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Rahul slams PM over police action on students in Bihar

■ New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary over the police action against protesting students in Bihar, asking that while their broken bones would be fixed, their shattered dreams could be restored.

Gandhi shared a video of his recent meeting with students and youngsters from Bihar who, he said, endured "horrific police brutality" for raising their voices against alleged irregularities in the examination system.

In his post in Hindi accompanying the video, Gandhi said, "Imagine, what sin had these children committed that they were shot with bullets? They had only asked the Government for three things — education, employment, and accountability."

"The bone in one student's leg was broken by an AK-47 bullet. His dream of joining the army and serving the nation vanished along with it. Bullets tore through the shoulders of two other students," the leader of the opposition



in the Lok Sabha said. Asserting that the students are not criminals, he said they were the children from poor families who had stepped out to study, carrying their families' dreams. "Some wanted a good job, some wanted to change their family's circumstances," he said.

"The bullet wounds will heal, but where is the hospital that treats the fear that has now settled deep inside these children?" Gandhi questioned.

"Prime Minister ji, Chief Minister ji, their broken bones would be fixed. Can you restore their shattered

dreams?" he said. Gandhi, on meeting students from Bihar on Thursday, had said the BJP should remember that any regime that suppresses the voice of youngsters eventually has to answer to the people, and claimed that day is not far off.

"Police lathis as well as gunfire from AK-47 and pistols left many students injured. A young man aspiring to serve the country in the Army had his leg battered by an AK-47 bullet — and with it, his life-long dream was also shattered," Gandhi had said in a post in Hindi on X.

These young people were

merely demanding fair opportunities, a transparent examination system and their rights, he added.

What was the need to use lathis and bullets in response to such demands, the Congress leader had asked.

"The Government cannot absolve itself of responsibility for such extreme brutality by merely blaming a few low-ranking officials. This action is either the result of orders from above or a sign of the administration's utter failure," he had said.

"No matter what the Bihar Government does, I stand with these young people. I am ready to provide them with every possible assistance," Gandhi had said.

Patna witnessed a pitched battle between job aspirants and police last month as demonstrators tried to march to the chief minister's residence demanding a single-tier teacher job exam and a transparent recruitment process.

The students' protest in Bihar, which began in the first week of August, has received support from opposition leaders, including RJD's working president Tejashwi Yadav.

Bihar floods affect 19 lakh, Ganga rises in Patna

■ Patna

Over 19 lakh people across 11 districts of Bihar have been affected by floods, with authorities sounding an alert in downstream areas after the water level of the Ganga crossed a crucial flood mark at Gandhi Ghat in Patna, officials said on Sunday.

Hathidah and subsequent gauge stations in the state capital are likely to be impacted over the next one to three days, as the Ganga's water level topped the 'highest flood level' (HFL) at Gandhi Ghat in Patna following heavy rain, they said.

Due to the rise in water levels of various rivers in the state, around 19.57 lakh people in 330 gram panchayats across 11 districts — Patna, Bhojpur, Saran, Vaishali, Bhagalpur, Begusarai, Buxar, Samastipur, Munger, Katihar and Araria — have been affected, the officials said.

According to the latest advisory issued by the Water Resources Department (WRD), the level of the Ganga at Hathidah may also cross its previous HFL, prompting heightened vigilance in Begusarai, Lakhisarai, Munger, Bhagalpur and Katihar districts, they said.

"Officials and field-level authorities have been directed to remain alert and con-



tinuously monitor water levels, embankments, vulnerable locations and low-lying areas, while taking precautionary measures as required. "Engineers have been asked to keep flood-control resources and machinery ready. People in affected areas have been advised to avoid going near the river and remain cautious," the advisory stated.

The local administration has also been asked to monitor boat operations, prevent overloading and keep residents informed about the situation.

"At Gandhi Ghat in Patna, the Ganga was flowing at 50.57 metres at 6 am on Sunday, which is 0.05 metre above its previous HFL of 50.52 metres, recorded on August 21, 2016. The trend is stable." At Pandarak in Patna, the Ganga was flowing at 43.92 metres at 6 am, which is 0.19 metre above its previous HFL of 43.73 metres,

recorded on August 16, 2021," the advisory said.

The rivers that are flowing above the danger level in the state include the Gandak at Dumariaghat and Hajipur, the Kosi at Baltara and Kursela, the Budhi Gandak at Khagaria, the Ganga at Hathidah, Bhagalpur, Kahaigaon, Buxar and Munger, the Punpun at Sripalpur, the Bagmati at Benibad and the Ghaghra at Darauli, the officials said.

A total of 110 community kitchens are currently operating in various districts for the flood-affected people, they said, adding, to facilitate the evacuation of people and movement in the affected areas, 1,345 boats have been pressed into service.

Besides, 27 teams of the SDRF and 10 from the NDRF have been deployed in various districts.

In a notification, the East Central Railway on Sunday said some trains have been

cancelled or diverted because of the "alarmingly high water level at bridge number 21" that connects Punpun and Parsa Bazar stations on the Patna-Gaya section. Meanwhile, the opposition sought 'national disaster' status in Bihar in the wake of the floods.

Claiming that 76 per cent of the state's area has been affected by floods, RJD national working president Tejashwi Yadav said 19 districts were reeling under the deluge, with more than 20 lakh people affected.

Yadav, who is Leader of the Opposition in the assembly, said in a post on X, "Livestock has been swept away... public infrastructure severely damaged and lives and property worth thousands of crores lost in the floods." He accused the Bihar Government of being "indifferent" towards the flood victims, and urged the Centre to immediately declare the situation a "national disaster" and provide special financial assistance to the state.

