, the Speaker interacted with devotees and local residents, extended festive greetings and conveyed his best wishes to families observing the four-day festival.

Highlighting the spiritual significance of Chhath, Gupta said the worship of the Sun symbolised gratitude towards nature and acknowledged its indispensable role in sustaining life. He described the festival as a celebration of devotion, purity, gratitude and collective harmony.

He also appreciated the efforts of local communities and volunteers in facilitating the celebrations and stressed the importance of maintaining cleanliness, ensuring public convenience and putting adequate safety arrangements in place, particularly for women, children and elderly devotees.

Gupta called for continued coordination among civic agencies to ensure that devotees could participate in the concluding rituals without inconvenience.

Chhath Mahaparv, observed from November 13 to 16, entered its most significant phase on Sunday with Sandhya Arghya, when devotees offered prayers to the setting Sun while standing in water bodies.

The festival will conclude on Monday morning with Usha Arghya, when devotees offer prayers to the rising Sun, marking the culmination of the four-day observance and the traditional fast.

Parvesh Sahib Singh celebrates Chhath Puja at residence, offers prayers to Chhathi Maiya



SNS

New Delhi, 15 November

Delhi Cabinet Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh celebrated Chhath Puja at his residence on Sunday, participating in the traditional rituals and offering Arghya to the setting Sun along with his family.

His wife, Swati Verma, welcomed devotees and their family members who visited the residence to celebrate the festival. Special arrangements were made to facilitate the devotees in performing the rituals.

Extending his greetings to people celebrating Chhath Mahaparv, Singh said the festival was a beautiful expression of faith, devotion, folk culture and gratitude towards nature.

He said Chhath reflected the values of discipline, dedication, cleanliness and collective harmony, adding that the devotion and commitment of devotees made it a unique and cherished part of India's cultural heritage.

In a post on X, Singh highlighted the festive atmosphere across the national capital and said, "There is a wonderful atmosphere of enthusiasm and excitement across Delhi for the grand Chhath festival."

He further said the efforts made by the Delhi government to provide better and more elaborate arrangements than last year were visible at Chhath ghats across the city.

Singh also prayed to Chhathi Maiya to bless every family in Delhi and across the country with happiness, peace, prosperity and good health.

Lakhs of devotees offer prayers to Sun God at 1,482 ghats

New Delhi, 15 November

As Delhi witnesses a wave of religious fervour with lakhs of devotees celebrating Chhath Puja—a significant festival for people from Bihar, Jharkhand and eastern Uttar Pradesh—preparations have transformed several parts of the national capital into vibrant centres of devotion. Devotees are observing rigorous fasts and offering prayers to the Sun God at locations ranging from the banks of the Yamuna to neighbourhood ponds and specially constructed temporary ghats.

The four-day festival began on November 13 and culminated on November 16. The most significant rituals were performed on Sunday evening, when devotees offered Sandhya Arghya to the setting sun, followed by Usha Arghya to the rising sun on Monday morning. The devotees, particularly women 'vratis', observe a strict fast, often without food and water, praying for their families' well-being, prosperity and longevity.

Chhath is distinguished by its emphasis on nature, purity and discipline. Unlike many other Hindu festivals, the worship is performed in the open, usually standing in water and offering prayers directly to the Sun God. Traditional offerings include thekua, fruits, sugarcane, coconuts and other seasonal produce arranged in bamboo baskets and soops.

Recognising the scale of the celebrations, the Delhi government arranged for 1,482 ghats across 996 locations this year, compared with 1,326 last year. These include 81 permanent ghats, 1,372 temporary ghats and 29 sites along the Yamuna. As many as 74 agencies have been engaged and 155 works undertaken to facilitate the celebrations.

A major addition this year is an approximately 11-km-long Chhath ghat along the Munak Canal in north Delhi. The stretch has been developed with concrete steps, paved roads, lighting, toilets and changing facilities for devotees. At prominent locations such as Hathi Ghat near ITO, Sonia Vihar, Wazirabad and Vasudev Ghat, special arrangements have been made, including barricades, tents, lighting and sanitation facilities.

Security has also been strengthened across the city, with more than 5,000 police personnel being deployed on November 15 and 16. Special attention is being given to the Yamuna ghats and crowded locations in East, Northeast and Shahdara districts.

Delhi Metro services to commence at 4:30 am today for Chhath Puja

New Delhi, 15 November

Delhi Metro will roll out an early-morning service schedule on Monday, starting operations at 4:30 am across all terminal stations—two hours ahead of its usual timing—to facilitate the movement of devotees heading to riverbanks and other designated locations for offering Usha Arghya on the occasion of Chhath Puja.


FILE PHOTO

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said services would begin simultaneously from all terminal stations across its network at 4:30 am to ensure devotees reach the ghats in time for the morning rituals.

During the extended early-morning period, trains will operate at 15-minute intervals on all metro lines until regular revenue services begin as per the scheduled timetable.

Announcing the arrangement, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the special schedule was put in place to ensure that devotees, particularly women, senior citizens and families, do not face difficulties while travelling to the ghats.

In a post on X, Gupta said the government made the arrangement keeping in mind the convenience of millions of devotees observing the festival and those preparing to offer prayers to Chhathi Maiya and the rising Sun.

She said the government was paying attention to every aspect of public convenience to ensure devotees could reach the ghats on time and perform the rituals without disruption.

The early-morning metro services aim to ease transportation for devotees observing the concluding phase of the four-day Chhath festival, during which worshippers offer Usha Arghya to the rising Sun on the final morning.

The special arrangement is expected to provide an additional commuting option for devotees travelling across the national capital during the early hours.

Eight highly poisonous chlorine gas cylinders illegally stored near Chhath ghat seized in Delhi

New Delhi, 15 November

The Delhi Police have busted an illegal storage facility containing highly poisonous chlorine gas cylinders in the Ranhola area of Outer Delhi and arrested a 45-year-old man in connection with the case.

Eight cylinders, each weighing approximately 1,519 kg (gross weight), were recovered from a partially constructed building near a designated Chhath Puja ghat in Shiv Vihar, Vikas Nagar.

According to DCP Vikram Singh (Outer District), the operation was carried out on November 14 by the Anti-Snatching and Burglary Cell of the Outer District Police, along with personnel from Ranhola police station, amid security arrangements for Chhath Puja.

The police said the team received a tip-off while patrolling about the alleged illegal storage of highly hazardous chlorine gas without a valid licence.

Acting on the information, a team led by Inspector Ritesh, in-charge of the Anti-Snatching and Burglary Cell, conducted a raid at the premises. The building was allegedly being used by Hasan Ansari alias Babu, a resident of Palam, Delhi, to store the gas cylinders.

During the inspection, the police asked Ansari to produce a valid licence or permission issued by the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO). However, he allegedly failed to produce any such authorisation.

The police recovered and seized eight chlorine gas cylinders from the premises. Officials said the unauthorised storage of such a highly poisonous substance in close proximity to a designated Chhath Puja ghat could have posed a serious threat to public safety, particularly during the festival, when large numbers of devotees gather near water bodies.



