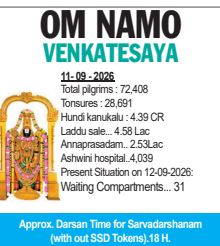


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INBRIEF

Sensex, Nifty rebound

Mumbai: The benchmark indices rebounded on Wednesday after a two-day decline, supported by gains in FMCG, realty and PSU banking stocks, while softer oil prices ahead of the US Federal Reserve's policy decision also aided market sentiment. The Sensex gained 332.63 points, or 0.45 per cent, to close at 74,336.45, while the Nifty advanced 99 points, or 0.43 per cent, to settle at 23,217.60.

Pak increases drone activity along LoC

New Delhi (TSIT): Pakistan has been using drones extensively against India in the past couple of years. Drones have been used to smuggle arms, ammunition and narcotics, especially into Punjab. In the last couple of weeks, the security agencies have noted that there have been drone sightings along the Line of Control (LoC). The RBI has been conducting VRRR auctions over the past month to absorb surplus liquidity from the banking system and align overnight money market rates with the repo rate.

CM calls for increased lending to all sectors



VISAKHAPATNAM (TSIT): Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu directed bankers and officials to ensure adequate credit flow to all sectors and sections of society at the 236th State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) meeting.

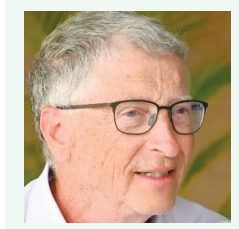
He said banks should increase lending to MSMEs, as the rise in credit disbursement compared to the previous period was still below expectations. He observed that some banks were lagging significantly in achieving their lending targets and stressed that the purpose of SLBC meetings would be fulfilled only when the prescribed targets are achieved.

He also urged banks to extend substantial loans under the PM Surya Ghar scheme, with the objective of

making Andhra Pradesh a leading state in rooftop solar adoption. The Chief Minister said the state had set a target of achieving 15 per cent economic growth, though the impact of El Niño had created challenging conditions, and efforts were being made to overcome the difficulties. He called upon banks to provide adequate credit to tenant farmers and strengthen lending support to various sections.

Naidu appreciated the repayment record of women belonging to Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Andhra Pradesh, stating that more than 99 per cent of women borrowers were repaying their loans on time, while only 0.67 per cent were facing repayment failures.

Bill Gates hails India's AI potential



AI's extraordinary potential and pointed to India as an important example of how the technology could be deployed rapidly for social and developmental benefit. "It's a stunning set of capabilities,"

BILL GATES

NEW DELHI (TSIT):

Microsoft Co-founder Bill Gates has said that artificial intelligence (AI) is fundamentally different from previous technological revolutions, warning that society may not yet be ready for the scale and speed of change ahead.

He underlined AI's extraordinary potential and pointed to India as an important example of how the technology could be deployed rapidly for social and developmental benefit. "It's a stunning set of capabilities," Gates said, add-

ing that India could demonstrate how "we can drive the good stuff as fast as possible".

In a conversation with NDTV, the billionaire philanthropist said the world should consider slowing the advance of AI if it gives societies more time to prepare for the profound changes it could bring.

Gates said AI was fundamentally different from the personal computer and the internet - two technological revolutions he helped shape during his years at Microsoft and cautioned against assuming its impact would be as

easy to manage. "AI is a very unique technology," he said. "I caution people who think it'll be as easy to manage the impacts of AI as it's been to manage other technologies," he added. The breadth and speed of AI's development had forced even someone with his long-standing belief in innovation to consider whether the pace itself needed to be questioned, he said.

"If we could slow things down, I think we should consider that because of this need to get ready for such a rapid change," Gates told NDTV. "Throughout my life, I have been a champion of innovation," Gates said, referring to both his years at Microsoft and the work of the Gates Foundation. "This is a rare case where innovation may be so broad and so dramatic that we're not ready for it."

MEA summons Pakistan envoy after naval collision

NEW DELHI (TSIT):

India on Wednesday summoned the Pakistani Charge d'Affaires (CDA) following "unacceptable conduct" by a Pakistan Navy vessel that led to a collision with an Indian Navy ship in international waters in the Arabian Sea. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the diplomat was advised to convey to the Pakistani authorities concerned the need for all military units to observe due care and respect the provisions of the relevant agreements between the two sides in order to prevent any repeat of such incidents.

"The CDA was summoned to the Ministry of External Affairs



today and a strong protest was lodged with him over the unacceptable and unprofessional conduct of Pakistani naval units at sea that led to a collision with a unit of the Indian Navy," the MEA said.

"While the incident, which took place in international waters, did not cause any major damage, the conduct of the Pakistani naval ship was in direct contra-

vention of Article 10 of the agreement between India and Pakistan on Advance Notice on Military Exercises, Manoeuvres and Troops Movements of April 1991," it said.

The Charge d'Affaires of India in Islamabad has also been instructed to lodge a similar protest with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, the MEA said.

LOP Rahul demands rollback of UPI charges

NEW DELHI (TSIT):

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi demanded that the government roll back charges on certain commercial UPI transactions above Rs.2,000, alleging the move would benefit the US. In a video posted on X, he invoked former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, saying she once remarked her inclination was neither left nor right but that she kept her spine straight. "But Modi ji's principle is different; he has decided to lie down flat in front of Donald Trump," Gandhi said.



THE PM, HE ALLEGES, HAS DECIDED TO LIE DOWN FLAT IN FRONT OF THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT. RAHUL GANDHI

"To provide massive profits to America, he has imposed charges on UPI and levied a tax on every single Indian." He urged the Prime Minister to keep his spine straight and roll back the UPI tax.

New Zealand Parliament approves India FTA, tariffs to fall on most exports

New Delhi, Sep 16 : New Zealand's Parliament on Wednesday passed legislation needed for the free trade agreement (FTA) with India with lawmakers voting 93-29 in favour, according to Trade and Investment Minister Todd McClay. McClay said the vote showed strong parliamentary support for the agreement and its expected economic benefits.

Death penalty for all 10 in Jhiram Ghati attack

JAGDALPUR (TSIT):

A special NIA court in Jagdalpur awarded the death penalty to all 10 convicted CPI (Maoist) cadres in the 2013 Jhiram Ghati attack case. They were found guilty of criminal conspiracy and murder under the IPC, besides offences under the Arms Act, Explosive Substances Act, and UA (P) Act. The death sentence was awarded for criminal conspiracy (Section 120-B) and murder (Section 302). On May 25, 2013, Maoists ambushed a Congress Parivartan Yatra convoy in Bastar, killing 27 people, including Mahendra Karma, Nand Kumar Patel, and Uday Mudliyar, and injuring 38. The trial lasted over a decade with 294 hearings. An 11th accused died during trial, while 28 chargesheeted accused remain wanted.

UPI MDR EXPLAINED: Will customers be charged from Oct 15?

NEW DELHI (TSIT):

New MDR rules on certain UPI transactions from October 15, 2026, will not impose direct charges on consumers. The MDR is a merchant-side fee paid within the payment ecosystem.

Person-to-person UPI transactions remain free, and merchant payments up to Rs.2,000 attract no MDR, covering around 96 per cent of merchant transactions. Under the revised framework, Person-to-Merchant transactions above Rs.2,000 will attract 0.4 per cent MDR, paid to the acquiring bank.

For transactions of Rs.75,000 or more, MDR is capped at Rs.300. Merchants cannot pass MDR directly to customers. NPCI clarified customers will continue using UPI without transaction charges. P2P transfers to family or between own accounts remain free.

UPI PAYMENTS TO REMAIN FREE FOR CONSUMERS UNDER NEW MDR FRAMEWORK

No direct charges for users; MDR applies only on merchant side for certain high-value transactions.

WHAT IS CHANGING?

New rules governing the Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) on certain UPI transactions have raised concerns among users over whether digital payments will become chargeable from October 15, 2026.

However, the revised framework does not impose any direct charge on consumers for making UPI payments. MDR is a fee linked to the merchant side of a digital transaction. It is paid within the payment ecosystem and does not mean that money will be deducted from a customer's bank account when they make a UPI payment.

P2P TRANSACTIONS TO REMAIN FREE

Person-to-person (P2P) UPI transactions will continue to remain free.

Merchant payments of up to Rs 2,000 will also not attract MDR.

According to the government, these exemptions mean that around 96 per cent of merchant UPI transactions will remain outside the scope of the new charge.

WHAT CHANGES FROM OCTOBER 15?

A standard UPI P2M transaction above Rs 2,000 will attract an MDR of 0.4 per cent. The charge applies on the merchant side and is paid to the acquiring bank as part of the digital payment ecosystem.

A ceiling has also been placed on the MDR. For transactions worth Rs 75,000 or more, the MDR will be capped at Rs 300 per transaction.

EXAMPLE

Rs 2,000 (0.4%)	Rs 50,000 (0.4%)	Rs 1,00,000 (0.4% - Rs 400)
= Rs 12	= Rs 200	(Capped at Rs 300)

CAN MERCHANTS RECOVER MDR FROM CUSTOMERS?

No. The new framework does not permit merchants to pass the MDR directly to customers. The amount payable by the consumer remains the price displayed by the merchant.

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has also clarified that customers will continue to use UPI without paying a transaction charge.
- This means users can continue making routine payments through their UPI apps without worrying about the new MDR being separately deducted from their bank accounts.

WILL SENDING MONEY TO FAMILY OR YOUR OWN ACCOUNT COST MORE?

No. P2P transactions remain outside the new MDR framework.

- Transferring Rs 1 lakh to a family member or moving money between your own bank accounts through UPI will continue to be free.
- The new MDR framework also does not introduce a separate platform fee for consumers. UPI apps cannot levy a new user charge simply because a customer is making a UPI payment under this framework.

WHAT DOES THE NEW MDR MEAN FOR CONSUMERS?

- For most users, there is no direct change in the cost of making UPI payments.
- The key change is on the merchant side, particularly for higher-value P2M transactions above Rs 2,000.
- Where a customer scans a QR code to pay for a purchase, the MDR will not be separately deducted from the customer's bank account.

FOR CONSUMERS, ROUTINE UPI PAYMENTS REMAIN FREE UNDER THE NEW MDR FRAMEWORK.

UPI Safer • Simpler • Faster

Pranitha Subhash sets siima stage on fire

sets siima stage on fire



UPI MDR can make digital payments sustainable: Fintech leaders

NEW DELHI (TSIT):

The introduction of a Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) on Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions could provide a sustainable revenue model for the digital payments ecosystem and support its expansion to



one billion users over the next decade, fintech industry leaders said on

Wednesday.

MobiKwik Co-founder, Executive Director and CFO Upasana Taku said UPI has transformed India's payments landscape over the past decade and played a significant role in expanding access to financial products and services.