Yadav also sought the deployment of Air Force helicopters for rescue operations, and requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Bihar, assess the situation on the ground and announce relief measures.

Floating screens on Dal Lake to mark first J&K film fest

■ Srinagar

Iconic Bollywood films shot in the Valley, *Kashmir Ki Kali*, *Kabhi Kabhie*, *Arzo* and *Jungle*, will be screened on floating screens installed on Dal Lake starting Monday as part of the first International Film Festival of Jammu and Kashmir (IFFJK).

The four-day festival, themed "Rang-e-Cinema," runs from September 7 to 10 and will feature 135 films from more than 40 countries.

Organisers say the floating cinema will give the event a distinctive visual and experiential character, with audiences watching from shikaras against the lake and the Zabarwan hills.

Director Information and Public Relations, J&K, Shreya Singhal said the initiative is expected to provide an iconic setting for screenings while



showcasing the unique cultural and natural landscape of Jammu and Kashmir to visiting filmmakers, artists and delegates from across India and abroad. She added that the festival seeks to revive J&K's cinematic legacy and position the Union Territory

as a destination for filmmaking and cultural exchange.

Main venues include SKICC and INOX in Srinagar, with additional programmes in Jammu and a dedicated day in Gulmarg.

The festival received

around 1,100 submissions from dozens of countries before a preview committee shortlisted the final 135 titles. Categories include International Panorama, Bharat Panorama, Cinema of the World, Documentary, Hybrid Documentary and

J&K Select. A prize purse of ₹96 lakh will be distributed across nine award categories. The opening screening at INOX Srinagar is the Lebanese film *Dead Dog*, directed by Sarah Francis. Masterclasses, workshops, panel discussions and cultural performances will run alongside the films, giving local students and emerging filmmakers a chance to interact with industry professionals.

More than 300 delegates are expected. Officials say IFFJK aims to rebuild that connection, promote film tourism and create economic opportunities in the creative sector.

Preparations have included beautification and sanitation drives around Dal Lake and key routes, along with security and hospitality arrangements for visiting guests.

Union Ministers, Governor, Chief Minister, Lieutenant Governors, Tourism Secretaries of different States/UTs and many Bollywood personalities are scheduled to attend the first International Film Festival in Srinagar.

A five-member international jury comprising distinguished personalities from the world of cinema, including internationally acclaimed filmmakers, cinematographers, sound artists and film curators, will evaluate the entries.

The jury, headed by acclaimed cinematographer-director Santosh Sivan, includes Oscar- and BAFTA-winning sound designer Resul Pookutty, German film curator Dorothee Wenner, media entrepreneur Keiko Bang and National Award-winning filmmaker Himansu Sekhar Khatua.

Caste census: Stalin urges Union Govt to avoid discrepancies

■ Chennai

DMK president MK Stalin on Sunday expressed disappointment over the Union Government's proposed open-ended format for recording caste details in the upcoming Census 2027.

He also called upon the Tamil Nadu Government to pass a special resolution in the ongoing Assembly session to reflect the sentiments of the people and exert necessary pressure on the Centre to adopt an error-free enumeration process.

In a statement, Stalin alleged that allowing enumerators to manually enter caste names without a standardised, pre-determined drop-down list would lead to severe discrepancies and undermine the core purpose of a caste-based census. "The Union Government's explanation that the Other Backward Classes (OBC) list comprises classes rather than individual castes is completely unacceptable," the former chief minister said. He urged the Centre to consult state Governments, obtain their official lists of Backward Classes (BC) and Most Backward Classes (MBC) and integrate these standardised categories into the census system. "Giving citizens the option to select from an



established list is the only way to ensure accurate data collection, whereas open-ended entries risk generating chaotic results, such as 'falsely' indicating the existence of 46 lakh distinct castes across India", he claimed.

The primary objective of a caste census is to determine the exact population and the socio-economic and educational status of OBC communities, similar to the data collected for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) so that Governments can frame effective reservation policies and development schemes, Stalin said.

"Proceeding with the current flawed methodology would waste nearly ₹12,000 crore of public funds, extensive labour of lakhs of Government employees, turning the entire exercise into a mere eye-wash," he said.

Maharashtra ministers call for DJ-free Ganesh festival

■ Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar

Maharashtra Minister of State for Health Meghana Bordikar and district Guardian Minister Sanjay Shirsat on Sunday made a strong pitch against the use of DJ sound systems during festivals.

Speaking to reporters, Bordikar emphasised that while festivals should be celebrated with enthusiasm, they must not cause distress or health hazards to others.

"Unfortunately, my cousin died because of a DJ system last year. We repeatedly appeal to people, and the Supreme Court has also laid down guidelines, but many fail to adhere to them. The use of DJs can lead to fatal consequences, and I have experienced this personal tragedy myself," she said.

Echoing her concerns, Shirsat said that the city administration and police will strictly enforce noise regulations, urging organis-

ers to celebrate with traditional music instead of DJs.

The MLA, who chaired a preparatory meeting for the upcoming Ganesh festival, noted that public opinion on the issue is divided, but the administration must prioritise public health.

"As far as our city is concerned, we do not want DJ systems. The police will take strict action as per the law — offenders will be fined, and their vehicles carrying the equipment will be seized,"



he warned. He urged Ganesh mandals to voluntarily refrain from using high-decibel sound systems to avoid action.

"I appeal to people to celebrate with enthusiasm and in a traditional manner. Small children and the elderly should be able to comfortably participate and understand the cultural essence of the Ganesh festival. I believe the mandals will heed our appeal," Shirsat added.