Sandhya Arghya

Devotees gather at Sonia Vihar on the banks of Yamuna river to offer 'Sandhya Arghya' to the setting sun on the 3rd day of Chhath Puja in New Delhi on Sunday. ANI

Delhi wakes up to clearer blue skies as AQI improves to 290; temperatures set to dip

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi, 15 November


FILE PHOTO

Delhi woke up to clearer blue skies on Sunday, offering some respite from the thick blanket of smog that had enveloped the national capital in the aftermath of Diwali, even as air quality remained in the 'poor' category with the 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) settling at 290 in the later part of the day.

The improvement came after several days of hazardous pollution levels, with the city's air quality showing a gradual decline in pollution intensity. However, the relief remained limited as 34 of the 58 monitoring stations recorded 'poor' air quality, while 23 continued to remain in the 'very poor' category. One station reported 'moderate' air quality. NSIT Dwarka recorded the highest pollution level with an AQI of 364, placing it in the 'very poor' category. The city's AQI had stood at 350 in the morning, according to the Sameer app, indicating an improvement over the course of the day. The relatively clearer conditions marked a departure from the dense smog witnessed over several preceding days, when pollution levels had remained elevated across large parts of Delhi.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a gradual fall in temperatures over the coming days, signalling the onset of cooler conditions in the national capital.

According to the IMD, the maximum temperature is expected to decline by 2-3 degrees Celsius over the next three days, while minimum temperatures are likely to fall below normal by 2-3 degrees Celsius during the next 24 hours, with no significant change thereafter.

At the Safdarjung observatory, Delhi's base weather station, the maximum temperature on Sunday was recorded at 29.4 degrees Celsius, while the minimum settled at 18.6 degrees Celsius. The minimum temperature was 5.1 degrees above normal, reflecting relatively warmer nights despite the approaching winter conditions.

The maximum temperature was 0.9 degrees above normal. The city had witnessed very light rainfall or drizzle at several places during the preceding 24 hours, while shallow fog was reported at many locations during the morning.

The IMD has forecast mainly clear skies for Monday, with maximum and minimum temperatures likely to range between 26 and 28 degrees Celsius and 14 and 16 degrees Celsius, respectively. Mist or shallow fog is expected at many places during morning hours, with moderate fog possible at isolated locations.

3 arrested for duping woman of ₹71 lakh in 'digital arrest' scam

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi, 15 November

In a major crackdown on an organised cyber fraud network, the Delhi Police's Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations (IFSO) unit arrested three persons for allegedly duping a woman of ₹71 lakh in a 'digital arrest' scam. They impersonated an IPS officer, fabricated a ₹6.5-crore money laundering case against her and threatened to send her to jail.

The arrests have also exposed a network of mule bank accounts allegedly used to receive, withdraw and divert the proceeds of cyber fraud. Three mobile phones purchased using the cheated money have been recovered.

According to Gaurav Tyagi DCP IFSO, the fraud came to light after the victim lodged a complaint stating that she had received an internet-based video call from a person claiming to be an IPS officer posted in Mumbai. The caller allegedly told her that a credit card had been issued in her name and was being used for money laundering involving transactions worth approximately ₹6.5 crore.

The fraudster then threatened her with arrest and judicial custody, creating an atmosphere of fear and panic. She was told that she could avoid legal action by cooperating with the purported investigation and transferring money for verification. Believing the claims and fearing arrest, the woman transferred a total of ₹71 lakh through two bank transactions. An e-FIR was registered at the Special Cell police station on October 8, 2026, following which the IFSO unit took up the investigation.

A dedicated team was formed to investigate the case. During the probe, the team analysed the financial transactions and traced the money to multiple bank accounts allegedly being operated as part of a mule account network. The investigation led the police to Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh, where three accused were arrested. They include Aman Soni, 28, his 30-year-old sister and another woman aged 31.

Police said the accused allegedly acted as account facilitators for their handlers, providing bank accounts to receive and divert money collected through cyber fraud. Investigators found that approximately ₹15 lakh had been withdrawn and distributed among the accused and their associates.

BRIEFLY

Israel says it killed a top Hamas commander in Gaza:

Tel Aviv: Israel said it killed a top Hamas commander in an airstrike on southern Gaza. A Hamas statement confirmed the killing of Samir Mahmoud Hassan Abu Younis, commander of the group's Rafah Brigade, and said a funeral would be held for him later in the day.

The Israeli military said Abu Younis was killed in a strike just after midnight Saturday.

It said he had been working to build up Hamas and directing plans "to advance and carry out terror attacks." Two months earlier, his predecessor was also killed in an Israeli strike.

The military said it targeted other Hamas militants in Sunday's strike but provided no additional details.

Jordan sentences three men to death over deadly church attack:

Amman: Jordan's State Security Court on Sunday sentenced three men to death for a deadly shooting at a Greek Orthodox Church in the city of Karak last month, state-run *Al Mamlaka TV* said.

The men were charged with "carrying out terrorist acts." The 23 October attack was one of the deadliest on Jordan's Christian minority in decades, with nine people killed and dozens more wounded.

The attackers targeted mourners attending a funeral at St. George's Church in Karak, about 90 kilometres (55 miles) south of the capital, Amman.

The three defendants, identified by authorities as two brothers and their brother-in-law, were arrested three days after the attack following a shootout with security forces in Karak. All three were wounded.

Saudi forces intercept 2 missiles targeting Riyadh, destroy 3 drones:

Riyadh: Saudi air defence forces intercepted and destroyed two ballistic missiles launched towards Riyadh by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi militia and shot down three drones targeting the Kingdom's Eastern Province early on Sunday, the Saudi-led coalition said.

A civil defence alert was issued in Riyadh at 4:08 a.m, warning residents of an incoming aerial threat. Several loud explosions were heard minutes later, followed by an all-clear notification. Maj Gen Turki Al-Maliki, spokesman for the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen, said in a post on X that air defences intercepted and destroyed the two missiles targeting the capital. The coalition also shot down three drones launched towards the Eastern Province, he said.

The attacks come amid a series of Houthi strikes targeting Saudi airports, military installations and energy infrastructure, raising concerns over the security of the Kingdom's critical assets.

A recent attack damaged an administrative building belonging to state oil giant Saudi Aramco in Riyadh's financial district. The Eastern Province, which holds most of Saudi Arabia's oil and gas reserves and is home to Aramco's headquarters, has also faced repeated attacks in recent weeks.

South-east Asian leaders open annual summit with major conflicts and their impact topping the agenda

AGENCIES
Manila, 15 November



South-east Asian leaders opened their annual summit in the Philippine capital Manila on Sunday for three days of talks, including dialogues with world leaders led by US President Donald Trump, whose crucial trip to Asia could help boost his standing after his party's defeat in the midterm elections.

The talks by the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and their expanded discussions with Asian and Western heads of state would focus on the world's most troubling conflicts led by the war in West Asia, according to drafts of post-summit communiques seen by *The Associated Press*.

Trump is expected to land in Manila with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Tuesday afternoon, after the main ASEAN summit meetings have concluded and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr turns over the regional bloc's rotating annual leadership to Singapore, Philippine officials said.

The ASEAN leaders are likely to renew calls for self-restraint and peaceful resolutions of conflicts, including longstanding disputes in the South China Sea and a civil war in Myanmar. They also are expected to press efforts to shield their economies and citizens from continuing fallout from intractable global conflicts.