Dharani facilitated massive land loot: CM Revanth



HYDERABAD TSIT BUREAU:

Chief Minister A.Revanth Reddy on Wednesday alleged in the Telangana Legislative Assembly that the Dharani land records system introduced by the previous BRS government facilitated large-scale irregularities and enabled valuable lands to pass into the hands of a few individuals.

Speaking during a debate on land issues, the Chief Minister said the earlier Kasra Pahani system contained provisions recording possession, which he said helped protect the rights of poorer sections. He alleged that the removal of such safeguards under Dharani adversely affected SCs, STs, BCs and other landholders.Revanth Reddy said forest, assigned,

CM Revanth says government will protect public land and legitimate rights of landowners

endowment and other protected lands must remain on the prohibited list and asserted that not an inch of such land should be improperly released. At the same time, he said genuine private landowners whose properties were wrongly placed under prohibited categories should get relief.

The Chief Minister said his government had introduced Bhu Bharati to rectify land records and address problems associated with Dharani. He also maintained

that Section 22-A was not introduced by the present government and said steps were being taken to resolve disputes involving prohibited properties. Announcing measures to address longstanding land problems, Revanth Reddy said the government would soon bring out a new policy for urban land regularisation. Registration and regularisation would be streamlined, while issues concerning authorised layouts would be examined with the respective authorities. He also announced special measures to resolve land disputes in the Singareni region, disposal of pending applications under GO 118, and action on long-standing land problems in and around LB Nagar. A high-level committee would be constituted to examine unresolved land issues and provide solutions to genuine landowners.

CM Naidu launches devotee-centric initiatives at Tirumala



TIRUMALA (TSIT): Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu inaugurated several TTD initiatives aimed at enhancing devotee safety, convenience, and spiritual experience. Key launches include the Tirumala Healing and Devotion Experience Centre at Vaikuntam Queue Complex-1, offering AI/VR-based spiritual content, guided meditation, and the 'Durlabha Darshan' 13-minute 3D VR experience. He also launched 32 electric buses — 'Srivari Dharmarathalu'—donated by Reliance Industries and Bharat Biotech Foundation, raising free buses from 18 to 50. The renovated Sri Venkateswara Museum, developed with TCS support across four floors and 14 galleries, was opened. A group insurance scheme with LIC providing Rs.2 lakh free life cover and the Nandakam defect-management App were also launched. Ministers, TTD Chairman B.R. Naidu, and officials attended.

Tirumala to Be Developed as a Global Model of Spirituality

TSIT, VISAKHAPATNAM, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said the government is working to develop Tirumala as a sacred spiritual destination and a global model of spirituality, while combining devotion, service, modern technology and environmental protection. He said Tirumala currently has 89.5 per cent green cover, which needs to be protected and further strengthened. On Wednesday, the Chief Minister inaugurated several development initiatives, including the Pilgrims Experience Centre at Vaikuntam Queue Complex-I and the renovated Sri Venkateswara Museum. The Experience Centre uses 3D and virtual reality technology to provide devotees with an immersive view of daily rituals, pujas and important



locations in Tirumala. The museum, redeveloped with Rs.104 crore by the TCS Trust, showcases the history and traditions of Lord Venkateswara, including replicas of jewellery offered by various rulers, historical

artefacts, crowns and ornaments, along with 3D models and AI-based visual presentations. The Chief Minister also flagged off 32 electric buses donated by Reliance Foundation and Bharat Biotech for the convenience

of devotees travelling in Tirumala. Naidu said the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) plans to provide Rs.2 lakh insurance cover to every devotee visiting Tirumala in association with LIC through an Aadhaar-based online system, with financial assistance applicable in the event of an unfortunate death in Tirumala. He said the government aims to construct 5,000 Sri Venkateswara temples across Andhra Pradesh through the Srivani Trust and is also considering requests for temples in countries such as Mauritius and New Zealand. The Chief Minister said steps are also being taken to utilise the services of Srivari Sevaks in education and healthcare and announced plans to reorganise TTD activities across six key areas.

Gujrati Garbha Uttarakhanda Cholia Punjabi Bhangra steals the show



Tirumala: The devotees rejoiced in the artforms of Bangra, Cholia and Garbha in Tirumala on Wednesday evening in front of Hamsa Vahanam. Drums, Lambadi dance, Karrasamu, Kolatam are a few other artforms that enthralled the devotees. A total of 504 artistes belonging to 19 teams from 08 states performed various dance forms .

Chinna Sesha Vahana Seva enthral devotees



TIRUMALA (TSIT): The second day of the annual Salakatl Brahmotsavams witnessed a magnificent Chinna Sesha Vahana Seva, offering a visual treat to thousands of devotees. Sri Malayappa Swamy was taken in a grand procession on the five-hooded Chinna Sesha Vahanam, associated with Vasuki, along the four Mada streets. The Lord appeared in the alankaram of Sri Panduranga Swamy, blessing devotees. The vahana symbolises the spiritual connection between the Lord and Adishesha and is believed to bestow family welfare. Pilgrims thronged the galleries as traditional music, kolatams, bhajans, and cultural performances by artists from several states added grandeur. Snapana Tirumanjanam was performed in the afternoon, and the day concludes with Hamsa Vahana Seva in the evening.

Indian Bank wins Rajbhasha Kirti Award third year running



NAVI MUMBAI (TSIT): Indian Bank was honoured with the Second Prize under the Rajbhasha Kirti Award for 2025-26 at the Hindi Diwas Celebration during the 6th All India Rajbhasha Conference in Navi Mumbai. This is the bank's third consecutive year receiving the award for outstanding performance in Rajbhasha implementation. Executive Director Shiv Bajrang Singh received it from Ministers of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar and Nityanand Rai, in the presence of Rajbhasha Secretary Ansuli Arya. The coffee table book "Main Dilli Hoon" was also released. Indian Bank's Chennai Corporate Office was honoured in the Best Category under TOLIC Rajbhasha Samman, while Kanchipuram and Puducherry zonal offices received Commendable Category awards. A stall at the Official Language exhibition was widely appreciated.



Sri Malayappa Swamy gave darshan to devotees in the alankaram of Goddess Saraswati on the Hamsa Vahanam. Adorned in this form and holding a veena, the Lord appeared as the embodiment of knowledge (Jnana Swaroopa).

CM unveils roadmap for Tirumala-Tirupati development

TIRUMALA (TSIT): Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said Tirumala and Tirupati will be developed into a world-class spiritual and service destination by integrating devotion, seva, and technology. Addressing media at Sudharma Conference Hall, he said seamless darshan for every pilgrim is the top priority. Plans include a skywalk from Tirupati Railway Station to Bus Stand, multi-storey parking on 50 acres, and Rs. 230 crore for employee



housing amenities. Tirupati will be developed as a premium wedding destination. All development will follow a net-zero concept with solar panels on TTD buildings, a zero-waste model, and the "Vriksha

Govindam" green drive. Around 5,000 temples will be constructed, and TTD land and jewellery details will be published online for transparency.

Dr. Haseem Baig emerges in Machilipatnam mayor race

MACHILIPATNAM (TSIT): Young TDP leader Dr. Haseem Baig's name has strongly emerged in the race for Machilipatnam Municipal Corporation's mayoral candidacy. Highly educated and accessible, Baig is currently State Vice President of Telugu Yuvatha and Director of the Minority Finance Corporation. His father Kaleem Baig worked for TDP since its inception, while his mother served as a municipal councillor. Political analysts cite his family background, youth rapport, grassroots following, and minority equations as key advantages. Though senior leaders Motummarri Balaprasad and Pallapati Subrahmanyam are also mentioned, analysts believe TDP may lean towards Baig given changing political dynamics. With Jana Sena and BJP candidates also in the fray, TDP seeks a formidable contender against YSRCP in the prestigious mayoral contest.



Minister Lokesh Inaugurates Renovated Government Schools in Nellore

TSIT, visakhapatnam Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh inaugurated the newly renovated DSR Government High School at Moolapeta and RSR Municipal Corporation High School at Stonehousepet in Nellore on Wednesday. The DSR school was redeveloped with Rs.13.41 crore in CSR funds by the Devireddy Sarada Charitable Trust, while the RSR school was modernised with Rs.8.3 crore in CSR funds from the VPR Foundation. The renovated schools feature modern classrooms, LED screens, digital learning facilities, computer, robotics, astronomy, physics, chemistry and biology laboratories, libraries, art, music



and language rooms, along with improved sanitation facilities. The schools have also been equipped with sports and

recreational facilities, including basketball, volleyball, badminton, kabaddi and other courts, playgrounds, kids' play

areas, sensory parks and outdoor gyms. At the DSR school, 24 classrooms have been developed across two floors, while the RSR school now has 43 classrooms and a dedicated sports ground. During his visit, Minister Lokesh inspected the classrooms, laboratories and dining facilities and interacted with students. He reviewed the performance of both schools with the headmasters and officials and directed them to improve learning outcomes, student attendance and enrolment. He also stressed the need to focus on better performance in Class X examinations and ensure quality in the mid-day meal programme.

HCG Vizag Completes 100+ Bone Marrow Transplants

TSIT, Visakhapatnam : HCG Cancer Centre Visakhapatnam, located at APIIC Health City, Chinnagadili, has successfully completed more than 100 Bone Marrow Transplants (BMTs), marking a major clinical milestone in advanced blood cancer care in the region. The centre's specialised Hemato-Oncology and Bone Marrow Transplant unit treats a wide range of complex hematological malignancies and non-malignant blood disorders, including acute and chronic leukemia, Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, multiple myeloma, severe aplastic anemia and thalassemia. With advanced clinical infrastructure and specialised medical expertise, the centre has been providing tertiary-level care to patients from Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema, Chhattisgarh, Andaman and neighbouring regions, helping reduce the need to travel to major metropolitan cities for complex stem cell procedures. According to the hospital, nearly 60 per cent of the cases handled by its Hemato-Oncology and BMT unit are pediatric patients. Eligible patients are able to access treatment through the

state's Aarogyaasri scheme, helping

tioning chemotherapy to stem cell



ing make advanced and potentially lifesaving treatment more accessible. The BMT facility is equipped with HEPA-filtered positive-pressure isolation suites, specialised infection-control systems and 24/7 critical care support. The centre performs both autologous transplants, using the patient's own stem cells, and allogeneic transplants, using stem cells from matched related or unrelated donors. Hospital representatives said successful bone marrow transplantation requires comprehensive care extending from pre-transplant evaluation and condi-

processing and close post-transplant monitoring. The centre is supported by diagnostic facilities including advanced flow cytometry, molecular diagnostics and rapid blood-bank services to manage complex cases and monitor patients during treatment. Doctors said the completion of 100-plus transplants reflects the coordinated efforts of hematologists, medical oncologists, transfusion specialists, critical-care teams and specially trained nursing staff. HCG Vizag said it will continue to expand its specialised hematology services, adopt emerging treat-

Protecting youth from drugs is everyone's duty: EAGLE Chief



V I J A Y A W A D A , SEPTEMBER 16 (TSIT): AP EAGLE Chief and IGP A.K. Ravikrishna called for collective efforts to protect youth from drug abuse, stressing narcotics threaten society and the nation's future. Speaking at an anti-drug awareness programme organised by

the Indian Red Cross Society and AP EAGLE at Siddhartha College of Pharmacy, he urged society to join the "Break the Silence" campaign. With around 70 lakh students in Andhra Pradesh, he said educational institutions should be key awareness centres. He warned against pro-

gression from tobacco and alcohol to narcotics and cautioned about synthetic drugs and social media contacts. Ravikrishna detailed operations Vajra Prahar, Safe Campus, Garuda, and EAGLE on Trains, and urged citizens to share information on toll-free 1972.