TVK functionary hacked to death in Chennai; five arrested

■ Chennai

A functionary of the ruling TVK was hacked to death by an armed gang in Besant Nagar in Chennai, police said on Sunday, with the murder drawing criticism from the Opposition over the State's law and order situation.

Police have arrested at least five persons in connection with the murder so far, officials said. The deceased, identified as Kannan, was chased and attacked with machetes on Saturday night, police said. According to police, Kannan was a history-sheeter with a criminal record. CCTV footage of the attack has since surfaced and been widely shared. Preliminary investigation suggested previous enmity as the likely motive, pointing to a revenge killing, police sources said. The murder drew immediate political criticism, with Leader of the Opposition Udhayanidhi Stalin targeting the Government and alleging that the TVK was a "dumping ground where the criminals seek refuge". Taking



a swipe at the administration, the DMK leader said a history-sheeter who had joined the ruling TVK was chased and hacked to death on an open road, and questioned whether this was the "Vetri" law and order the Government claimed to have established in Tamil Nadu. The incident came a day before Chief Minister and TVK founder C Joseph Vijay is scheduled to respond to the Opposition's criticism of the law and order situation in the Tamil Nadu Assembly.

"Ahead of the Hon'ble Chief Minister replying to the debate on the Police Demand

for Grants tomorrow, a functionary of his own party has been murdered in the Capital," Udhayanidhi said in a post on X.

Joining the Opposition's criticism, PMK president Dr Anbumani Ramadoss cited the murder along with three ATM heists in the suburbs over the past fortnight to target the Government's handling of security. Ramadoss said the killing of Kannan had triggered fear among the public and alleged that no effective measures were in place to curb violent crime and robberies in the Chennai metropolitan area.

VHP's Garba diktat unconstitutional: NCP

■ Mumbai

The NCP(SP) on Sunday slammed the Vishva Hindu Parishad's (VHP) call to bar Muslims from participating in Garba events during Navratri, terming it "unconstitutional", and questioned the BJP-led Maharashtra Government's silence on the issue.

The VHP has announced that Muslims would not be allowed entry to 'Garba' and 'Dandiya' venues across the state during the upcoming Navratri festival, and issued "guidelines" for organisers to verify par-

ticipants' identities by checking their Aadhaar cards and applying 'tilak' on their foreheads.

The Navratri festival will begin on October 11.

Terming the VHP's decision as unconstitutional, NCP (SP) national spokesperson Clyde Crasto said, "We live in a society where we have co-existed in peace and harmony. This diktat from the VHP is bound to disturb it." Crasto, in a statement, questioned if the state Government would remain "mute" and allow the right-wing organisation to dictate law and order in Maharashtra.



NCP(SP) national spokesperson Clyde Crasto

London-bound flight makes emergency landing in Bengaluru



■ Bengaluru

A London-bound Virgin Atlantic flight carrying 270 passengers was forced to make an "emergency landing" at the Kempegowda International Airport here on Sunday after developing a technical glitch shortly after take-off, sources at Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL), which operates KIAB, said.

The flight took off from KIAB at around 8:20 am but reportedly developed a technical issue soon after departure, prompting the crew to

circle the aircraft near Tumakuru for more than half an hour before returning to Bengaluru.

All passengers on board are safe, sources at BIAL said, adding that the aircraft was brought back to KIAB as a safety precaution and made an emergency landing.

The exact nature of the technical problem was not immediately known. Authorities are looking into the cause of the incident.

A spokesperson for Virgin Atlantic said the VS317 flight from Bengaluru to London Heathrow returned to

Bengaluru shortly after departure due to a technical issue. "The aircraft landed safely as a precaution, and the flight was subsequently cancelled," he said in a statement. The airline said the safety and security of its customers and crew are always its top priority.

"We sincerely apologise for the inconvenience caused to our customers. Our teams are supporting those affected and are working hard to rebook them onto alternative services as quickly as possible," the company said.

EDITORIAL

Leaders must act responsibly to uphold honour of nation

Since independence, leaders in the highest government positions have also served as opposition leaders, each with their own political ideologies. Despite opposing government policies, they never undermined the nation or its achievements. They stood by the government on matters of unity and integrity, displaying patriotism beyond political differences. Also Read - Rahul Gandhi to visit his constituency Rae Bareilly tomorrow However, a new trend has emerged—if one opposes the ruling party at the Centre or in states, they resort to baseless allegations, discrediting their own country while praising others. This pattern was evident once again on Monday when Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi made sweeping and objectionable remarks, which his party supporters and spokespersons defended without logic. Also Read - Rahul Gandhi's tribute to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on his birth anniversary stokes BJP's ire Rahul Gandhi recently posted a 9.15-minute video titled "Industrial Vision for India" on social media, showcasing a banned Chinese-made DJI drone. He emphasised the evolving role of drone technology in warfare, citing Ukraine as an example, and criticised the BJP government for failing to harness its potential. However, he overlooked how drone technology has been instrumental in India. In Andhra Pradesh, drones aided disaster management during heavy floods in Vijayawada. Also Read - Rahul Gandhi to take up Save Samvidhan Yatra soon In Punjab, the BSF recently seized narcotics transported via DJI drones from Pakistan. Security forces report that 70-80% of drones used by Pakistan-based narco-terrorists are DJI-made. Similar drones were used for surveillance by militants in Manipur during ethnic clashes, prompting the Army and Assam Rifles to shoot down at least 18 last year. The very technology he seemed to promote is being misused against India. Also Read - Rahul and Tharoor meeting eases tensions in Kerala in Congress DJI is a globally recognised brand widely used for filmmaking, photography, and adventure sports. While India's drone industry is still developing, rather than merely highlighting China's advancements, it would have been more constructive for Rahul to study the sector and propose ways to enhance India's drone capabilities. He should have known that not just China there are other countries like the US and Israel which lead in drone technology, and that India is also a significant player in the global UAV market. While India has invested in indigenous drone manufacturing, further prioritisation of R&D is essential to reduce foreign dependence and achieve technological self-sufficiency. The US possesses the world's largest military drone fleet, using drones for surveillance, strikes, and signal jamming. China leads the consumer drone market, with DJI being the world's largest manufacturer.