"We reaffirmed our shared commitment to upholding international law, including the United Nations Charter," the leaders' draft statement says. The statement also underlines the "importance of the peaceful resolution of disputes, upholding freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea, including the right of transit passage in straits used for international navigation."

Marcos said it's crucial that despite the 11-nation regional bloc's diversity, it has remained committed to remaining united in the face of headwinds.

"That commitment matters even more as the waters around us turn on shifting tides, geo-political tensions, economic uncertainty, new technologies, climate change and transnational threats," Marcos said in his opening remarks before ASEAN counterparts in a heavily secured convention center by Manila Bay.

Marcos warned problems across the world "are reshaping our region faster than any one country can respond to alone."

Australia, Philippines sign Defence Pact to boost maritime security:

Manila: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Sunday announced a new Defence Cooperation Agreement with the Philippines to strengthen maritime security, enhance intelligence and information-sharing, and deepen military ties amid growing regional security challenges. Albanese witnessed the signing of the agreement during his visit to the Australian naval vessel HMAS *Stalwart* in Manila, as the two countries marked the 80th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Zelenskyy: US floated Donbas withdrawal in exchange for Ukraine's NATO membership

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA
Kyiv, 15 November

For the first time, the United States has floated the idea of Ukraine withdrawing its remaining forces from the eastern Donbas region in exchange for NATO membership, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said, while making clear that Kyiv would not surrender its territory.

Zelenskyy said US negotiators have raised the proposal for the "first time" during discussions on a possible settlement of the war with Russia that is in its fifth year. "The Americans raised a question: 'What if Ukraine joins NATO? Would Ukraine withdraw from Donbas?' This was the first time this had been raised," Zelenskyy said in remarks to journalists released by his office on Saturday.

He emphasised that he would never make any territorial concessions but would put a concrete proposal to the Ukrainian people if it included "comprehensive security guarantees," a strong Ukrainian military and support for the country's reconstruction.

"If the American side confirms precisely this to us, together with other NATO partners, then I will ask our Ukrainian society what it thinks: do we accept it or not? I have no right to make that decision on my own. But we need specifics, and we don't have them yet," he said.

US air travel should normalise soon, FAA says, after ground stop triggers mass cancellations

AGENCIES
Washington, 15 November



Airlines cancelled thousands of flights across the US on Saturday as they worked to recover from a nationwide ground stop that left passengers scrambling for seats and disrupted travel around the world.

The US air travel schedule should be back to normal by the end of Sunday, two days after what was the nation's longest ground stop in 25 years, Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Bryan Bedford said, declaring the "worst is behind us."

The problem began when contractor L3Harris Technologies Inc. was replacing a section of the air traffic control system's old copper wire with new fiber wire, somehow causing the system to overload, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said.

The work led to "intermittent" communications and radar gaps, prompting the government to shut down air traffic for more than four hours. Officials were investigating whether contractor "incompetence" or a faulty router was the cause," he said. "Our contractor didn't meet the moment or the equipment didn't meet the moment," Duffy said.

L3Harris said in a statement that it was supporting the FAA in the investigation to understand what led to the ground stop and the company takes seriously the impact to travellers, airlines and air traffic operations.

The FAA normally consults its own technicians in advance and asks them to assess the risks of any upgrades or repairs but that didn't happen in this case, the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, the union representing the agency's technicians, said in a Saturday statement.

The nationwide stop was the first since January 2023, when a key FAA computer system that sends notices to pilots malfunctioned, and the second since the 11 September, 2001, attacks.

SpaceX catches returning spacecraft from orbit in launch tower arms; Musk hails feat

AGENCIES
Texas, 15 November



In a landmark moment for space exploration, SpaceX on Saturday (local time) made history by successfully bringing its *Starship* spacecraft back from orbit and catching it upright in the mechanical arms of its launch tower, an unprecedented manoeuvre that could reshape the future of rocket reusability.

The achievement marks the first time an orbital rocket's upper stage has returned from space and made a controlled and upright landing at its launch site, with the giant mechanical arms of SpaceX's launch tower, nicknamed *Mechazilla*, catching the spacecraft during its descent.

Celebrating the achievement, SpaceX CEO Elon Musk congratulated the engineers and teams behind the mission, acknowledging their efforts in making what appeared to be a science-fiction-like spectacle a reality.

NASA administrator Jared Isaacman also congratulated Musk and the SpaceX team, describing the achievement as an almost magical moment that could bring more people closer to believing in the possibilities of space exploration.

Voyager 1 to make distance history, set to become first human-made object to travel one light-day from Earth

AGENCIES
Texas, 15 November



Nearly five decades after embarking on its historic journey, NASA's *Voyager 1* spacecraft is poised to achieve an unprecedented distance milestone, becoming the first human-made object to travel one light-day away from Earth ~ a distance that light itself takes 24 hours to cover.

The robotic spacecraft, which has travelled farther from Earth than any other human-made object since its launch in 1977, is expected to cross the landmark on Wednesday, 18 November, at 5:16:07 a.m. EST (3:46:07 p.m. IST), according to NASA.

A light-day represents approximately 16 billion miles (26 billion kilometres), marking another remarkable achievement for the spacecraft that left the solar system years ago and is now travelling through interstellar space.

According to NASA, *Voyager 1* will have taken 49 years, two months and 11 days to travel this distance from Earth, making it the first spacecraft to reach the milestone. The achievement is particularly significant given the enormous distances involved in space exploration. A light-day measures the distance that light, travelling at approximately 186,000 miles per second, covers in 24 hours. NASA explained that the milestone is about distance rather than time, with the spacecraft continuing its journey through interstellar space at nearly 38,000 miles per hour (61,000 kilometres per hour).

To put the distance into perspective, sunlight takes approximately eight minutes and 20 seconds to travel the 93 million miles (150 million kilometres) between the Sun and Earth. Similarly, light takes around four hours and 10 minutes to travel between Earth and Neptune, the most distant planet in the solar system.

LEISURE

BEETLE BAILEY



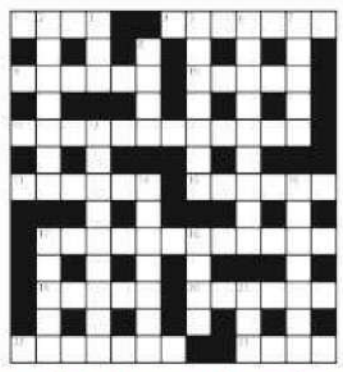
TIGER



DADDY DAZE



10 MINIUTE CROSSWORD



Answers to "?" clues are suggested by words forming the puzzle's title: Ub FOR 11

ACROSS

1 Notion (4)
4 Best (7)
9 ? (6)
10 Result (5)
11 See title (8,4)
13 Reviewer (6)
15 Excused (6)
17 Road (12)
19 ? (5)
20 Buck's fizz (US) (6)
22 Try (7)
23 Heap (4)

DOWN

2 Percussionist (7)
3 Request (3)
5 Foreword (7)
6 Notwithstanding (2,5,2)
7 Overturn (5)
8 Young horse (4)
12 Reasoned exposition (9)
14 Type of photograph (5-2)
16 ? (7)
17 Unspoken (5)
18 ? (4)
21 Cleaning implement (3)

SOLUTIONS TO LAST SATURDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS: 1 Teller, 4 Lye (Tell a lie), 7 Less, 8 Bulletin, 9 Building site, 11 Revue, 12 Pumps, 16 Make it snappy, 18 Sombrero, 20 Unit, 21 Dot, 22 Papers.