EDITORIAL

Money laundering: The game of laundering the proceeds of crime

Money laundering is no longer just an economic crime; it has become a significant financial backbone for organized crime, corruption, drug trafficking, terrorism, and illegal trade. Simply put, money laundering is the process by which criminal proceeds are presented as legitimate or legally obtained, concealing their true source. Criminals understand that simply earning money illegally is not enough; it is also necessary to incorporate that money into a system that makes it difficult to trace its true origin. This is why the challenge of money laundering in the modern financial system is becoming increasingly complex. The process of money laundering is generally understood to have three major stages—placement, layering, and integration. In the first stage, criminal proceeds are introduced into the financial system. This is called placement. For example, large amounts of illicit cash may be deposited in separate bank accounts, divided into smaller amounts for transactions, or integrated into the financial system through cash-based businesses. Criminals exercise particular caution during this stage because it is the first contact between illicit funds and the financial system. The second stage is called layering. Its purpose is to conceal the true source of funds and complicate their path for investigating agencies. Multiple bank accounts, companies, intermediaries, and financial transactions can be used to achieve this. Money can be transferred from one account to another, from one company to another, or from one country to another. Sometimes, through paper companies or complex business transactions, layers of money are created that make it difficult to trace its original source. While digital financial systems have made transactions easier, the rapid movement of money internationally has created both new challenges and opportunities for criminals. The third stage is integration. In this stage, funds are reintroduced into the economy in a manner that makes them appear like legitimate income or investments. Criminal proceeds may be used to purchase property, invest in businesses, capitalize on companies, or engage in other legitimate economic activities. Once funds become part of legitimate economic activities, it can become more difficult to identify their criminal origins. Thus, criminal proceeds gradually become absorbed into the legitimate economy. The biggest concern about money laundering is that it serves as a dangerous bridge between crime and the economy. If criminal proceeds can be easily legalized, criminals are encouraged to continue their activities. Corruption proceeds, drug trafficking, illegal mining, fraud, smuggling, and organized crime can be concealed through money laundering. This strengthens the economic foundation of crime and weakens the rule of law. Money laundering also impacts the credibility of financial institutions. If banks and other financial institutions fail to detect and stop the flow of illicit funds, the transparency of the entire financial system is questioned. Furthermore, large-scale illicit money flows can distort market competition. Individuals and institutions conducting business honestly may lose out to those with access to capital acquired through crime. Thus, money laundering is not only a law and order problem, but also a question of economic justice and financial stability.

TARA KARTHA

It's all rather hilarious at one level, even while being deadly serious on another. A few days ago, Pakistan published a notification increasing the bounty on Masood Azhar, head of the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), from about PKR 50 lakh to 75 lakh. That's not some inflation-accounting; it comes ahead of a meeting of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) next month. That international body of 40 members has the power to decide whether the Pakistani financial system has been cleaned up or not. In 2023, it let Rawalpindi off with a slew of actionable points. This time, the idea is to convince them that Rawalpindi is keen to up the ante in its so-called "search" for the elusive Azhar. The Whole Jaish 'Special' Much has been written about the 'Red Book' brought out by the Federal Investigative Agency (FIA), which details the various terrorists it supposedly intends to act against, including over 17 people who were involved in the Mumbai terror attack. Pakistan, which was under President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Youssef Gillani then, did not deny that 'elements' from the country were involved in the heinous Mumbai attacks. In fact, this was confirmed by the government of India at the time. In fact, President Zardari even offered - under strong British pressure - to send the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Chief, Lt Gen Shuja Pasha, to India to help. Pasha himself seemed ready to share intelligence, amid reports of a possible second attack on India. Eventually, however, nothing came of this, and Pasha's visit was turned down by the military (which was under



General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani at the time). Shortly thereafter, Zardari himself lost his job. But here's the curious thing. While India did call out Jaish as one of the planners, Pakistan denied that completely. A rather detailed investigation by a noted police officer, Tariq Khosa, then the Director General of the FIA, highlighted the actions of various persons in Lashkar, but nothing on Jaish. Azhar appeared to have been 'arrested' in Bahawalpur in 2009, but eventually, he seemed to disappear from the investigation entirely, even being dropped from the Indian chargesheet. But then, Azhar had long ago mastered the art of melting away into the darkness, even when he seemed to have friends in the highest places. The Azhar Story Consider

this: Azhar was first sighted in Kashmir in the early 1990s. Involved in the deadly attacks in the Valley, he was eventually arrested. That stirred a hornet's nest in Pakistan intelligence circles. In 1995, a huge operation was launched that saw the kidnapping of six foreign tourists. The aim was to free Azhar. Of those six people, only one survived; one was beheaded, and the rest were never seen again. But even these gruesome killings couldn't deliver the Jaish Azhar. So then, there was the Kandahar hijacking three years down the line. That shook the nation, and Azhar walked out. He got a hero's welcome back home and started Jaish-e-Mohammed, with its massive headquarters in Bahawalpur. Every taxi, auto, or grocery guy knew what it was. And so

did the then US Ambassador, who, in a November 17, 2006, meeting with Foreign Secretary Riaz Khan, pointed out that the television solicitations of Al Rashid, a Jaish front, for Zakat donations, meat sales, and other public activities for fund-raising had continued despite the group being designated a terrorist organisation after 9/11. He also noted Federal Minister of Information Muhammad Ali Durrani's participation in the activities of yet another front, the Al Akhtar Trust, during a Ramadan event, and a declaration by a Parliamentary Secretary of the Defence Ministry that he was 'proud' to extend support to jihadi organisations. In other words, the Jaish and the level of support it enjoyed were both common knowledge. Then came a series of attacks

by the group, which culminated in the horrific Pulwama suicide attack that killed some 40 Indian paramilitary forces. That led to the Balakote air attack against Pakistan, and, in 2019, the designation of Azhar in the United Nations Security Council - as China withdrew its objections - though with the caveat that the listing had no reference whatsoever to Pulwama. The listing and the strikes led to a few shifts. First, Azhar again disappeared from sight; second, a number of new 'secular' fronts opened up in Kashmir. For the Jaish, it was the People's Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF), while the Lashkar got its own offshoot, The Resistance Front (TRF). It seemed that Beijing preferred that the terrorists it protected be delinked from

religion. Then came the massacre at Pahalgam, and the retaliation, Operation Sindoor. Records now indicate that the airstrike on Bahawalpur's Markaz Subhanallah killed at least 10 family members of Azhar, including his sister and her husband, his nephew and his wife, another niece, and five children of his family. Masood was clearly alive, while there remains some doubt as to whether his brother was killed. So, when Pakistan now ups the ante on Masood and declares that he has fled to Afghanistan - where the Taliban are highly unlikely to spare him - it is possible that he is either dead or deep in hiding. Alive and kicking, the man would be a political embarrassment to the 'establishment', especially as the FATF meets.

INDIA'S DIGITAL REVOLUTION NEEDS A HUMAN FACE

BY DR. JITHENDER RAO THANUGULA

India stands at an important crossroads in its digital transformation. What began with smartphones, internet connectivity and digital payments has now entered a far more consequential phase, driven by artificial intelligence, digital finance and rapidly evolving technologies. The question before the nation is no longer whether India can embrace technology. It has already demonstrated that capability. The larger question is whether technological progress can be converted into jobs, opportunity, inclusion and greater public confidence.

India's digital payments revolution is perhaps the clearest example of this transformation. Unified Payments Interface has fundamentally changed the way millions of Indians pay for goods and services. Small traders, consumers and businesses have increasingly embraced instant digital transactions. But the next stage of digital finance brings new responsibilities.

The emergence of artificial-intelligence systems capable of acting on behalf of users could make financial transactions faster and more convenient. At the same time, it raises important questions about consent, authentication, accountability and consumer protection. If an artificial intelligence system initiates a transaction, who bears responsibility when something goes wrong? How does a citizen challenge an unauthorised payment? How can the system distinguish between a genuine instruction and a fraudulent one? These questions must be answered before convenience becomes the sole measure of digital progress.

Innovation and regulation should not be treated as opposing forces. Responsible regulation can create the trust that allows innovation to grow. The same principle applies to employment.

Artificial intelligence has the potential to transform almost every major sector from manufacturing and bank-



ing to healthcare, education, agriculture and journalism. It can increase productivity and create entirely new professions. But it can also alter existing jobs and require workers to acquire new skills. For India, this makes education and skill development a national priority.

The country's young population should not merely become consumers of new technology. Young Indians must have the opportunity to become developers, entrepreneurs, researchers, innovators and skilled professionals who shape the technologies of tomorrow. This is where India's digital ambitions must be linked to its employment ambitions. A technologically advanced economy without sufficient opportunities for its workforce cannot be considered a complete success. Digital transformation must ultimately improve people's lives. There is also a wider economic reality. India's digital progress is taking place against a backdrop of global uncertainty, including movements in oil prices, currency markets, interest rates and international trade. These forces eventually reach ordinary households through fuel prices, transportation costs, inflation, loans and the cost of essential goods and services.

For the common citizen, economic growth is not measured merely through headline figures. It is measured through employment, income security, affordable living costs and

the ability to provide a better future for the next generation. That should remain at the heart of India's development strategy.

The country has already built an impressive digital foundation. The next task is to deepen it particularly in rural areas while ensuring that small businesses, farmers, students and ordinary households can participate in the digital economy. India must also ensure that digital infrastructure does not create a new form of inequality between those who possess technological skills and those who do not.

The digital revolution must therefore have a human face. Technology should make government services simpler, businesses more efficient and citizens more empowered. Artificial intelligence should be developed responsibly. Digital payments should remain secure and trusted. And economic growth should create opportunities rather than merely increase technological dependence.

The coming decade could determine whether India remains primarily a massive technology market or becomes one of the world's leading technology creators. That transformation will require more than artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure. It will require strong institutions, quality education, skilled human resources, responsible regulation, entrepreneurship and public trust.