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Second single from ‘Hari Hara Veera Mallu’ turns out to be an instant chartbuster; film to release on March 28



Hyderabad: The much-awaited second single from power star Pawan Kalyan's upcoming magnum opus 'Hari Hara Veera Mallu' has just been released, and it has become an instant chartbuster, further raising expectations for the film. From the very first note, the song, titled 'Kollagottinadhiro', hooks listeners with its high energy beats and electrifying vibe. Pawan Kalyan's unmatched screen presence after a long time adds to the excitement, keeping fans glued to their screens. Nidhi Agerwal, who is paired opposite the power star brings a refreshing charm to the visuals making their on screen chemistry a delight to watch. The song also features Anasuya Bharadwaj and Pujitha Ponnada, adding grace and elegance with their dance moves. Composed by Oscar-winning music director MM Keeravani, the song is an absolute earworm, enchanting listeners from the very first play. The track features an ensemble of powerhouse singers across multiple languages — Mangli, Rahul Sipligunj, Ramya Behara, Yamini Ghantasala, Airaa Udupi, Mohana Bhogaraju, Vaishnavi Kannan, Sudeep Kumar and Aruna Mary, each bringing their unique touch to this mesmerising composition. The soulful and impactful lyrics penned by Chandrabose, Abbas Tyrewala, PA Vijay, Varadharaj Chikkaballapura and Mankombu Gopalakrishnan add another layer of magic, making this track even more special. Directed by Jyothi Krishna and Krish Jagarlamudi, and backed by AM Ratnam under Mega Surya Production, 'Hari Hara Veera Mallu' is set to be the first major release of summer 2025, as it is gearing up to hit the big screens on March 28. This larger-than-life spectacle promises to take the box-office by storm.

Blockbuster ‘Chhaava’ set to roar in cinemas in Telugu, to premiere on March 7



Hyderabad: Riding high on an unprecedented wave of admiration and fan fervour, 'Chhaava', the historical epic chronicling the valiant life of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, is all set to make its grand debut in Telugu. Responding to the overwhelming audience demand, the filmmakers have now decided to dub and theatrically release the film in Telugu on March 7. 'Chhaava' was originally released in Hindi. The Telugu release of the movie will be helmed by Geetha Arts Distributions. Produced by Dinesh Vijan's Maddock Films and directed by Laxman Utekar, 'Chhaava' stars Vicky Kaushal in the lead role, with Rashmika Mandanna as Yesubai Bhonsale, Akshaye Khanna as Aurangzeb, Diana Penty as Zinat-un-Nissa Begum, Ashutosh Rana as Hambirrao Mohite, and Divya Dutta as Soyarabai. Since its release on February 14, the film has been on a record-breaking spree, surpassing Rs 417.20 crore GBOC in India in just 11 days. With its gripping storytelling, stellar performances, and a powerful tribute to the legacy of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, 'Chhaava' continues to reign supreme in the hearts of audiences.

Shruti Haasan's international debut project ‘The Eye’ to open 5th Wench Film Festival



Mumbai: The British psychological thriller 'The Eye', which stars Shruti Haasan, is set to have its India premiere as the opening feature of the 5th Wench Film Festival, founded by Sapna Bhavnani. The film festival is dedicated to horror, sci-fi, and fantasy films, and will be held from February 27 to March 2. 'The Eye' marks Shruti's international debut as a leading lady, and is directed by Daphne Schmon. The film tells the haunting story of Diana (played by Shruti Haasan), who journeys to the remote island where her husband Felix (Mark Rowley) drowned, seeking closure by scattering his ashes. However, her grief soon turns to intrigue when she learns of the mysterious 'Evil Eye' ritual, an ancient practice that might bring Felix back but demands a dark and unsettling sacrifice. The film has been shot in Athens and Corfu. Talking about the film's Indian premiere, Shruti shared, "Psychological thrillers have always been a genre that fascinates me. To be

part of a story that dives deep into human emotions, grief, and the supernatural is incredibly exciting. Besides the fact that the film has a riveting storyline and top-notch production quality, what makes this project even more special is that it was created under an all-women-led production house, which aligns with my passion for supporting women in the film industry." "Furthermore, this film champions a sustainable way of filmmaking, something that the world desperately needs. If we want to continue telling our stories, we must be able to tell them in a manner that is conscious of our impact," she added. Director Daphne Schmon said, "'The Eye' is both a love letter to Corfu, the island where my family is from, and an exploration of the dark psychological impulses surrounding grief. The story demanded an actor who could embody its emotional depth and complexity, and Shruti Haasan was the perfect fit. Her ability to navigate Diana's grief, paranoia, and resilience with such authenticity is truly remarkable. It was only an artiste of Shruti's calibre who could do justice to this role, and she has delivered a stellar performance that will leave a lasting impact." The film has been produced by Fingerprint Content. Looks like love is still in the air! With the release of 'Nadaanian' inching closer, the excitement surrounding the film is only intensifying. The latest reel featuring Ibrahim Ali Khan and Khushi Kapoor grooving to 'Ishq Mein' has set the social media on a buzz, offering fans a playful glimpse into their chemistry. The video captures the duo vibing to the track, but the real twist comes when Ibrahim amusingly chooses Khushi's dog over her, perfectly captioned as "When Ishq takes a paw." This light-hearted moment has sparked speculation amongst the audience, could this reflect their dynamic in the film, where love comes with unexpected distractions? Or, is it simply a fun nod to their off-screen camaraderie?