DOWN: 1 Tremble, 2 Lassitude, 3 Embody, 4 Lie, 5 Exist, 6 Plank, 10 Sculpture, 13 Physics, 14 Steed, 15 Angora, 17 Avoid, 19 Bat.

By arrangement with The Independent Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

King Classic Sudoku

		3		8				4
	7		3	1		8		
	9	2		4				
3	1						9	
		9	1	5	7		6	
		5	9					1
				3		1		
	3		5	7			4	
	6		8		1			

Difficulty: ★★★ 7/17

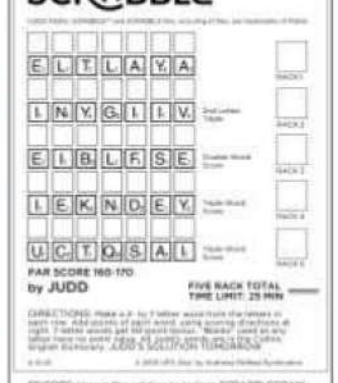
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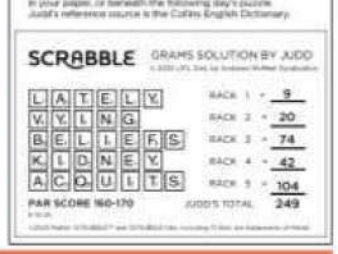
Solution to yesterday's puzzle

8	2	1	7	6	9	5	3	4
7	4	9	5	2	3	8	1	6
3	5	6	1	8	4	2	7	9
4	1	7	3	9	5	6	2	8
9	6	2	8	1	7	4	5	3
5	8	3	2	4	6	7	9	1
2	7	4	9	3	8	1	6	5
1	3	8	6	5	2	9	4	7
6	9	5	4	7	1	3	8	2

Sudoku is a number placing puzzle based on a 9×9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that no row, no column and no 3×3 box contains the same number. The difficulty level increases through the week.

SCRABBLE





NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- Vidyasagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur 22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800112511
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
- Haryana Roadways 23861262
- Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23325320
- Punjab Roadways 23867842, 23860626
- Rajasthan Roadways 23864470
- U.P. Roadways 23868709

FLIGHT INQUIRY

- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001801407
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airport 011-25671580; Terminal I-B 25671576, Palam Road 25671579, 18001803838
- JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 39841111
- EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 33773377
- Air Canada Flight Inquiry 25656421/25656431 Reservation 41528181
- Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport)
- Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

Foreign investors pump ₹84,290 crore into Indian equities in Nov first half

New Delhi, 15 November



Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) made a strong comeback to Indian equities in the first fortnight of November, investing a net Rs 84,290 crore during the first half of November, after withdrawing funds for two consecutive months. The sharp reversal in foreign investor sentiment comes amid easing crude oil prices, improving domestic earnings visibility and attractive valuations in select large-cap stocks, even as global markets grapple with concerns over artificial intelligence (AI)-related stocks.

According to data from depositories, FPIs were net sellers in Indian equities in September and October, withdrawing Rs 35,861 crore and Rs 34,843 crore, respectively. The latest investment was made over nine trading sessions between 2 November and 13 November, indicating a significant improvement in foreign fund flows into domestic markets.

With the latest round of buying, cumulative FPI outflows from Indian equities in 2026 have narrowed to approximately Rs 2.1 lakh crore, compared with nearly Rs 3 lakh crore a few weeks ago. The turnaround suggests that foreign investors are beginning to reassess their exposure to Indian equities after a period of sustained selling pressure.

One key factor supporting the return of foreign capital has been the decline in international crude oil prices. Brent crude fell by around 13 per cent in the first week of November to nearly $97 per barrel, easing concerns over India's import bill, inflation and pressure on the country's current account deficit.

India remains heavily dependent on imported crude oil to meet its energy requirements. A sustained decline in global oil prices can help reduce input costs for businesses, ease inflationary pressures and provide greater room for macroeconomic stability. This, in turn, can improve investor confidence in Indian financial markets. Easing geopolitical concerns have also contributed to the improvement in sentiment. Reduced uncertainty around global energy supplies has helped lower the risk premium associated with crude oil, providing some relief to emerging markets such as India that remain vulnerable to external energy shocks.

Another factor attracting foreign investors is the valuation comfort available in select large-cap stocks. After periods of sustained selling, corrections in several heavyweight stocks have made their valuations more attractive, creating opportunities for overseas funds to increase exposure to Indian equities.

Improved visibility on domestic corporate earnings has further supported the investment case. Expectations of better earnings performance, combined with India's domestic consumption potential and relatively resilient economic outlook, have helped strengthen the appeal of select Indian companies.

Meanwhile, the global technology sector has witnessed volatility amid concerns over elevated valuations of artificial intelligence-linked companies. The global AI-related sell-off has prompted investors to reassess their portfolios and risk exposure, potentially influencing the allocation of capital across markets and sectors.

India, Egypt set to explore preferential trade agreement or an FTA: Piyush Goyal

AGENCIES
Cairo, 15 November



Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday that India and Egypt will now work on the Terms of Reference and examine the potential of either a Preferential Trade Agreement or a free trade agreement (FTA).

He said that there are immense opportunities for India and Egypt to strengthen trade and investments in the next five years, adding that the presence of over 700 registered Indian companies in Egypt reflects the growing depth of business ties between the two nations.

Speaking to *agencies* on the sidelines of the India-Egypt Business Forum Meeting here, the minister said The relations between our leaders are very good, and the ties between our business communities are strong. "Furthermore, the civilisations and histories of both nations are thousands of years old. So, along with working to bring both ancient civilisations closer together, we are also bringing trade and industry closer," Goyal told *agencies*.

Goyal further stated that an Indian company informed "us just yesterday that they have invested approximately Rs 1,200 crore into an international seed company, which also has manufacturing in Egypt."

Over 300 companies from India and Egypt across sectors met under one roof at the India-Egypt Business Forum.

"This reflects the enthusiasm for the possibilities and the potential that our partnership can unlock. I spoke about India's scale, and robust consumer market can complement Egypt's strategic location, which can generate great outcomes across fields like trade and investment, education, healthcare, engineering, manufacturing, technology solutions, and much more," said Goyal.

He met Dr Mohamed Farid Saleh, Egypt's Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade, and discussed about expanding bilateral trade, boosting investments and finding new avenues of cooperation.

"The India-Egypt partnership is set for greater heights," said Goyal.

Goyal also addressed the India-Egypt Joint Business Council Meeting alongside Dr Mohamed Farid Saleh, Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade of Egypt.

The minister highlighted "the strong complementarities between our two economies and the significant potential for greater private sector participation".

RBI to review ₹3 lakh income limit for microfinance borrowers: Deputy Governor

New Delhi, 15 November

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is considering a review of the annual household income threshold of ₹3 lakh for microfinance borrowers, following demands from industry participants to revise the existing limit.

RBI Deputy Governor Shirish Chandra Murmu said the central bank would examine the need for a change based on its assessment of the sector and developments within the industry.