India has already demonstrated to the world that digital transformation can take place on an extraordinary scale. The next challenge is even more important: to demonstrate that technological progress can be inclusive, secure and beneficial to every section of society. That is the real test of India's digital future. And ultimately, the success of a digital India should not be measured by how many machines can think, how many transactions can be completed in a second, or how quickly technology advances. It should be measured by how much better technology makes the lives of its people.

I'm A Woman Motorcyclist, And I Refuse To Be Told Where I Belong



Last Sunday, I was riding on the same Gurugram roads where, elsewhere, a young woman on a motorcycle was being chased and then was allegedly rammed by a car. The incident involving Sia has disturbed me deeply. Not only because she was a woman riding a motorcycle, but because it could have been any one of us. It could have been one of the women I train. It could have been any rider, cyclist, pedestrian, or driver simply trying to get home. Fortunately, Sia was wearing her helmet, gloves, and shoes, which saved her from far more serious injuries in the fall. The entire episode was also captured on an action camera mounted on her motorcycle, and that footage became crucial evidence later. The police subsequently arrested the accused and added the attempt to murder charge to the case. The accused has denied hitting her deliberately and has described the collision as an accident. But for me, the bigger question goes beyond this particular case. Why do our roads feel so unsafe? And why does anyone feel entitled to use a vehicle as a weapon against another human being? Skills Aren't Enough I



am a motorcycle training instructor and a professional rider, and I have founded my own formal riding academy. I have been riding on Indian roads for close to 20 years and have covered lakhs of kilometres on all kinds of motorcycles. I have seen enough to know that knowing how to operate a vehicle, whether it is a car, a truck, a bus, or a motorcycle, is simply not enough. Driving, or riding, is not only about how to accelerate, brake, turn, and balance. It is also about how to behave on a public road. Road sense, etiquette, and public conduct matter just as much. Maintain distance. Give way. Signal before turning. Do not use your phone while riding. Do not drive aggressively because the person ahead of you is slower. Do not turn a disagreement on the road into a personal battle. And avoid road rage at all costs, because it ends badly for everyone involved. These are not advanced skills. This is basic road etiquette. Yet, India con-

tinues to pay an enormous price for unsafe road behaviour. Government data recorded 4,80,583 road crashes and 1,72,890 deaths in 2023. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways identifies several contributing factors, including speeding, mobile phone use, drunken driving, and lane indiscipline. We have somehow normalised all of this. Don't Blame The Machine A vehicle hitting another vehicle is called an "accident". A rider falling is treated as part of riding. Someone cutting across lanes is dismissed with a shrug. We are yet to admit that a vehicle does not move an inch by itself. It starts and rolls only when a human being turns the key. How, then, do we keep blaming the machine when there is always a person behind the wheel? Not everything that happens on the road is inevitable. Some of it is a choice. And when the person on the receiving end is a woman, there is another layer to the

problem. Women riders still attract curiosity, judgement, and, sometimes, hostility. Even when I take women out for a ride after their training at my track, I notice people staring as though a woman on a motorcycle is an unusual sight. It should not be. A woman should not have to justify why she rides a motorcycle. She should not have to prove that she belongs on the road. And she certainly should not have to calculate the possibility of harassment every time she rides alone. We often tell our daughters what to wear, where to go, when to return, and how to protect themselves. Perhaps it is time we also taught our sons something equally important: respect. Respect the woman on the motorcycle. Respect the cyclist. Respect the pedestrian. Respect the person driving faster or slower than you. Respect the road rules even when nobody is watching. My Own Pending Case I say this not as someone who has never faced danger.

**Olympian Pranati Nayak from Odisha AM/NS
India Gymnastics High Performance Centre
to represent India at Asian Games 2026**

Mumbai, September 15, 2026: Olympian Pranati Nayak, who trains at the Odisha AM/NS India Gymnastics High Performance Centre (Odisha AM/NS GHPC) in Bhubaneswar, has been selected to represent India at the 20th Asian Games 2026, scheduled to be held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, from September 19 to October 4. Pranati is the only Indian gymnast selected for the Asian Games and will compete in the Women's Vault and Women's All-Around events in Artistic Gymnastics. Her selection follows a strong run of performances, including a silver medal in the Women's Vault at the FIG World Challenge Cup 2026 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Ashutosh Telang, Director & Vice President – HR & Administration, AM/NS India, said, “Pranati's selection as India's sole gymnast for the Asian Games is a sig-

■ Olympian Pranati Nayak, who trains at the Odisha AM/NS India Gymnastics High Performance Centre (Odisha AM/NS GHPC) in Bhubaneswar, has been selected to represent India at the 20th Asian Games 2028, scheduled to be held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, from September 19 to October 4.

nificant achievement and reflects her consistency, discipline and determination. At the Odisha AM/NS Indian Gymnastics High Performance Centre, our focus is on providing athletes with the training and support required to compete at the highest level. We wish Pranati the very best as she represents India in Aichi-Nagoya." Pranati represented India at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games and has consistently delivered strong performances at national and international competitions. In 2026, she

won silver at the FIG World Challenge Cup in Tashkent and gold at the 54th All India Railway Gymnastics Championship, besides representing India at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. In 2025, she won bronze at the Asian Artistic Gymnastics Championships and the FIG Apparatus World Cup, and secured one gold, one silver and one bronze at the 38th National Games. She has also won multiple medals at national championships and international FIG events over the past few years.

The Odisha AM/NS India Gymnastics High Performance Centre in Bhubaneswar supports the development of high-performance gymnasts through specialised coaching, training infrastructure and athlete support, with the objective of enabling Indian athletes to compete successfully at national and international levels.

**L&T Finance Ltd. (LTF) partners
with Pine Labs to Introduce
Agentic Commerce and Payments
on L&T Finance PLANET App**

Mumbai, September, 2026: L&T Finance Ltd. (LTF), one of the leading Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) in the country, announced a partnership with Pine Labs Ltd., a leading global payments technology company, to integrate Agentic Storefront into the L&T Finance PLANET App at the Global Fintech Fest 2026. This collaboration will enable agentic commerce by allowing AI agents to interact and execute transactions securely within a governed framework. The partnership commences with flight ticket bookings as the debut use case, elevating customer interaction beyond conversational chatbots to complete end-to-end, autonomous transaction fulfillment. Commenting on the development, Mr. Manish Kumar Gupta, Chief Executive – Urban Unsecured Assets, Payments & Digital Partnerships, L&T Finance Ltd. said, “Our endeavor at L&T Finance has always been to leverage cutting-edge digital innovations to simplify financial and lifestyle journeys for our customers. Partnering with Pine Labs to introduce an Agentic Storefront on the L&T Finance PLANET App marks a major shift from conversational assistance to

true transaction execution. By empowering customers with autonomous AI agents that operate securely within user-defined guardrails, we are building a hyper-personalised, effortless commerce & payments experience. Flight bookings are just the beginning; this architecture will scale to multiple merchant categories in the near future." Speaking about the partnership, Mr. Sanjeev Kumar, Chief Technology Officer, Pine Labs Ltd., said, "We are entering a new era where commerce is increasingly driven by intent rather than clicks, searches, and manual decisions. For that shift to scale, trusted AI agents must be able to move from consumer intent to transaction execution securely and autonomously. With P3P and the Grantex protocol, Pine Labs is building the trust infrastructure that enables buyer and seller agents to transact securely and autonomously. Together with L&T Finance, we are enabling a new model of commerce on the L&T Finance PLANET App that combines the intelligence of AI with the trust and accountability consumers expect from financial institutions, helping establish the foundation for agent-to-agent commerce at scale."

AI+ SMARTPHONE TO CROSS 1,000+ SERVICE TOUCHPOINTS; ANNOUNCES FIRST EXCLUSIVE SERVICE CENTRE AND AI+ ASSISTANCE APP

September 2026: Ai+ Smartphone is strengthening its after-sales experience in India with plans to expand its service network to 1,000+ service centers across the country. It will also be establishing its first exclusive Ai+ Service Centre in Delhi this Diwali. Complementing the expansion of its physical service infrastructure, the brand is also introducing the Ai+ Assistance App, a unified digital platform designed to bring device support, service bookings, ticket tracking and troubleshooting assistance together in one place. The expansion will add 200+ service centres to its already existing network of 800+ service centres, further extending the brand's after-sales reach across India. Together, the physical and digital expansion is aimed at making the ownership experience more accessible, transparent and consistent for Ai+ customers, from raising a service request to tracking its resolution. Commenting on the announcement, Madhav Sheth, CEO, NxtQuantum Shift Technologies (Ai+ Smartphone), said, "Building a smartphone brand goes beyond the device. At Ai+, the ownership experience is where the real relationship begins."



Crossing 1,000+ service touchpoints, establishing our first exclusive service centre and introducing the Ai+ Assistance App are important steps towards making support more accessible, transparent and dependable. Our focus is simple, to ensure that wherever our customers are, reliable support is never far away.” The upcoming Delhi facility will be Ai+’s first dedicated Service Centre in India, offering trained technical support, genuine spare parts, standardised repairs, software assistance, warranty support and device setup across the Ai+ smartphone portfolio. For common service requirements, Ai+ is targeting turnaround times ranging from same-day reso-

lution to up to seven days, depending on the nature and complexity of the issue. Alongside the expansion of its physical service network, A+ Smartphone is introducing the A+ Assistance App to simplify the customer support journey and provide greater visibility across the service lifecycle. Through the app, customers will be able to access device and warranty information, locate nearby service centres, book service requests, generate and track service tickets, and access troubleshooting assistance. By connecting its digital support experience with its expanding physical service network, A+ aims to give customers greater convenience and visibility, from identifying an issue and rais-

ing a request to tracking its resolution. The launch of the exclusive Delhi Service Centre and Ai+ Assistance App marks the next phase of Ai+ Smartphone's after-sales expansion in India. As the brand continues to grow its physical service network alongside digital support capabilities, the initiative reflects Ai+'s commitment to making after-sales support more accessible, transparent and dependable, ensuring that its customer commitment extends beyond the point of purchase and across the entire ownership journey. About Ai+ and NxtQuantum Shift Technologies NxtQuantum Shift Technologies is a deep-tech Indian company building secure.