Parineeti Chopra begins shooting for her OTT series debut

Mumbai: Bollywood actress Parineeti Chopra has officially started shooting for her highly anticipated series OTT debut with a Netflix project. On Tuesday, the Kesari actress took to her social media handles and shared a note that read, "Some mysteries don't just unfold - they pull you in, keep you guessing, and refuse to let go". A new mystery thriller series is in the making! Can't wait for you all to see this labour of love from Team Netflix and us, when it's ready! Shooting had begun.. Marking my OTT series debut!" Also Read - Airtel Introduces Apple TV+ and Apple Music for Home Wi-Fi and Postpaid Users She also posted photos of other cast members, including Tahir Raj Bhasin, Anup Soni, Jennifer Winget, Chaitannya Choudhry, Harleen Sethi, and Soni Razdan. Parineeti is all set to make her digital debut with a thrilling drama for Netflix. Set against the scenic backdrop of Shimla's hills, the upcoming yet-to-be-titled project is poised to deliver an intense mix of mystery and



suspense. Produced by Siddharth P. Malhotra and Sapna Malhotra, the series will be directed by Rensil D'Silva. Also Read - Two Thrilling Web Series to Stream on OTT Platforms on Feb 28 ADVERTISEMENT Speaking about the show, creators Siddharth Malhotra and Rensil D'Silva shared, in a statement, "We are thrilled to collaborate on this Noir Mystery Thriller with Netflix, a platform that celebrates storytelling in its most diverse and compelling forms.

Sanjay Dutt's next titled ‘The Bhootnii’ is to release on this date



Mumbai: As promised, Sanjay Dutt has revealed the name of his forthcoming action-horror comedy on the auspicious occasion of Maha Shivratri. The makers of 'Sanam Teri Kasam', Soham Rockstar Entertainment, and Three Dimension Motion Picture shared that their next has been titled "The Bhootnii". They further revealed that the project will be hitting the theatres on 18th April 2025. Dropping the announcement on his IG, Sanjay Dutt wrote, "This Good Friday, fear gets a new date #FridayThe18th! Get ready for horror, action, and comedy like never before! #TheBhootnii machayegi taandav in cinemas on April 18th!" For the unversed, the film was earlier titled "The Virgin Tree", but has now been renamed. The makers also shared a small teaser of the drama which gives us an insight into the mystical world where 'love turns into darkness'. Made under the direction of Sidhaant Sachdev, the film brings together a star-studded cast featuring Sanjay Dutt, Mouni Roy, Palak Tiwari, Sunny Singh, Beyounick and Aasif Khan in key roles, along with others. Soham Rockstar Entertainment and Three Dimension Motion Pictures are presenting "The Bhootnii", which has been produced under the banner of A Soham Rockstar Entertainment Production by Deepak Mukut, Sanjay Dutt, Hunar Mukut, and Maanayata Dutt. Yesterday, the makers shared an eerie poster from the upcoming drama on social media, announcing that the title and release date for the project will be unveiled during Maha Shivratri on February 26. The post was captioned, "Mahadev ki bhakti main shakti hai! Bohot hua wait! Baba is locking the date! ("There is power in the devotion to Mahadev! Enough waiting! Baba is locking the