Speaking at an event organised by the Microfinance Institutions Network (MFIN) in Mumbai, Murmu said the review would depend on the evolving requirements of the sector. He also emphasised the need for microfinance lenders to strengthen their household income assessment and reporting mechanisms to ensure transparency and prevent potential misuse of any changes in regulatory limits.

"The microfinance industry has also been seeking changes to the existing 50 per cent cap on the fixed obligation-to-income ratio (FOIR), which restricts the share of a household's monthly income that can go towards loan repayments. Lenders have proposed excluding the principal component of certain loans while calculating the repayment-to-income ratio," he said.

However, Murmu cautioned against such a move, arguing that excluding specific loan components would undermine the purpose of the regulatory restriction and result in an inaccurate assessment of household indebtedness. He said the 50 per cent ceiling was designed to prevent borrowers from taking on excessive debt while ensuring they retained sufficient income for essential consumption and other living expenses.

He further pointed out that the existing threshold was already relatively liberal, considering the limited financial buffers available to low-income households and their vulnerability to economic disruptions. The regulatory cap, he said, should be viewed as a maximum permissible limit rather than a borrowing target for households.

Citing a recent study, the RBI Deputy Governor said: "Microfinance borrowers spend an average of 18.7 per cent of their monthly household income on loan repayments, while nearly two-thirds of their income goes towards consumption. Surveys conducted periodically by NABARD on rural economic conditions and sentiments also indicate that consumption and other expenses account for around three-fourths of monthly household income, leaving the remainder for debt repayment and savings."

Murmu also flagged the rising average ticket size of microfinance loans, noting that larger loans were gaining traction while demand for smaller-ticket loans appeared to be weakening. Although the trend could indicate greater lender confidence in borrowers with established credit histories, it also raises concerns about increasing household indebtedness.

FAA to audit India's aviation safety oversight framework this week

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi, 15 November

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will conduct a five-day review of India's aviation safety oversight system from 16 November, with the assessment expected to play a key role in determining the country's ability to retain its top-tier Category 1 safety rating.

The audit, scheduled from 16 to 20 November, comes at a time when India's aviation industry is expanding rapidly, placing greater responsibility on regulators to ensure compliance with international safety standards.

Under the FAA's International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) programme, the US regulator evaluates whether a country's civil aviation authority possesses the regulatory capability and institutional framework required to oversee airlines operating international services.

The assessment also determines whether carriers from that country can operate flights to the United States or enter into codeshare arrangements with US airlines.

The upcoming review will assess the effectiveness of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) in enforcing safety regulations and maintaining standards prescribed by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

India currently holds Category 1 status, the highest rating under the FAA's safety assessment framework.

The classification signifies that the country's aviation regulator complies with ICAO standards and has adequate oversight mechanisms in place.

At present, Air India is the only Indian carrier operating direct flights to destinations in the United States.

India last underwent an IASA review beginning in October 2021, when FAA officials inspected the DGCA's systems and procedures.

That review involved follow-up consultations in April 2022 and additional assessments in July and September of the same year.

In April 2023, the FAA announced that India had successfully retained its Category 1 rating.

The latest evaluation assumes added significance amid heightened scrutiny of aviation safety following a series of incidents involving aircraft and helicopters.

Last year, an Air India Boeing 787-8 operating a flight to London Gatwick crashed shortly after takeoff from Ahmedabad, resulting in the deaths of 260 people. Several helicopter accidents and other aviation-related incidents have also been reported this year, bringing renewed attention to safety oversight and regulatory effectiveness.

Cyient DLM, Hindustan Shipyard sign MoU for maritime, defence electronics:

Hyderabad: Cyient DLM and Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to explore collaboration in advanced electronics and technology solutions for maritime and defence applications. The partnership aims to leverage HSL's expertise in shipbuilding, ship repair and platform integration and Cyient DLM's capabilities in mission-critical electronics, embedded systems, power electronics and precision manufacturing, Hyderabad based company said in a release on Sunday.

The two organisations will explore opportunities in indigenisation, technology development, electronics manufacturing, testing and lifecycle support in line with the Centre's Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

The proposed areas of collaboration include obsolescence management, test and support systems, autonomous and unmanned maritime platforms, power electronics and artificial intelligence-enabled maintenance solutions. Cyient DLM Managing Director and CEO Rajendra Velagapudi said the partnership would bring together complementary capabilities in shipbuilding, platform integration and mission-critical electronics to support indigenous technology development and manufacturing in the maritime and defence sectors.

Ashok Leyland delivers record volumes, revenue, profit in Q2

Chennai, 15 November

CV makers Ashok Leyland delivered a strong performance in Q2, achieving all time high in commercial vehicle volumes, revenue and profits, reflecting sustained business momentum and operational strength.

Commercial Vehicle (CV) volumes surged 32 per cent to 64,677 units, compared with 49,116 units in the corresponding quarter last year. Revenue grew by an impressive 39 per cent to Rs.13,364 crore, up from Rs.9,588 crore, driven by strong market demand and better price realisation and mix. EBITDA stood at Rs.1,350 crore (10.1 per cent), as against Rs.1,162 crore (12.1 per cent), while PBT reached Rs.1,187 crore, compared to Rs.1,043 crore growing at 14 per cent , reflecting a significant improvement in financial performance. Profit After Tax (PAT) stood at Rs.869 crore as against Rs.771 crore, registering a 13 per cent growth.

Both the Medium and Heavy Commercial Vehicle (MHCV) and Light Commercial Vehicle (LCV) industry witnessed healthy growth during Q2. The company outperformed the industry in the MHCV segment, registering an impressive 44 per cent year-on-year growth in volumes to 37,958 units, compared to 26,307 units in the corresponding quarter last year, against industry growth of 39 per cent. In the LCV segment, volumes grew by 21 per cent to 21,371 units, up from 17,697 units in the previous year. The domestic MHCV truck volumes surged 48 per cent significantly outpacing industry growth of 41 per cent.

Our strong performance translated into a domestic truck market share of 31.5 per cent, representing a gain of 1.5 per cent during the quarter (excludes Defence). Ashok Leyland also maintained its market share in the bus segment (excludes EV buses). In the LCV business, VAHAN market share in the addressable segments improved to 13.6 per cent, reflecting a year-on-year gain of 0.3 per cent.

Export volumes for the quarter stood at 5,102 units, registering a 7 per cent year-on-year increase.

Patanjali Foods revenue rises 15.5 per cent to ₹11,323 cr; FMCG business drives growth

New Delhi, 15 November

Patanjali Foods Ltd reported a 15.55 per cent year-on-year (YoY) increase in standalone revenue from operations to Rs 11,322.58 crore in the second quarter of FY27, compared with Rs 9,798.84 crore in the corresponding quarter last year. The company's performance was supported by growth across its edible oils and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) businesses.

The FMCG segment reported revenue of Rs 2,923.48 crore during the quarter, while the edible oils business generated Rs 8,532.25 crore, registering annual growth of 22.39 per cent. The FMCG business contributed 25.50 per cent to revenue from operations and 45.04 per cent to the company's EBITDA, highlighting its growing contribution to overall profitability.