ASUS Collaborates with Rajiv Talreja as the Mentor for MSME Segment, and Strengthen the 'Built for Worry-Free Business' Promise of ASUS Expert Series

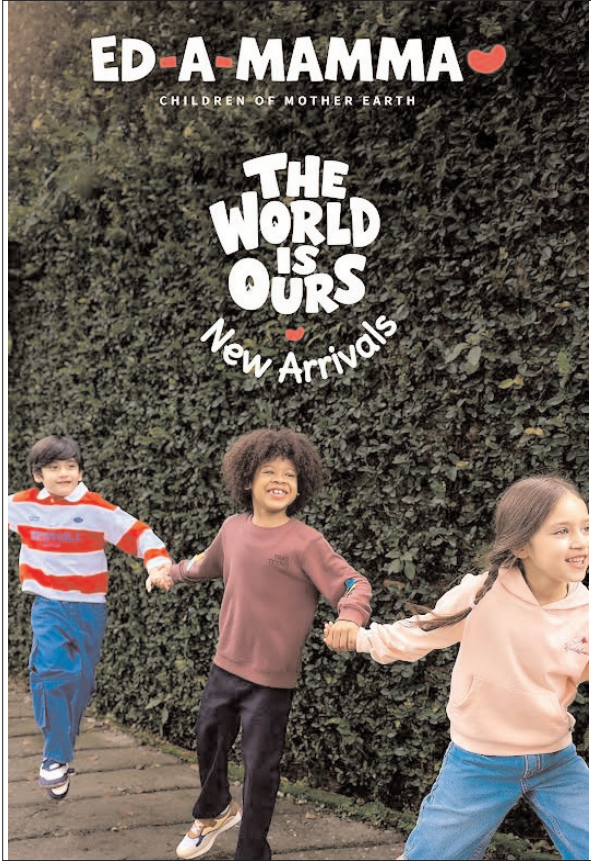


Hyderabad, September 2026: ASUS India is proud to announce Rajiv Talreja, MSME Expert and Founder of Quantum Leap, as the Mentor for the MSME Segment, to strengthen the 'Built for Worry-Free Business' promise of its Expert Series PCs. This landmark, long-term collaboration aims to redefine how Indian MSME leaders leverage business PCs, empowering them to over-

come technological bottlenecks to focus entirely on sustainable enterprise growth. As India's second-largest employing sector and a massive economic engine, MSMEs are scaling rapidly. To sustain this momentum, business owners must eliminate daily tech friction by adopting purpose-built PCs designed for enterprise workloads, boosts productivity and collaboration.

ED-A-MAMMA LAUNCHES 'THE WORLD IS OURS' - AUTUMN WINTER 2026

India September 2026: Ed-a-Mamma, a conscious brand for kids founded by actor Alia Bhatt has introduced 'The World Is Ours', it's Autumn-Winter 2026 collection inspired by the way children see and experience the world. Across ages 0-14, the collection brings together playful storytelling, conscious design and thoughtful details, with each category reflecting a different stage of childhood. For 0-4 years, the collection draws inspiration from the natural world, with animal and outdoor inspired prints. Practical details are built into everyday pieces including cushioned knee patches on joggers that offer added comfort for babies as they crawl, toddle and discover. For 5-14 years, the collection evolves with growing personalities and interests, drawing inspiration from sport and adventure, with nostalgic influences and styles made for moments of celebration. The girls' edit takes inspiration from sports and play, with easy silhouettes, bold number prints and playful detailing. From everyday separates to pieces made for more active days,



the collection brings together comfort and personality, giving girls plenty of ways to mix, match and make each look their own. For boys

denim takes centre stage, with a playful take on classic heritage styles. Flannel checks and repurposed denims bring newness to every-

day favourites, while thoughtful details add a little character to pieces made to be worn, played in and lived in. 'The World Is Ours' is a celebration of childhood as it happens every day - discovering something new, finding what you love and making it your own. From the early years through to growing personalities, the collection brings together a mix of prints, colours, textures and details that reflect the different ways children express themselves. Commenting on the launch, Alia Bhatt, Founder of Ed-a-Mamma, said, "Children see the world with so much curiosity. There's an imagination and sense of possibility in the way they look at even the simplest things and over the last 6 years that has always been a big source of inspiration for us at Ed-a-Mamma. We wanted this collection to feel fun and expressive, but also comfortable and practical. Because that's what children need from their clothes. At Ed-a-Mamma, we're also very conscious of the choices we make as a brand and of finding better ways to do things as we grow.

Hyderabad gets its First Direct Metro-to-Residential Skywalk with Vaasavi Group in LB Nagar

Hyderabad, 16 September, 2026 — Vaasavi Group, one of Hyderabad's leading real estate developers, announced Hyderabad's first elevated skywalk connecting LB Nagar Metro Station directly to its flagship residential township - Vasavi Ananda Nilayam. As per recent updates, the project obtained the key statutory clearances to proceed with construction. The project, once completed, will give direct access to the metro for 3600 residents. The elevated skywalk project is being developed through the Group's developing entities, Vasavi Avenues LLP and SR Infra & Developers. The elevated direct-to-home Skywalk being Hyderabad's first will offer easy accessibility and safe road access to not just Vaasavi's Anandailayam residents but general commuters of LB Nagar. The Skywalk lifts pedestrian movement off a stretch of NH-65 that carries highway-speed traffic with little pedestrian infrastructure, connecting it directly to the metro concourse. Being the last stop on the

metro's longest corridor, the station puts the city's western technology belt within a single interchange, and the area's own growth has long been tied to the industrial and IT parks to its east. Once complete, the Skywalk will replace what is today a 10-12 minute walk and road crossing along NH-65 with a direct, safe, elevated 2-3 minute walk from the metro concourse straight into the Vasavi Ananda Nilayam township. The project recently secured the No Objection Certificate (NOC) from L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad Limited (LTM-RHL) along with the Traffic Police NOC from the DCP Traffic-II, Malkajigiri. On-ground work-zone traffic diversion permissions, including consent from the ACP LB Nagar Traffic Division and the SHO LB Nagar Traffic PS, will be finalised ahead of barricading and the start of site work. "We are building for a Hyderabad that will look very different, a decade from now, one where a resident steps out of the lobby, walks a covered path and boards a

train without ever setting foot on a highway. Mass transit is only as good as its last mile, and completing that final stretch is where private developers can do the most for a neighbourhood, whether it is a shift worker reaching a factory, a child reaching school or a family reaching a hospital. The Skywalk is our first expression of that idea, and it has been engineered to carry far more than the footfall of today, so that it keeps serving the area as the network stretches eastward and towards the airport. Having its design and safety vetted by IIT Hyderabad gives us, and more importantly our residents, the confidence that what we hand over will hold its own for generations," said Vijay Kumar Yerram, Chairman & Managing Director, Vaasavi Group.

■ A FIRST FOR HYDERABAD'S METRO-LINKED REAL ESTATE

While Hyderabad Metro has previously connected stations directly to malls and IT parks - including Punjagutta, Hitec City, and

Irrum Manzil to nearby retail destinations, and Raidurg to Mindspace IT Park - the LB Nagar Skywalk marks the first time a private residential township in the city. The project will be directly and seamlessly linked to a metro station via a dedicated elevated pathway.

■ THE DIFFERENTIATING FACTORS

Designed and proof-checked by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Hyderabad, the Skywalk will connect directly with the concourse level of LB Nagar Metro Station. The structure comprises 10 main pillars, each 5.94 m in diameter and 8.64 m in height, spaced 12-14 m apart, built along the footpath adjacent to NH-65, 14.5 m from the central median. An additional pillar has been mapped inside the project boundary to accommodate future service road widening, and the distance between the main skywalk pillar and the internal boundary pillar (with dropping stairs) is approximately 12.5 m.

Eight children among 21 killed after war-damaged Gaza building collapses, rescuers say

At least 21 people have been killed, including eight children, and dozens are missing after a war-damaged building collapsed in the Gaza Strip overnight, local rescuers and medics say. Witnesses told the BBC that the six-storey building in the Tal al-Hawa area of Gaza City had been left tilting dangerously to one side after an Israeli strike more than a year ago. Displaced families were living inside because they were desperate, they said. UN agencies and an Egyptian team have joined the search for survivors, but officials say it is proceeding slowly due to a lack of equipment. In the initial rescue effort, members of the Hamas-run Civil Defence agency resorted to using their bare hands. "We are still hearing voices from under the rubble, so there is still hope to find people," said Raed al-Dahshan, the director of the Civil Defence in Gaza City. He added: "The limited availability of shelter options forced residents to move into this building, believing it was safe. However, at one point it collapsed entirely, tragically crashing down on people as they slept." A woman living in a tent nearby, Umm Mohammed Bakrun, said she had been talking to her son when the building collapsed suddenly in the early hours of Wednesday. "It felt like an earthquake. There was a loud sound and I couldn't stand up. Stones rained down on us and when I looked outside I saw a lot of dust," she told the BBC. "Within minutes, there were screams everywhere."



Another witness, Mansour Abu Mohammed, said the building collapsed "in a few seconds". "Every day, a stone or a few stones would fall from it, but the people inside couldn't find anywhere else to live. I used to live next door to it and you could see that it was tilting to one side." Locals said some 10 families had been living in the building's apartments. The head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Gaza office, Alessandro Mrakic, told reporters at the scene that between 70 and 100 people were believed to be trapped under the rubble. "The situation, as you see, is tragic because we don't have the equipment and machinery that is needed. There are actually people digging with their bare hands," he said. Mrakic also warned that approximately 400 other war-

damaged buildings across Gaza were at imminent risk of collapse, particularly as winter approaches. "We need support, most importantly with machinery, equipment, among others. Our colleagues here don't have [engine] oil and spare parts to continue to work with all the equipment that is still in Gaza." The UN's humanitarian relief co-ordinator, Ramiz Alakbarov, said he was "devastated" by the reports of the building collapse. "No-one should have to risk their life simply to find a safe place to shelter," he said. He also urged Israeli authorities to approve deliveries to Gaza of heavy machinery for rescue operations, as well as tents, tarpaulins and other non-food items for displaced people ahead of the winter rains. Israel says its restrictions are meant to keep equipment out of the hands of

Palestinian armed groups that could also have military uses. An estimated 80% of all structures in Gaza have been destroyed or damaged during the war between Israel and Hamas, according to the UN. More than 1.9 million people - about 90% of the territory's population - have been displaced, many of them multiple times, and 1.2 million of them are currently living in tents or makeshift shelters, it says. The UN has warned that the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains dire despite the ceasefire agreed last October, as Israeli air strikes and other attacks continue to hit populated areas, causing casualties and property damage and driving further displacement. On Tuesday, Israeli air strikes killed at least five Palestinians, including two children and a Hamas commander, accord-

ing to health officials and Hamas sources. The Israeli military said it killed a Hamas commander in southern Gaza and another fighter in the north. In both cases, a child was also reportedly killed. Separately, the British charity Medical Aid for Palestinians said that a patient was killed by an Israeli drone at a health centre it supports in Jabalia in northern Gaza. A spokesperson for the Israeli military told the BBC it was not aware of such an incident. The Gaza war was triggered by the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023, when about 1,200 people were killed and 251 others were taken hostage. Since then, more than 73,790 people have been killed in Gaza, according to the territory's Hamas-run health ministry, whose figures are considered reliable by the UN.