date!)" Additionally, Sanjay Dutt's lineup includes the much-awaited sequel 'Welcome to the Jungle.' The Ahmed Khan's directorial enjoys an ensemble cast with Akshay Kumar, Raveena Tandon, Disha Patani, Suniel Shetty, Lara Dutta, Bobby Deol, Jacqueline Fernandez, Paresh Rawal, Arshad Warsi, Rajpal Yadav, Johny Lever, Shreyas Talpade, and Tusshar Kapoor. Furthermore, Sanjay Dutt will also be seen playing a crucial role in 'Son of Sardaar 2'. The drama has Ajay Devgn and Mrunal Thakur as the lead pair. Directed by Vijay Kumar Arora, Ajay Devgn has produced the film under the banner of Devgn Films in collaboration with Jio Studios. Bollywood actor Preity Zinta expressed her frustration over misinformation and irresponsible reporting. In a strongly worded post, Zinta criticised newspeople who, according to her, fail to verify facts before publishing stories. On Tuesday, the actor took to her social media handle to voice out her annoyance regarding the matter. Taking to the microblogging site X (previously known as Twitter), the Dil Hai Tumhaara actor wrote, "So much misinformation going around but thank god for social media and thank god for X!" She highlighted her long-standing concerns about the lack of accountability in the media, claiming that respected journalists often publish incorrect stories without issuing corrections or apologies. "All through my career I have seen so many respected journalists get so many stories completely wrong & never have the decency to correct the story or apologise," she wrote. The actor also revealed her personal struggles with false reporting, stating that she has had to take legal action multiple times, incurring significant expenses in prolonged court battles. "I have also gone to court and spent a tonne of money fighting cases that go on & on & on," she said. Bollywood actor Preity Zinta expressed her frustration over misinformation and irresponsible reporting. In a strongly worded post, Zinta criticised newspeople who, according to her, fail to verify facts before publishing stories. On Tuesday, the actor took to her social media handle to voice out her annoyance regarding the matter. Taking to the microblogging site X (previously known as Twitter), the Dil Hai Tumhaara actor wrote, "So much misinformation going around but thank god for social media and thank god for X!" She highlighted her long-standing concerns about the lack of accountability in the media, claiming that respected journalists often publish incorrect stories without issuing corrections or apologies. Zinta then called for greater accountability in journalism, announcing her intent to publicly name reporters who fail to verify information before publishing. Her post specifically mentioned a journalist, urging her to cross-check facts before writing stories that involve her. "I think it's time we start holding them responsible right here so there is some accountability in the future. I'm definitely going to start naming all these journalists who write articles without following up or investigating the stories. If you don't value my reputation then sorry I don't value yours. Next time pls call me and find out if the story is true or not before mentioning my name," she wrote. "Just like you, I have spent years working hard and building a reputation so if you don't care about mine I don't care about yours" she asserted, making it clear that she would no longer remain silent. Bollywood actor Preity Zinta expressed her frustration over misinformation and irresponsible reporting. In a strongly worded post, Zinta criticised newspeople who, according to her, fail to verify facts before publishing stories. On Tuesday, the actor took to her social media handle to voice out her annoyance regarding the matter. Taking to the microblogging site X (previously known as Twitter), the Dil Hai Tumhaara actor wrote, "So much misinformation going around but thank god for social media and thank god for X!" She highlighted her long-standing concerns about the lack of accountability in the media, claiming that respected journalists often publish incorrect stories without issuing corrections or apologies.



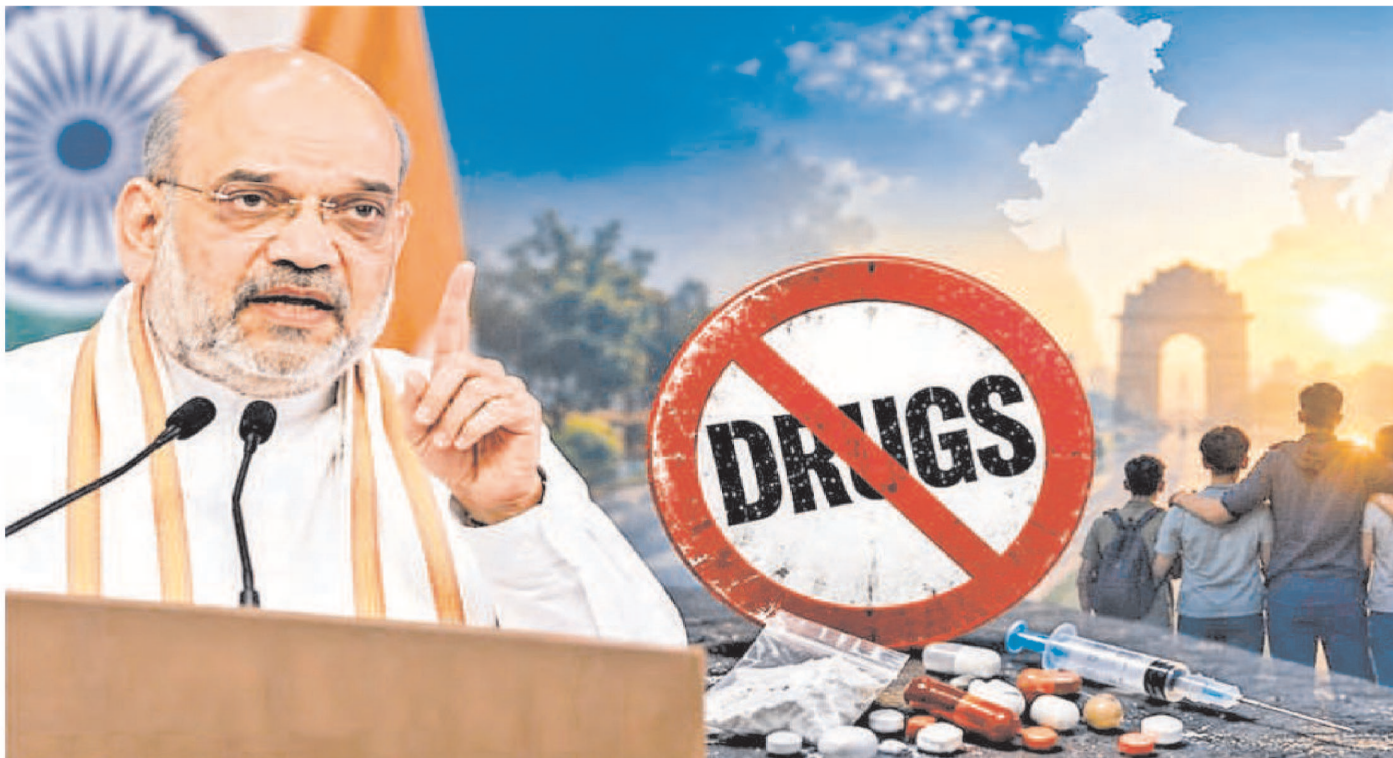
NASHA MUKT BHARAT BY 2029: AMIT SHAH

PANAJI/DONA PAULA (GOA)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday outlined an ambitious three-year roadmap to make India drug-free by 2029, framing the fight against narcotics as a national security priority essential to realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047. Addressing the media in Goa, Shah said the Modi government is committed to eliminating the drug menace just as it has tackled Naxalism and terrorism. "It is Narendra Modi's objective that drug-free youth power will lead to Viksit Bharat in 2047," he stated.