Patanjali Foods' gross profit stood at Rs 1,439.14 crore, with a gross profit margin of 12.62 per cent. Operating EBITDA, excluding exceptional items, stood at Rs 425.63 crore, translating into a margin of 3.76 per cent. Profit before tax (PBT) stood at Rs 409.02 crore, with a margin of 3.59 per cent.

The company's FMCG segment recorded an EBITDA of Rs 221.33 crore, with a margin of 7.57 per cent. Its biscuits division posted its highest-ever quarterly revenue of Rs 638.31 crore, registering year-on-year growth of 27.69 per cent. The Doodh biscuits brand alone generated quarterly revenue of around Rs 475 crore.

For the first half of FY27, Patanjali Foods reported its highest-ever half-yearly revenue from operations of Rs 22,660.03 crore, marking an increase of 22.06 per cent over the corresponding period last year. Operating EBITDA stood at Rs 969.03 crore, with a margin of 4.28 per cent, while profit before tax came in at Rs 862.36 crore. Commenting on the performance, Sanjeev Asthana, Chief Executive Officer of Patanjali Foods, said the company's integrated business model, spanning branded edible oils, oil palm plantations and an expanding FMCG portfolio, had supported its performance during the quarter.

SEBI to issue AI usage guidelines for capital markets, focus on investor protection

AGENCIES
New Delhi, 15 November



Markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) will soon issue detailed guidelines on the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in capital markets, with a focus on investor protection, accountability and human oversight, Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey said.

The proposed guidelines will establish appropriate safeguards for the adoption of AI by market participants, including mandatory disclosures, accountability of regulated entities and a 'human-in-the-loop' approach to ensure that critical decisions remain subject to human supervision.

Speaking at the inauguration of Sebi's pavilion at the 45th India International Trade Fair (IITF) 2026, organised by the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), Pandey said the regulator was working to ensure that technological innovation does not compromise market integrity, investor safety or financial stability.

In June 2025, SEBI had issued a consultation paper proposing guiding principles for the responsible use of AI and Machine Learning (ML) applications and models in the securities market. The framework aims to maximise the benefits of emerging technologies while minimising associated risks.

Highlighting the growing cybersecurity challenges facing the financial sector, Pandey said SEBI had been continuously strengthening its cybersecurity framework to deal with emerging threats, including cyberattacks on financial institutions and cryptocurrency platforms, as well as digital frauds involving social media influencers.

The regulator introduced a structured incident response mechanism in May this year, aligned with the Financial Stability Board's FIRE reporting template, to improve the reporting and management of cybersecurity incidents.

On the potential risks associated with quantum computing, the SEBI Chairman said the regulator was undertaking an inventory of cryptographic systems and identifying areas where cryptography is being deployed to assess possible vulnerabilities.

Shipping Secy reviews infra development at Chennai Port, three MoUs inked to boost cargo movement and container service to Thailand

Chennai, 15 November

The Chennai Port Authority (CPA) has signed three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to increase cargo movement and strengthen connectivity, including a commitment to handle around one million metric tonnes of dry bulk cargo over three years, and an agreement to facilitate a proposed container service between Chennai and Ranong Port in Thailand.

The agreements were were signed in the presence of union Shipping Secretary Vijay Kumar, who reviewed infrastructure development at the port and held consultations with representatives of shipping lines, container train operators, terminal operators, logistics companies, and trade associations. He also visited the proposed Outer Harbour project site.

In a social media post, the CPA said "Chennai Port Authority was honoured to welcome union Shipping Secretary Vijay Kumar. During the visit, the Secretary interacted with senior Port officials, reviewed operational performance and ongoing infrastructure initiatives, and inspected key facilities across the Port, including a tug ride to the proposed Outer Harbour Project Area."

He also chaired a Statkeholder Consultation Meeting with port users and



industry representatives, where requirements and measures to improve trade facilitation and digitisation were discussed. Memoranda of Understanding were exchanged with industry partners to promote cargo growth and strengthen multimodal connectivity.

The visit reaffirmed Chennai Port Authority's commitment to infrastructure development, statekeholder-centric trade facilitation and its role as a major maritime gateway of India, it said.

During the visit, the CPA signed pacts with MinSotrans, TCI Seaways and Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC). Under the agreement with MinSotrans, the CPA has committed to handling around one million tonnes of dry bulk cargo over three years under its Non-Containerised Cargo Incentive Scheme (NCCS). The pact with TCI Seaways will facilitate a container service between Ranong Port in Thailand and Chennai under the BIMSTEC framework. The proposed service had been discussed between the company and Chennai Port officials in October. The third MoU, with the Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC), was aimed at improving railway connectivity and promoting rail-based container movement through Chennai Port.

During the stakeholder meeting, industry representatives sought additional storage facilities, dedicated berths for iron ore fines and faster development of the proposed Outer Harbour project to increase the port's cargo-handling capacity. Companies, including Hyundai, Indian Oil Corporation and Suryadev Alloys and Power Ltd, shared their growth projections and highlighted the need for infrastructure expansion.

CA admits players reaching agreement on Sandpapergate is 'very unlikely'

AGENCIES
New Delhi, 15 November

Cricket Australia once again responded to the ongoing debate around the reignited Sandpapergate scandal, admitting that the players might never reach an agreement on the 2018 incident in Cape Town.

Sandpapergate has made the headlines once again after Usman Khawaja made explosive claims that the whole Australian team knew about the ball-tampering scandal during the Cape Town Test and that the sandpaper was also used during the previous Test match in Port Elizabeth.

With different views coming from Australian cricketers, CA has admitted that it remains "very unlikely" that the players will reach an agreement over the issue.

"We respect the right of those in South Africa in 2018 to share their version of what they believe happened on that tour," a CA spokesperson said on Sunday as quoted by the Sydney Morning Herald.

"The significant differences in the views expressed continues to demonstrate that it is very unlikely an agreed version of events will be reached without relevant material evidence," the spokesperson added.

This comes after former Australian bowler Chadd Sayers on Sunday rejected Pat Cummins' statements on the Sandpapergate. Sayers, who was a member of the touring Australian side for the 2018 series, said he was confident that "everyone" in the Australian Test side knew of what was happening.

"I'm comfortable sitting here ... that I believe that everyone in that side knew what was going on and what was being used," Sayers told SEN radio on Sunday. "I'm not taking sides. I'm neutral in all this ... I'm just trying to tell my side of the story and what I believe happened."

Axar, Kishan rescue India before bowlers end NZ's seven-year home ODI series-winning run

Mount Maunganui, 15 November

Axar Patel and Ishan Kishan rescued India from a precarious position with fighting half-centuries before the bowlers defended a modest total to secure a 22-run victory over New Zealand in the fifth and final ODI here on Sunday, sealing the series 3-1 and ending the hosts' seven-year run of consecutive bilateral ODI series victories on home soil.

After winning the toss and opting to bowl, New Zealand reduced India to 34 for three, removing the top order cheaply. However, Axar and Kishan produced crucial 46-run knocks to rebuild the innings and take India to 209 all out in 42.1 overs.

Axar made 46 off 55 balls, while Kishan scored 46 off 58 deliveries. Their partnership provided the backbone of India's innings after Rohit Sharma (7), Virat Kohli (5) and Ruturaj Gaikwad (18) departed early.