EU chief backs plan for Canada to become 'associate member'

The president of the European Commission has backed proposals for Canada to become the EU's first "associate member". Ursula von der Leyen told the European Parliament on Wednesday she wanted to work on "opening the door" for Canada, which would involve closer ties on various key sectors. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney last week spoke of seeking a "unique alliance" with the EU. The country currently faces tense relations with the US, compounded by an intensifying dispute over trade. Without mentioning US President Donald Trump by name, von der Leyen said offering Canada some sort of EU membership was "not a partnership against anyone else, but for our common strength". She added: "Partnerships are a strategic choice for Europe. But they also respond to the fracture in the international rules-based system". Carney was in attendance at the annual key note speech in Strasbourg, and is due to address the parliament on Thursday. Trade talks between Canada and the US collapsed last month, sparking a series of new tariff measures. Trump's repeated talk of making Canada a "51st state" has also helped to fuel the feud between the North American neighbours. Carney's new love-in with EU has everything to do with Trump. Von der Leyen told the EU's State of the Union address that the bloc and Canada "see the world with the same eyes", including on topics ranging from AI, to climate change



and geopolitics. "And we have stood together: on Ukraine, on defence, on raw materials and on supply chains. But above all... Europe and Canada believe in democracy." She did not give specific details on how any Canadian membership would work, but listed manufacturing, technology, AI, defence, energy, critical minerals and economic security as key areas for cooperation. Both she and other European leaders have found a reliable ally in Carney as they deal with similar problems. In particular, they have faced Trump's aggressive use of tariffs and his threat to annex Greenland which is a sovereign territory of EU member Denmark. But "associate membership" of the EU does not currently exist and the process, if agreed, could take years. Earlier this year, Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz suggested - to a mixed reaction - that Ukraine could be granted this new status. Some countries in the western Balkans including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia are already on the

long road towards full EU membership. In Eastern Europe, Georgia and Moldova are also applying. Ten of the bloc's 27 members are yet to ratify a free-trade agreement struck with Ottawa nearly a decade ago, and some capitals would prefer to build on existing defence and trade agreements rather than create a new form of membership for Canada. Setting out the EU's political and policy priorities for year ahead, von der Leyen also proposed the formation of a European Security Council, which would include the UK and Ukraine, amid an ongoing threat to the continent from Russia. "For a long time, we have discussed a leaders' format focused on the security of our continent, with partners like Canada, Norway, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and others involved," she said in the wide-ranging address. "This is even more urgent now, given the nature and scale of the risks at play. This is why we will set out our ideas to make a European Security Council a reality." Calls for such a body have been growing since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Iran war has led to US munitions shortfalls, Pentagon inspector confirms



The US defence department's inspector general says the war with Iran has led to "shortfalls" in munitions and a bottleneck in resupply, contradicting President Donald Trump who has repeatedly denied the US is facing shortages. Trump has claimed US munitions supplies are "virtually unlimited" and said reporting otherwise is "fake news". But the independent watchdog said the US spent more than \$22 billion on munitions from February through to June, leading to "strategic inventory shortfalls". When asked about the watchdog's report, the White House said the US had "more than enough" munitions.

The report provides a first-of-its-kind, independent glimpse into US weapons stockpiles, data that is typically classified. Previous estimates have painted a dire picture of the US shortages. Over the course of the war, US forces have expended vast quantities of both long-range ground attack systems and the air and missile defences used to intercept incoming Iranian attacks. A late July estimate from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, or CSIS, found that stocks of some interceptors - such as the Patriot missile and Terminal High Altitude Area Defense.

OPENAI BOSS SAYS WORLD 'RIGHT TO BE AFRAID' BUT SHOULD TRUST AI FIRMS

The boss of ChatGPT-maker OpenAI says people should have more faith in AI firms to keep the tech safe, amid rising public concerns about the risks. "The world should trust that we are going to do the right thing because it's the right thing and we feel the magnitude of this," Sam Altman said on Tuesday during a conference in San Francisco. He accepted people were justified in being concerned about AI, as the capability of the tools has progressed rapidly. But critics say firms cannot be trusted to self-regulate, with left-wing Senator Bernie Sanders and Steve Bannon, a former adviser of US President Donald Trump, among those calling for greater governance of AI. Trump himself has criticised calls for more guardrails on the fast-moving technology, calling fears about AI's safety a "hoax". He said the only "guardrails" needed for AI was a "strong and smart" president. Altman's comments on Tuesday came during an appearance at an annual conference hosted by software firm Salesforce. "It doesn't take as much imagination as



it used to for [us] to imagine how this could go wrong," he said. "I think the world is right to be afraid of this." But AI bosses themselves have also admitted it may be difficult to regulate a technology which is changing so quickly. In an interview with Axios published on 3 September, Altman said he had expected Congress to create a "basic framework" for advanced AI after his 2023 testimony, but that has yet to happen. He suggested lawmakers have struggled to keep pace with the technology and to regulate it without "slow[ing] down innovation". New safety legislation on AI is unlikely to emerge from the US Congress

anytime soon, despite the fact lawmakers returned from their summer break on Monday. There is a lack of consensus within both US parties on how any regulation would happen - and the House is set to enter recess again at the end of the week ahead of the midterm elections in early November. Why Trump is all-in on AI despite the warnings Altman's comments on Tuesday were the first time he had spoken publicly since a post went viral last week by a researcher who quit the AI firm Anthropic. The researcher claimed AI could "kill all humans" by the end of the decade if left unchecked. A handful of other AI executives

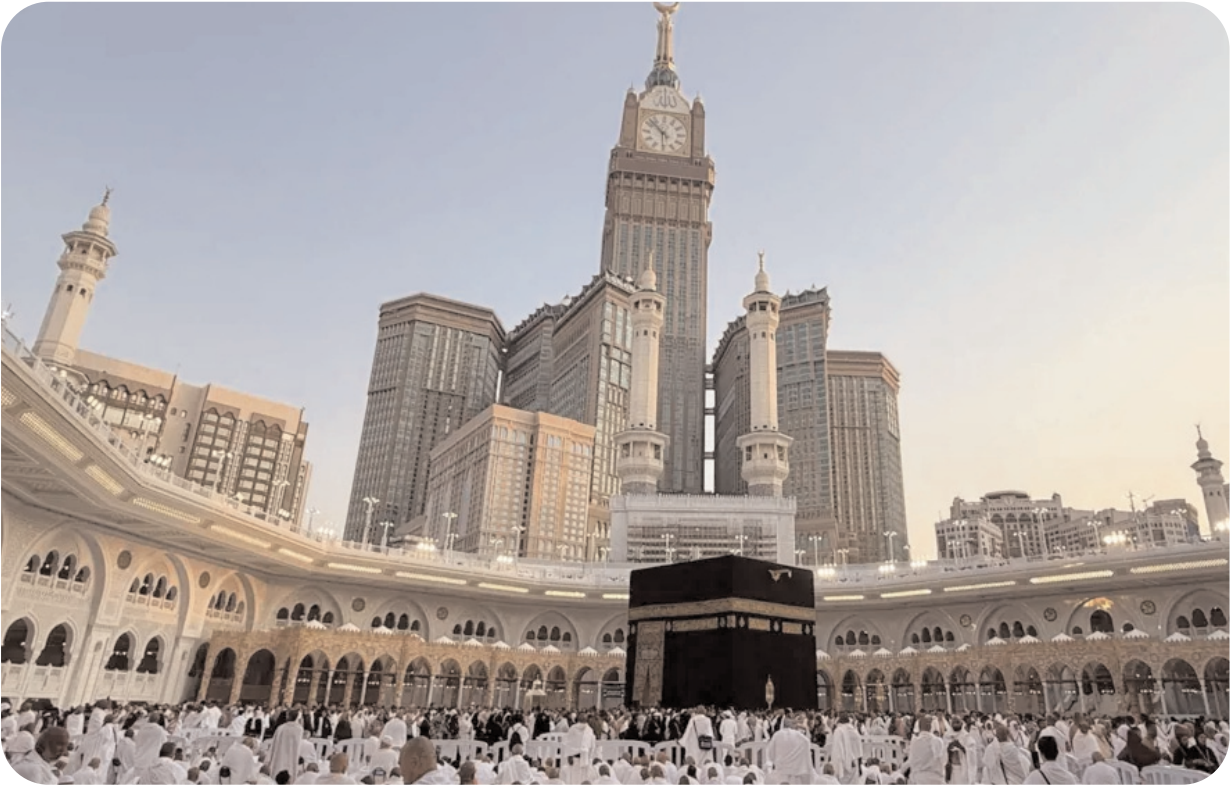
and experts responded by saying they agreed with the assessment, though they didn't explain how they came to their conclusions or how exactly AI could accomplish such a thing. After Altman's comments, Mark Zuckerberg wrote on X that every AI firm had the ability and the incentive "to take its own actions" towards safety. "Any lab that doesn't focus on alignment will fall behind," the Meta chief executive wrote. "Labs face significant liability if their models cause harm, so they have a strong incentive to prevent this as well." Alignment is a field which aims to build human ethical ideas and principles into AI. In other words, it aims to keep it on track with what humans value. Some political figures have pushed back against the view that AI firms should be able to self-regulate. Bernie Sanders said decisions about AI had been left to "a handful of the richest people in the world", while former White House strategist Steve Bannon said the public could not trust tech oligarchs to regulate themselves.

Journalist and pilot among three killed after news helicopter crashes in LA



Photojournalist Eliana Moreno and pilot George Marciniw have been named as being among three people killed after an NBC Los Angeles helicopter crashed in the city's suburbs, the station has confirmed. NBC Los Angeles said its NewsChopper4, which also operated for Telemundo 52, was in the area on Tuesday reporting on a deadly bus crash which killed two people. Fire officials said an unidentified pedestrian was also killed, and two others were taken to hospital. Tributes, including from the local news community, have started to come in led by the station's

hosts, who called the victims "valued friends and colleagues". One CBS editor said their "hearts are shattered". "That helicopter community is a small group of people, and it's just devastating to know that this has happened to one of those people, to our friends and our colleagues at NBC4," said Mike Rogers, CBS Los Angeles assignment editor. Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said she was "absolutely devastated by the loss of life in Chatsworth tonight". "My heart is with the families and loved ones of those we lost in the tragic bus collision and helicopter crash.