The government has prepared a detailed roadmap spanning 2026-2029, built on coordinated action involving central agencies, states, and multiple ministries. Shah emphasised that narcotics trafficking destroys future generations and generates "dirty money" that funds terrorism, giving rise to narco-terror modules worldwide. Before 2014, he noted, the fight was fragmented and limited to catching small-time offenders.

Since 2019, it has become a sustained national campaign through systemic overhauls. Key measures already implemented include the four-tier Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD)—mechanism, dedicated anti-narcotics task forces models shared with



states, a Joint Coordination Committee, the MANAS helpline -1933—for rehabilitation, restructuring of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), and the NIDAN portal for a national database of offenders. Authorities now pursue both "bottom-to-top" and "top-to-bottom" investigations—tracing small seizures to larger networks and bulk intercepts down to end users—while intensifying financial probes under the PIT-NDPS Act and targeting darknet, crypto, and en-

crypt channels. The new vision document rests on four pillars: intelligence- and operations-based enforcement; control of precursor chemicals and synthetic drugs; demand and harm reduction; and capacity building with coordination.

Specific targets include training one lakh 'Nashamukti Mitras' (Drug-free India Ambassadors)—through the NCC, NSS, and My Bharat platforms; making educational campuses drug-free in partnership with the Ministries of Education

and Youth Affairs & Sports; and establishing fully equipped Anti-Narcotics Task Forces (ANTFs) in every state by March 2027, with 100n central assistance for capacity building. Enforcement goals are equally sharp. The Ministry of Home Affairs and NCB aim to dismantle 100 international and inter-state drug networks and extradite 100 narcotics-linked fugitives. Central agencies including the CBI, Enforcement Directorate, and Financial Intelligence Unit will pursue drug mafias and fi-

nancial trails. Risk-based profiling scanners will be deployed at airports and cargo terminals.

Authorities have set a target to destroy 100 clandestine laboratories producing precursors and synthetic drugs, involving the Department of Revenue, Central Bureau of Narcotics, GSTN, and Excise departments. Forensic reports are to be made available within 30 days, with over 25 time-bound action points identified. Shah highlighted past gains to underscore mo-

UNION HOME MINISTER UNVEILS ROADMAP

mentum. Between 2014 and 2026, seizures of synthetic drugs and overall narcotics rose dramatically compared with the previous decade, with large quantities destroyed. The broader Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan has already reached tens of crores of citizens through awareness drives, community participation, and expanded rehabilitation services. The new campaign seeks to reach 50 crore people.

Linking the drug war to internal security successes, Shah said separatism in Jammu and Kashmir has declined sharply after the abrogation of Article 370, with terrorism metrics approaching zero and development accelerating. The five-decade Naxal problem has become a thing of the past, with those who envisioned a "Red Corridor from Tirupati to Pashupatinath" surrendering and joining the mainstream. In the Northeast, around 10,000 youth have laid down arms under more than 14 agreements, bringing calm and progress. "We have eradicated Naxalism and will deal with the menace of narcotics in the same manner," he asserted.

He also noted success in extraditions: 274 fugitives

brought back from 36 countries between 2019 and July 2026, alongside hundreds of Red Corner Notices and the sealing of assets worth nearly Rs 18,000 crore, facilitated by the Bharat-Pol system connecting central agencies and state police. Shah expressed confidence in nationwide co-operation for the three-year 'Drug-Free India' campaign. Demand reduction will rely on expanded public awareness, education, rehabilitation, and a sympathetic approach toward affected youth, led by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and others. Strict monitoring of pharmaceutical diversion and online pharmacies will continue.

The announcement builds on earlier steps, including the Vision Document on Drug Control -2026-29—unveiled in June 2026 at an NCORD meeting, which stressed detecting, disrupting, and destroying the entire narcotics ecosystem so it cannot recover for decades. With youth at the centre of India's demographic dividend, officials view a Nasha Mukta Bharat as indispensable to national progress and security. The coming three years, Shah indicated, will determine whether India decisively defeats the drug trade.

Uttam vows to secure Telangana's share in KG basin

HYDERABAD

Telangana Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Sunday asserted that the Congress government would wage an uncompromising battle to secure the State's rightful share of Krishna and Godavari river waters.

Speaking during his inspection of the R-9 Lift Irrigation Scheme in Suryapet district, Uttam said the government would firmly protect the interests of Telangana farmers before all competent forums, including water tribunals and the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB).

"We will fight effectively to ensure justice to Telangana in the allocation of Krishna and Godavari waters. Whether it is before the tribunals, the KRMB or any other forum, there will be no compromise when it comes to Telangana's rightful share," he said.

The Minister dismissed criticism as "false and bogus propaganda". He said the gov-



ernment was efficiently managing irrigation systems and agricultural power requirements and was committed to putting every available drop of water to productive use.

Uttam launched a sharp attack on the previous BRS government, alleging that huge amounts of public money had been spent during its decade in office without creating proportionate irrigation potential. He cited the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme and other pending projects as examples of schemes that remained incomplete despite substantial expenditure.

Referring to the Kalesh-

waram project, he alleged that thousands of crores had been spent on irrigation schemes without delivering the corresponding ayacut benefits promised to farmers. He also pointed to expenditure on the SRSP system and other pending projects, claiming that investments had failed to translate into the intended irrigation benefits.