Rohit was caught by Dean Foxcroft off Matthew Fisher, who also accounted for Kohli, caught behind by Tim Seifert. Jacob Duffy then removed Gaikwad, leaving India in trouble at 34 for three.

Shreyas Iyer contributed 22 before Blair Tickner dismissed him, while Axar and Kishan took responsibility for the recovery. New Zealand also missed opportunities, with



Foxcroft dropping Axar and Finn Allen putting down Iyer.

Axar and Kishan kept the innings together before Michael Bracewell ended the former's stay, with Young completing the catch. Kishan continued to fight but fell four runs short of his half-century, caught by Fisher off Duffy.

Naman Dhir added 22, while Auqib Nabi made five. Mitchell Santner then struck in quick succession, dismissing Naman, Nabi and ODI debutant Yash Thakur, leaving India struggling to build a substantial total.

Arshdeep Singh provided late impetus with 14 off just four balls, hitting two sixes, while Mohammed Siraj remained unbeaten on 14 off 20 deliveries. Their last-wicket stand of 26 runs helped India cross the 200-run mark.

Duffy and Santner claimed three wickets each for New Zealand, while Fisher took two. Bracewell and Tickner picked up one wicket apiece.

In reply, New Zealand were bowled out for 187 in 48.1 overs, falling 22 runs short despite some resistance from their middle and lower order.

India's bowling attack maintained pressure throughout the chase, with Arshdeep leading the effort with three wickets for 30 runs. Axar and Siraj took two wickets each, while Yash Thakur, Auqib Nabi and Naman Dhir claimed one apiece.

New Zealand began cautiously, with Will Young and Tim Seifert attempting to provide a steady start. Siraj's review for a possible dismissal of Seifert in the second over was unsuccessful, but the right-arm pacer eventually removed the opener for 14, caught by Yash Thakur.

Young made 22 before Arshdeep had him caught by Ruturaj Gaikwad. The left-arm pacer then bowled Nick Kelly for 24, leaving New Zealand under pressure.

Virat Kohli dropped a difficult chance offered by Dean Foxcroft at second slip off Arshdeep, but the reprieve did not prove decisive. Foxcroft made 31 before Yash Thakur bowled him in the 32nd over to claim his maiden ODI wicket.

Siraj had earlier dismissed Finn Allen for one, while Auqib Nabi removed Bracewell for 19, with Naman Dhir taking the catch.

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner made 24, but Naman Dhir ended his resistance when Arshdeep took the catch. Kristian Clarke scored 16 and Blair Tickner added 14, but neither could take the hosts close to the target.

India also had to negotiate a few tense moments in the closing stages. Clarke survived an lbw review against Naman Dhir, while a missed run-out opportunity gave him another reprieve. Tickner, too, survived a close run-out chance after a relay throw involving Siraj and Kishan.

Arshdeep eventually dismissed Clarke, caught behind by Kishan, before Axar removed Jacob Duffy, caught by Kohli at long-on. Kishan then completed the victory by stumping Tickner off Axar in the 49th over.

'We weren't doing it to show them anything': Mohit on India U19 team's celebrations after Asia Cup win



AGENCIES
New Delhi, 15 November

India's hero Mohit Ulva, who snatched a win from the jaws of defeat to defeat Pakistan U19 in the Asia Cup final, has opened up on the Indian U19 team's celebrations after the match.

Mohit did the unthinkable when he powered the Indian U19 side to a near-impossible-looking win against Pakistan U19 as his unbeaten 49 helped the team chase the 338-run target.

The No.10 medium pacer hit the winning four when three runs were needed off the final ball as India U19 produced a stellar one-wicket win. Speaking on the team's celebrations, which were criticised in Pakistan, Mohit stated that it came "natural" and they did not intend to show anything to them.

"It is natural. It was an India vs Pakistan match, and additionally, a final. The way they celebrated after beating us in the league stage. Actually, we were not even taking their celebration personally. We were thinking that they were celebrating their own victory. It doesn't matter what they do.

"We did likewise. We were celebrating our own victory. It had emotions, aggression, and everything. We weren't doing it to show them anything. We were celebrating among ourselves, and everything was natural," Mohit told Star Sports.

From 252/8, India U19 went on to chase 338 as Manal Chauhan also made an important 47 in the win. Reflecting on the outcome and his winning four, Mohit said he could not believe that they had won.

Lakshya scripts history, wins Kumamoto Masters Japan title

Kumamoto (Japan), 15 November

Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen scripted history by becoming the first Indian to win the Kumamoto Masters Japan title, rallying from a game down to defeat Japan's Koki Watanabe in the final on Sunday, as India capped its most successful season on the BWF World Tour with a record nine titles and four runnerup finishes.

The eighth-seeded Sen defeated Watanabe 13-21, 21-18, 21-14 in a gruelling one-hour-and-four-minute contest at the Kumamoto Prefectural Gymnasium to claim his second consecutive title, following his triumph at the Hylo Open in Germany earlier this month.

The victory marked Sen's second Super 500 title of the year and fifth overall at the level, placing him joint-second among men's singles players in terms of Super 500 titles. He also became the first Indian men's singles player to win two World Tour titles in a season since Kidambi Srikanth clinched four Superseries titles in 2017.

After conceding the opening game 13-21, Sen bounced back strongly, racing to a 5-0 lead in the second game and building a nine-point advantage. Watanabe fought back with seven consecutive points, but the Indian held his nerve to take the game 21-18.

In the decider, Sen maintained control and entered the interval with a 11-7 lead before winning six successive points to tighten his grip on the contest. Despite a late fightback by the Japanese shuttler, Sen closed out the game 21-14 to seal the historic victory.

" It feels very good to win a title here. Last year, I reached the semifinals, so I am happy that I could better that result. This is my second title back-to-back and I would love to continue this form," Sen said after the win.

"Even after losing the first game, I kept my confidence up. I was making some easy lifts in the opening game, which allowed him to attack, so in the second and third games I focused on giving a better length and playing more aggressively," he added.

Congratulating Sen, Badminton Association of India (BAI) General Secretary Sanjay Mishra said the victory was another proud moment for Indian badminton and reflected the growing consistency of Indian players on the



international circuit.

" This has been one of the most successful years for Indian badminton on the BWF World Tour, with our players setting new benchmarks. These achievements reflect the growing strength of Indian badminton and the collective efforts of our players, coaches and support teams," Mishra said.

Sen's triumph takes India's tally at Super 300 and higher-level tournaments outside the country to nine titles and four runner-up finishes in 2026, surpassing the previous best of six titles and three silver medals recorded in 2023.

The achievement makes 2026 India's most successful season on the BWF World Tour by this measure, underlining the country's growing presence in international badminton.

ICC approves LA28 Olympic qualification events; men's and women's qualifiers to be held in USA, Bangladesh

AGENCIES
New Delhi, 15 November



The final qualification berths for cricket's return to the Olympic programme at the Los Angeles 2028 Games will be decided through separate eight-team tournaments in the USA and Bangladesh, with the men's qualifier scheduled from February 5 to 13, 2028, and the women's event from February 26 to March 5.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) Board confirmed the hosts and dates for the two events following its meetings in Bali, Indonesia, on Sunday. Both qualifiers will feature eight teams divided into two groups of four, with 13 matches in each tournament. The group winners will advance to the final, with the winner securing the final qualification spot for LA28.