Saudi Arabia says it shot down Houthis drone south of Mecca

ALL SUPPORT ACTS ON ED SHEERAN'S US TOUR QUIT AFTER MACKLEMORE DROPPED

All of the remaining support acts on Ed Sheeran's US tour have quit, after the rapper Macklemore was dropped from the line-up for making pro-Palestinian remarks on stage. Among them were Finneas, the brother of pop star Billie Eilish, who said in a statement: "Artists must not be silenced when they speak up for the oppressed." Irish singer-songwriter Aaron Rowe and Danish band Lukas Graham also announced their departure. Irish folk band Beoga, who perform with Sheeran on stage every night, dropped out too. The announcements came hours after Sheeran said he would not be drawn into a public debate over Gaza, and stressed he was not responsible for Macklemore being removed from the tour. "Macklemore



coming off tour was the promoter's decision, it was not mine," Sheeran said on Instagram. "I would never let down the fans who had made plans, nor would I abandon the touring crew and the other support acts and musicians who rely on me for work and to make a living." Sheeran is set to next perform at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia on Saturday. His Loop tour website has

not been updated, and Graham and Rowe are still listed as special guests. Earlier this month, Macklemore - real name Benjamin Haggerty - called for a "free Palestine" and showed images of devastation in Gaza during two concerts in New Jersey. His comments drew criticism from Jewish groups, after which some venues put pressure on the tour promoters to drop him from the

tour. In his statement, Sheeran said he had spoken to the venues "at length all week to try and build a bridge" - but the promoters, Messina Touring Group, had ultimately pulled the plug. While the star said he was "appalled by the conflict between Israel and Palestine" and that the "suffering and pain caused on both sides is a human tragedy", he also attempted to explain his decision to keep political issues at arm's length. "I am not complicit," he wrote. "I have my personal views on this devastating conflict. Just because I choose not to speak publicly, it doesn't mean I don't have them, and it doesn't mean I don't care. "Nor does it mean I don't support causes in my own, personal way."

Women's Premier League 2027 To Be Staged From January 14 To February 7

The fifth edition of the Women's Premier League will be played from January 14 to February 7, 2027 while its auction will be held on October 28 this year in Kochi, the BCCI announced on Wednesday. The BCCI however did not disclose the host cities for the WPL. "As the biggest T20 league in women's cricket, the WPL has established itself as a significant platform for the growth of the sport, bringing together leading players from India and around the world while creating opportunities for emerging talent to perform at the highest level," said the BCCI in a statement. The Player Retention deadline is set for September 28. "The five franchises will have the opportunity to retain players from their existing squads as they begin putting their combinations in place for the new season," the BCCI



added. In the 2026 edition, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, led by Smriti Mandhana, had won their second WPL title. The matches were held in Navi Mumbai and Baroda. The first edition of WPL was held in 2023. Both Mumbai Indians and RCB have won couple of titles each. The fifth edition of

the Women's Premier League (WPL) will be played from January 14 to February 7, 2027, the BCCI has announced. The deadline for the five franchises to submit their player retentions ahead of the tournament is September 28, before the auction will be held on October 28 in Kochi. It will be a mini-

auction this time, after 73 slots were filled at the mega-auction in Delhi for the last season. Each squad can have a maximum of 18 players with a salary cap of INR 15 crore. There is no cap on the number of players that can be retained. Deepti Sharma was the most expensive player at last

year's mega-auction with UP Warriorz picking her for INR 3.2 crore, followed by Melie Kerr (Mumbai Indians, INR 3 crore) and Shikha Pandey (UPW, INR 2.4 crore). Kashvee Gautam, who attracted a bid of INR 2 crore from Gujarat Giants at the WPL 2024 auction, was the most expensive player at a mini-auction followed by Simran Shaikh, whom UPW picked at the WPL 2025 auction for INR 1.9 crore. Royal Challengers Bengaluru are the defending champions of the WPL, having also won the competition in 2024. Two-time champions MI are likely to have a new head coach with Lisa Keightley being appointed Cricket Australia's national development lead. UPW also have bolstered their support staff by appointing Neetu David as their chief scout. She took over from Bengal allrounder Rajib Dutta.

Kapil Dev Asked About India's Refusal To Receive Women's Asia Cup Trophy From Mohsin Naqvi. India Great's One-Line Reply

It's sort of a deja vu. After 2025, it's the same story in 2026. After the men's team, now the women's cricket team has refused to receive the Asia Cup trophy from Pakistan's Mohsin Naqvi. Besides being the head of Asian cricket, he is also Pakistan's interior minister. The Indian women's team's refusal to accept the trophy from Naqvi was a repeat of the position first taken in the 2025 men's edition of the tournament. The Suryakumar Yadav-led side did not accept the winner's trophy from Naqvi to protest against the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people that same year. Indian cricket great Kapil Dev was asked about India's refusal to accept the Women's Asia Cup trophy from Mohsin Naqvi. "Tell all of them to play golf," was his brief reply. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Vice-President Rajeev Shukla said the decision not to accept the Women's Asia Cup trophy from



Asian Cricket Council (ACC) President Mohsin Naqvi following their tournament victory in Dubai was taken after thorough discussion. At the Dubai International Stadium, India defeated Sri Lanka by 72 runs on Sunday to secure their record eighth Women's Asia Cup title. But Harmanpreet Kaur's squad declined to collect the trophy from Naqvi, who also serves as Pakistan's interior minister and head of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). The stance mirrored the decision taken by the Indian men's team after their 2025 Asia Cup victory over Pakistan.

Following a 50-minute delay, Naqvi distributed runners-up medals to Sri Lanka before the presentation ceremony concluded abruptly. "We discussed the trophy issue and decided not to take it from him. He didn't object to it, and we told our team. They gave whatever they had and left. There was no quarrel, no fight, no clash, and what (Devajit) Saikia ji said is right. When you sit at a match, everyone sits and meets there. It doesn't mean that you have to criticise them excessively. When you sit at a match, everyone sits there and meets people from various countries," Shukla told reporters.

"WANTED TO WIN MEDAL AT ASIAN GAMES, DENIED SELECTION": RASHID KHAN

Rashid Khan, one of the finest spinners the modern game has seen, remains a phenomenon with the ball in his hand. Over the years, Rashid has also developed his skills with the bat and become a handy option down the order, especially at death. On a personal level, Rashid has done wonders, broken records and set benchmarks. But it's his trophy cabinet with the Afghanistan national team that still remains empty. In New Delhi for the 3-match T20I series against India, Rashid Khan spoke to NDTV in an exclusive chat and touched upon some intriguing topics, including his duels with the 15-year-old sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, as well as the sensitive topic of the Asian



Games. Question: I am joined by one of Afghanistan's superstars at the moment, Rashid Khan, the former Afghan captain and now one of the best spinners in world cricket. Thank you very much for talking to us, Rashid. Afghanistan is having a T20 bilateral series after a very long time. In fact, almost after seven years, you

have come to India with the team. But given the way the team has performed, would you say it is a lack of match practice or a lack of talent in the team? Rashid Khan: Well, it has been a long time since we have had this series. I think we had one about three years ago in India. However, the more you play against bigger teams, the better you

get. We certainly have the talent and skill in the team; it is just about making sure you execute your plans at the right time and have trust and belief in your skills. I feel like that is something we have been missing. It is not a skill-wise issue. The skill and talent are right up there, but sometimes under pressure, you make mistakes. I feel those mistakes are what hold us back. Question: Rashid, when we look at the Afghan team, it is a side of individual brilliance, but collectively, the performance does not always show. You are yet to win a major tournament. Where is it really lacking? Rashid Khan: As I mentioned, it is just about bringing your best game under pressure.

Sanju Samson Ends Silence On Competition With Vaibhav Sooryavanshi With Mic-Drop Statement

Chasing a target of 160 runs against Afghanistan in the first T20I, Team India never looked under pressure as the opening duo of Sanju Samson and Abhishek Sharma forged an 88-run partnership for the first wicket. Samson roared back to form with a 57-run knock off just 22 balls as India overhauled the total in just 14.5 overs. The wicket-keeper batter's exemplary knock put the chatter around his competition with the 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi to bed, showing the cricket world again that form is temporary, while class is permanent. Samson, speaking in the press conference after the game, was asked about the competition for the two opening spots in the T20I team. However, the veteran crick-



eter produced a mic-drop statement, saying competition only exists for the outside world. For him, both Sooryavanshi and Abhishek are teammates who are playing together for the country. He stressed that there is no chatter in the team about one player being snubbed or another not getting enough opportunities. "I think they

(Sooryavanshi and Abhishek Sharma) are competitors for the outside world, but we are a team, and we are playing for our country. We want to win the game first, and then it comes down to the other individuals. We cannot sulk or be in a negative frame of mind, thinking, 'Oh, I did not get it, why was it given to him?' Those kinds of mind-

sets do not work here," Samson told reporters in the post-match press conference. Samson also spoke about the chatter on social media, where a number of former Indian cricketers have opined on the competition for the opening spot. Some suggest that Sooryavanshi deserves to play over Samson in the team, while others believe Abhishek should make way for the teenage batter. While Samson is not someone who pays heed to the comments on the internet, he admitted to having come across some remarks made by former cricketers. "I try to switch the Wi-Fi off. But sometimes the Wi-Fi gets switched on, and comments become visible. Some senior player says something.

Mbappe, Vini and Konate obscure Real's Ceuta message



Kylian Mbappe, Vinicius Junior and Ibrahima Konate rolled up their pre-game T-shirts ahead of Real Madrid's match at Elche on Tuesday to obscure the message of support for the people of Ceuta.

Released despite seven straight wins, baffled Mokaev vows UFC return

It has been more than two years since Muhammad Mokaev was released by the UFC - and yet he is still searching for answers. In July 2024 the Russian-born Briton had just stretched his winning run in the promotion to seven fights with a unanimous decision victory over Manuel Kape at UFC 304. From the outside, Mokaev appeared to have it all. Victory over Kape in Manchester had seemingly further cemented his place as a top contender in the flyweight division and a title shot appeared to be within his grasp. But later that night UFC president Dana White made the shock announcement they would not be re-signing Mokaev.



Military Service, Then The Climb Again: The Resilience Of Korean Tennis



Seoul: Professional tennis is built around rhythm -- playing week after week, collecting ranking points, carrying confidence from one tournament to the next -- but for South Korean men, there is an unavoidable interruption that can arrive in the middle of that journey. Mandatory military service. For Korean players, it means learning to adapt their careers around an obligation and then, in many cases, finding their way back to the professional circuit after an 18-month absence. Seong-chan Hong is living that experience. The 29-year-old reached a career-high 139 in September 2024. In top-form he had beaten formidable teammate Soom-woo Kwon and India's Sumit Nagal at Indian Wells that year. He also won 14 ITF titles and one Challenger. But he enlisted in the military in January 2025 and returned to competition this year. Due to the long break, he is now ranked outside 1000. He has played only a handful of matches since his return as he begins the climb again. Korea Davis

Cup captain Jong-Sam Chung acknowledged the difficulty of the situation, even as he stressed that the players have little choice because military service is an obligation for all Korean men. "When you are doing well, you have to be in the right mood. But we are obligated to be in the military," Jong-Sam said ahead of Korea's Davis Cup tie against India here. The current active-duty period is 18 months for the Army and Marine Corps, with longer terms for the Navy and Air Force. Why military service for all Korean men? The system stems from South Korea's security situation following the Korean War, which ended in a 1953 armistice but not a peace treaty. Universal male conscription has subsequently remained a central part of the country's national defence system. Initially, they learn basics like how to shoot, throw a grenade and for 12 months they perform assigned jobs as per their skills -- fixing electricals, vigilance and once in three months they perform war simulation.