Uttam said the Congress government's approach would focus on completing pending projects, creating actual ayacut, ensuring efficient utilisation of water and power, and safeguarding Telangana's river-water entitlements.

"Irrigation projects should ultimately be judged by the water delivered to farmers and the acreage brought under assured irrigation, not merely by the amount spent," he said.

During the R-9 scheme inspection, the Minister reviewed its utility and stressed efficient functioning of irrigation infrastructure to ensure water reaches farmers without avoidable losses or delays.

Crorepati Public Servants

HYDERABAD

India's elected representatives continue to present a striking paradox. They describe themselves as public servants dedicated to the aam aadmi still their collective declared net worth runs into astronomical figures that dwarf their official salaries many times over. Recent data compiled from election affidavits and analyses by organisations such as the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)—paints a clear picture: the total declared assets of Lok Sabha MPs, Rajya Sabha MPs and MLAs across the country exceed Rs 1.30 lakh crore—figures that exclude any unaccounted or black money.

According to the figures, 543 Lok Sabha MPs hold combined assets of approximately Rs 25,160 crore, averaging about Rs 46 crore per MP. This aligns closely with ADR's analysis of the 2024 general election winners, where the average assets of successful candidates stood at Rs 46.3 crore, with 93 per cent of them -504 out of 543—qual-

How India's Lawmakers Amassed Over Rs 1.3 L Cr in Declared Assets



ifying as crorepatis—up from 88 per cent in 2019 and 82 per cent in 2014. In the Rajya Sabha, 226 members account for roughly Rs 27,600 crore in total assets, or about Rs 118 crore on average. ADR reports from 2026 put the total for around 226 sitting Rajya Sabha MPs at approximately Rs 26,047 crore with an average of Rs 115.25 crore, con-

firmed the scale.

Meanwhile, India's roughly 4,123 MLAs—or about 4,092 in recent snapshots—declare a collective Rs 73,400 crore, averaging around Rs 16–18 crore per legislator. One 2025 ADR analysis of sitting MLAs put the total near Rs 73,348 crore. These are not marginal sums. The combined declared wealth of these legislators ex-

ceeds the annual budgets of several smaller states. Still the official compensation remains modest by comparison. An MP's basic salary is currently around Rs 1.24 lakh per month—after a 24 per cent hike notified with effect from 2023—supplemented by constituency allowance—Rs 87,000—office expenses and other perks that can push the effective monthly package towards Rs 2.5–2.8 lakh or more, excluding daily allowances and facilities. MLA salaries vary widely by state—often in the range of Rs 1–2.5 lakh including allowances—but rarely approach levels that could independently generate multi-crore fortunes within a few terms.

So how do the numbers climb into the crores? Several factors explain the gap between salary and net worth. Many politicians enter public life already wealthy. A significant proportion come from business families, professional backgrounds—doctors, lawyers, industrialists—

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GEN Z'S HOUSING STRUGGLE

HYDERABAD

In the neon-lit streets of Madhapur and the student-heavy lanes of Kukatpally, a quiet crisis is unfolding among Gen Z. Fresh graduates, IT trainees, and college students in their early twenties are discovering that finding a decent Paying Guest (PG)—accommodation in Hyderabad is no longer a simple matter of budget and location. It has become a daily battle against skyrocketing rents, inconsistent facilities, restrictive rules, and a growing sense of insecurity.

Paying Guest accommodations have long been the default choice for young people arriving in Hyderabad. The city's booming IT corridor, educational institutions, and relatively lower cost of living compared to Bengaluru or

Mumbai made it a magnet for Gen Z. PGs offered furnished rooms, meals, and the promise of community without the hassle of independent house hunting. Today, that promise is fraying. Rents have risen sharply. In high-demand areas such as Hitech City, Gachibowli, and Kondapur, a basic shared room in a PG that once cost 6,000–8,000 a month now routinely demands 10,000–15,000, often excluding food. Single occupancy options frequently cross 18,000–22,000. Many young professionals earning entry-level salaries of 25,000–40,000 find themselves allocating 40–50 per cent of their income to housing alone. Security deposits of two to three months' rent further strain limited savings.

When tenants try to leave,



recovering the deposit can take months of follow-ups, with deductions for "damage"

that residents claim never occurred. Quality of facilities varies widely and is frequently

disappointing. Multiple accounts from young renters describe overcrowded rooms

WHY PAYING GUEST ACCOMMODATIONS IN HYDERABAD ARE FAILING YOUNG RENTERS

with three or four people sharing spaces designed for two, erratic water supply, poor ventilation, and intermittent power backups. Wi-Fi, essential for remote work and online classes, is often slow or shared among too many users.

Food, advertised as "home-style," is a frequent source of complaint—repetitive menus, limited hygiene standards, and little accommodation for dietary preferences common among Gen Z, such as vegetarian, vegan, or high-protein options. Safety and privacy concerns add another layer of stress. While many PGs market themselves as secure, residents report inadequate CCTV coverage, poorly monitored entry points, and insufficient female staff in women's hostels during night hours. Restrictions that feel outdated to a

generation raise concerns are common: strict curfews of 9 or 10 p.m., bans on opposite-gender visitors even in common areas, and rules against cooking or hosting friends.

For many young women, the combination of high rents and limited safe options leaves them feeling trapped between financial pressure and personal safety. Location compounds the problem. Affordable PGs are increasingly pushed to the city's periphery, forcing long commutes on overcrowded buses or expensive cab rides to workplaces in the IT hubs. Students near universities in areas such as Habsiguda or Tarnaka face similar trade-offs between proximity and livability.