The decisions form part of a broader set of approvals covering event schedules, competition formats and qualification pathways, with the ICC saying the changes are aimed at expanding opportunities for Full and Associate Members and strengthening the competitive structure of international cricket.

ICC CEO Sanjog Gupta said the events calendar and qualification pathways were central to the global development of the game.

"The ICC events portfolio and schedule are critical components of cricket's global architecture and deliver elevated context, competitiveness and consequence to the ecosystem. These tournaments serve as pinnacle moments for fans and players alike, with the associated pathways driving aspiration and access for the broader cricketing landscape.

"We also recognise the importance of providing athletes and member associations long-term visibility of these events to enable development of improved player pathways, focused high-performance programmes and structured calendars," Gupta said.

The Board also approved the qualification framework for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2028 Global Qualifier, which will feature 16 teams and 31 matches in the first quarter of 2028. The teams will be divided into four groups of four, followed by quarter-finals, semi-finals and a final. Eight teams will qualify for the tournament in Australia and New Zealand.

Australia make squad changes for England ODIs & T20Is

Adelaide, 15 November

Australia have made changes to their squads ahead of the remainder of their white-ball series against England, with left-arm fast bowler Ben Dwarshuis added to the T20I squad.

Dwarshuis replaces Nathan Ellis, who continues his recovery from a side strain sustained during Australia's recent tour of South Africa.

Meanwhile, Riley Meredith has been added to the ODI squad.

Ellis suffered the injury during the ODI series against South Africa in September and has not yet recovered sufficiently to return to action.

Fast bowler Mahli Beardman is being managed for Sunday's second ODI against England in Adelaide as he continues to build capacity following recent injuries. He is expected to return for the third ODI in Hobart on Wednesday, according to ICC.

Beardman made a sensational start to his international career in the series opener in Perth, claiming 6/24 from 7.4 overs to record the best bowling figures by an Australia men's player on ODI debut. His performance also ranks fourth on the all-time list for best bowling figures on men's ODI debut.

The 21-year-old dismissed England captain Harry Brook and Joe Root before adding the wickets of Jordan Cox, Sam Curran, Liam Dawson and Jofra Archer as England were bowled out for 131. Australia went on to secure a seven-wicket victory to take a 1-0 lead in the series.

AB de Villiers' Sub-Saharan Africa beat Matthew Hayden's Australasia in first Test Twenty match

Colombo, 15 November

First blood in cricket's newest rivalry went to AB de Villiers' mentored Sub-Saharan Africa as they beat Matthew Hayden's mentored Australasia by five wickets at SSC Stadium here, in the first Test Twenty match ever played.

Chasing a combined 350, de Villiers' side finished on 351 with five balls left in the 80-over contest on Saturday.

The win was a shared one, exactly as the Parity Rule intends. Sub-Saharan Africa's Girls' XI earned a 16-run lead that was carried forward, which meant the Boys' XI were set 180 to win instead of 196.

The boys then finished the job the girls had started, and neither XI could have taken their side over the line alone.

Girls' XI: Kanchan's all-round show outshines Cantrill's 82

Australasia made 155 for 7 in the Girls' XI's 20 overs, an innings built almost entirely around Lexie McLeavy Cantrill.

She struck 82 off 48 balls, with five fours and six sixes, and found support from Varsha Yadav, who made 36 off 38 balls with five fours. Kanchan then turned the innings for Sub-Saharan Africa.

She took 6 for 18 in her four overs, removing Yadav, Cantrill, Ridhi Mishra, Melinda, Khushi Kinha and Pearl Muthamma B. Swarnim Gaur held three of the catches, and Astha T claimed the other wicket in an economical spell of 1 for 13 from three overs.

Kanchan was not done. She returned with the bat to score a crucial 62 off 58 balls, with four fours and two sixes, as Sub-Saharan Africa's Girls' XI replied with 171 for 5 in 20 overs. That gave Sub-Saharan Africa a 16-run lead to carry into the second half of the match.

Boys' XI: Hopkins answers Gemini in a chase of 180

Australiasia boys hit back hard. Vansh Gemini smashed 85 off 39 balls, with six fours and seven sixes, before they were bowled out for 195 in their 20 overs. That took the side's combined total to 350 and set Sub-Saharan Africa a challenging 180 to win. Joe Hopkins rose to the occasion.

He hit an unbeaten 62 off 36 balls, with six fours and four sixes, to anchor the chase and take his side to 180 for 5 in 19.1 overs thus ensuring a fitting result for a win the girls and boys built in tandem.

From the winning team, Kanchan was named Player of the Match for her all-round brilliance. The result reflected the central philosophy of Test Twenty, which places boys and girls on the same competitive level and makes both equally responsible for their franchise's success.

Tamil Nadu girls and Karnataka boys lift Junior National Badminton Championship Trophies

Gangtok, 15 November

Tamil Nadu emerged champions in the U-19 Girls' category, while Karnataka clinched the U-19 Boys' title at the Yonex-Sunrise 49th Inter-State and Inter-Zonal Junior National Badminton Team Championship 2026, which concluded its second day at the Indoor Badminton Hall, Paljor Stadium Complex, Gangtok, on Sunday.

Four closely contested finals were held during the day.

In the U-19 Boys' Team Championship final, Karnataka emerged champions with a 2-0 victory over Assam. Hardik Divyansh gave Karnataka the opening point by defeating Bornil Akash Changmai 18-16, 15-6 in the singles match. The doubles pair of Pavan Suresh and Punith Suresh then sealed the title with a 15-9, 10-15, 15-7 victory over Aanayan Borah and Bornil Akash Changmai.

In the U-19 Girls' Team Championship final, Tamil Nadu claimed the title with a 2-0 victory over Delhi. Diksha S R defeated Rishita Nandi 15-12, 15-12 in the singles match, while the doubles pair of Ananya Arun and Anjana Manikandan overcame Rishita Nandi and Ishita Negi 16-14, 12-15, 15-10 to secure the championship.

The prize distribution ceremony followed the matches, with the dignitaries presenting the winning teams with medals, certificates, Red Panda tournament mementos and cash prizes. The second runners-up received Rs 1 lakh, the first runners-up Rs 2 lakh, and the champions Rs 3.5 lakh each.

The final standings were as follows:

Girls' Category:

- First: Tamil Nadu
- Second: Delhi
- Third: Maharashtra and Uttarakhand

Boys' Category:

- First: Karnataka
- Second: Assam
- Third: Uttarakhand and Haryana

Organised by the Badminton Association of Sikkim under the aegis of the Badminton Association of India, the championship marks Sikkim's first time hosting this national-level competition. The tournament provides an important platform for emerging Under-19 players to showcase their talent, improve their national rankings and strengthen their prospects of representing India in international tournaments and world championships.

The day's proceedings were graced by Speaker of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly M N Sherpa as the Chief Guest, while Deputy Speaker Raj Kumari Thapa and Melli constituency MLA and Advisor to the Horticulture and Agriculture Departments, N B Pradhan, attended as Guests of Honour.



The championship will conclude on 21 November, with the closing ceremony scheduled to feature musical performances by renowned singers Pawandeep Rajan and Purna Rai