F1 to have 10 sprint races in 2027, including Monaco

Formula 1 has increased the number of sprint races from six to 10 for the 2027 World Championship. Sprint events, which feature a shorter race on Saturday and an extra qualifying session on Friday, will be held for the first time in Bahrain, Australia, Japan, Monaco, and Abu Dhabi. The other sprints will be in Canada, Britain, Italy, Brazil, and Qatar, it was revealed as the calendar was formally announced. The maximum number of sprints previously in a season has been six. The 2027 season is scheduled to start in Bahrain on 12-14 March, followed by Saudi Arabia a week later, but both



events will remain in doubt while the war in the Middle East continues. Bahrain is the default season-opening

race, but Australia has hosted the first grand prix for the past two years because of the timing of the Muslim holy

month of Ramadan. The 2026 season is due to end with two races in Qatar and Abu Dhabi, and while F1 is plan-

ning to complete the calendar as scheduled, it is working on contingency plans if those races cannot be held as a result of the continuing conflict between the US/Israel and Iran. The same applies for the start of next season as F1 considers its options for an alternative opening schedule if racing in the Middle East looks impossible by the end of this year. On Sunday, a summit involving some of the nations involved in or affected by the conflict released a statement urging "maximum restraint" in the war. The British Grand Prix will be on 2-4 July, and the 2027 season reintroduces races in Portugal

and Turkey, returning for the first time since being used as placeholder events during the pandemic. Sprint events usually come at a higher price for race organisers but they are in demand because they increase the chance of selling more tickets, with competitive action on each of the three days of the meeting rather than only Saturday and Sunday. Silverstone believe holding a sprint this year was a large part of the reason for the British Grand Prix's highest ever attendance - 64,000 more fans attended over the course of the four days compared with the year before, which was not a sprint.

Aasmaan" Teaser: What Happens When Faith, Fear and Fire Collide?



The skies turn darker, the clock keeps ticking, and an unsettling world begins to reveal itself in the official teaser of Aasmaan. Produced by Kondaru Venkatesh and Srikanth Mannem under Klin Kaara Celluloids, the Telugu thriller marks an intriguing new chapter for the production house's maiden venture. Directed by Ram Nandhan and headlined by Meghamsh Srihari, the teaser introduces a world where rituals, mystery, fear and violence appear to exist on the same fault line, offering only fragments of a larger story while leaving its most crucial questions unanswered. The teaser deliberately refuses to explain its world in con-

ventional terms. Instead, it moves through a series of striking and increasingly unsettling images — ticking clocks, rituals, candles, groups gathered in white, flowers, ominous spaces, moments of domesticity, police intervention and the sudden eruption of violence. At the centre of this shifting landscape is Meghamsh Srihari, whose presence evolves from the familiar to the fierce as the teaser progresses. Fire becomes one of its most powerful visual motifs, culminating in an intense glimpse of Meghamsh amid a charged and mysterious setting. Rather than spelling out the conflict, the teaser uses these images to establish an atmosphere of uncertainty

and leave audiences wondering how each piece connects. The film brings together a distinctive creative team led by writer-director Ram Nandhan, who makes his Telugu debut with Aasmaan. Having previously directed two Arabic films, while also working as an assistant to veteran filmmaker Kodi Ramakrishna, Ram Nandhan brings a cross-cultural filmmaking perspective to a story rooted in suspense and mystery. The teaser reflects that intent through a visual world that feels both unfamiliar and deeply atmospheric, while keeping the central narrative deliberately under wraps. For Meghamsh Srihari, Aasmaan presents a notably

different screen space. The teaser offers glimpses of an intense and physically charged performance, placing the actor within a world where the stakes appear to escalate with every passing moment. The contrast between quieter, human moments and the increasingly volatile imagery around him creates one of the teaser's central questions: what exactly has Meghamsh been drawn into, and what lies behind the events unfolding around him? The film's technical crew includes music by Prashanth R Vihari, cinematography by Shoyabh, and art direction by Krishna Mohan Talluri. Swapna Kondaru serves as CEO, with Praveen Gundlathoti as Executive Producer. Publicity designs are by Dhani Aelay, while SK Naidu handles PRO responsibilities. The production is backed by Kondaru Venkatesh and Srikanth Mannem, marking the first production from Klin Kaara Celluloids as the banner looks to build a slate of films with distinctive subjects and filmmakers. With its teaser choosing atmosphere over exposition, Aasmaan positions itself as a thriller that wants audiences to look beyond the obvious. The clocks are ticking, the rituals have begun, and the hunt is officially underway. What connects the people, the rituals, the violence and the fire remains deliberately obscured leaving Aasmaan with a mystery that has only just begun to unfold.

Second Song from Chitralayam Studios' New-Age Crime Comedy 'Baa Baa Black Sheep', Released by Hit Machine Anil Ravipudi

GRAND THEATRICAL RELEASE ON OCTOBER 9

Highlights

■ 'Baa Baa Black Sheep' is a new-age crime comedy being made with a different concept to entertain audiences across all sections. Presented by Donepudi Chakrapani and produced by Venu Donepudi under the Chitralayam Studios banner, the film is directed by Guni Manchikanti.



'Baa Baa Black Sheep' is a new-age crime comedy being made with a different concept to entertain audiences across all sections. Presented by Donepudi Chakrapani and produced by Venu Donepudi under the Chitralayam Studios banner, the film is directed by Guni Manchikanti. The movie is set for a grand theatrical release on October 9. Tinu Anand, Upendra, George Maryan, Akshay, Vishnu, Karthikeya, Vismayasri, Malavi Malhotra, Kashyap, Raja Ravindra and others play key roles. Interestingly, 'Baa Baa Black Sheep' is the first South Indian film to be shot entirely in the state of

Meghalaya. The teaser released earlier, along with the recently released song 'Aaja Meri Jaani', received an amazing response. Against this backdrop, the makers have now released the film's second song, 'Vevela Oohale Chupina'. Hit Machine Anil Ravipudi unveiled the song and congratulated the entire team. Coming to the backdrop of 'Vevela Oohale Chupina', a villain gang is searching for a rare box that they desperately want. They believe that the box is with the hero and heroine. At the same time, the hero and heroine come into the gang's sight. Meanwhile, the hero is holding a gun, which unexpect-

edly goes off. The gang then starts firing back at the hero and heroine. It is against this backdrop that the retro-styled song 'Vevela Oohale Chupina' plays. The song has been penned by Kittu Vissapragada and sung by Shrri Sagar. With a distinctive backdrop and engaging music, the song is captivating throughout and makes listeners want to play it on repeat. On this occasion... Producer Venu Donepudi said, "The teaser of our film 'Baa Baa Black Sheep' and the song 'Aaja Meri Jaani' have received a superb response so far. Now, we are bringing the song 'Vevela Oohale Chupina' to you.

This is a song that unfolds in a very different style. My thanks to Anil Ravipudi garu for releasing this song. We are releasing the film on October 9. The post-production work is currently in the final stage. "We completed the entire film in Meghalaya. 'Baa Baa Black Sheep' is the first South Indian movie to have been shot entirely in Meghalaya. We also filmed in breathtaking locations such as Cherrapunji. We successfully completed the film with meticulous planning. This was made possible with the support of our director Guni Manchikanti, the actors, technicians and the entire team."

TAAPSEE PANNU TURNS UP ISLAND HEAT



Taapsee Pannu is currently soaking up some much-needed holiday bliss, sharing dreamy beach pictures from her vacation. The actress captioned her post, "Last minute, but it's essential to celebrate certain victories... Needed this salt and water cleanse to 'reset'. Dressed in chic black swimwear paired with a soft pink cap. Taapsee looked effortlessly relaxed as she posed playfully by the beach and under lush greenery. Adding to the fun, Taapsee recently shared hilarious videos with husband Mathias Boe attempting a viral vaca-

tion pose that went hilariously wrong. Despite multiple tries to nail the perfect picture, the couple ended up with comical outtakes instead, which she candidly shared online, winning hearts for their playful chemistry. On the work front, Taapsee was last seen in "Gandhari," a gripping thriller written and produced by Kanika Dhillon, which premiered on Netflix. The film features Taapsee as a mother caught in the disappearance of her daughter, alongside Ishwak Singh and Jatin Sarna, and has been praised for its intense, emotional storytelling.

GRAND SONG LAUNCH OF 'NEE NAANUNDI DOORANGA' HELD GRANDLY AT PRASADS LAB

The grand song launch event of 'Nee Naanundi Dooranga', produced under the banner of MSM Productions, was held recently at Prasads Lab in Hyderabad. Renowned music director Sri Charan Pakala and popular actor Vikas Vasishtha attended the event as chief guests and extended their best wishes to the entire team. The song 'Nee Naanundi Dooranga' has been created by Jnananda, with music composed by Ramcharan Maturi.

The song, which gives prominence to themes of love and emotions, is expected to connect well with audiences, according to the film's team. Girdhar is playing the lead role of Abhiram, while Madhu will be seen as the female lead Janaki. Speaking at the grand song launch, the chief guests appreciated the team and expressed confidence that the film's music and songs would receive a great response from audiences.



Hero Sri Vishnu Releases 'Yedo Bagundhe' Song from 'E Nimishaniki Emi Jaruguno'



Akil Raj, who gained recognition as a lead actor with Raju Weds Rambai, is now starring in the

upcoming film E Nimishaniki Emi Jaruguno. The film is being made as a distinc-

tive suspense thriller, with Rathika playing the female lead. Sai Teja is directing the movie.

Produced by Bekkem Venugopal and Deevela Srinivasa Rao under the banners of Lucky Media and KD & Co, the film is currently in its post-production stage and is gearing up for release soon. Meanwhile, the makers have released the lyrical video of the song 'Yedo Bagundhe', penned by Krishnakanth. Popular young hero Sri Vishnu unveiled the song. Speaking on the occasion, Sri Vishnu said, "The song feels very fresh, and the visuals are impressive. I believe the song will appeal to everyone. Music director Shashank has composed a wonderful tune. Everything about the film, including its title, feels fresh. I came to know that the film has been made as a time-loop thriller. Movies like this are very rare. I sincerely hope the film becomes a success and brings recognition to everyone who has worked on it.

ACTRESS PRANITHA SUBHASH SETS SIIMA STAGE ON FIRE



Pranitha Subhash turned heads at the SIIMA event in a wine-red sequined gown that instantly grabbed attention. The plunging halter neckline and cutout waist detailing gave the look a bold, glamorous edge, while the fitted sil-

houette and flowing train added red-carpet drama. Soft curls and subtle glam makeup completed the elegant appearance. On the work front, Pranitha was last seen in Ramana Avatara, released in 2024, with no update on her next project.