

Police Promise Strict Action, Order Refund After Chaos at Messi's Kolkata Event

Unprecedented chaos erupted at the Vivekananda Yuba BharatiKrirangan (Salt Lake Stadium) in Kolkata on Saturday after Argentine football legend Lionel Messi was forced to leave the venue early, triggering violent scenes that shocked the nation and drew global attention. What was meant to be a historic and celebratory event during the Kolkata leg of Messi's GOAT Tour quickly spiralled into disorder, raising serious concerns over event management, crowd control, and administrative accountability. Disturbing visuals from the stadium showed angry spectators hurling bottles, damaging property, and attempting vandalism soon after Messi's departure. Opposition parties described the incident as a moment that left Bengal with its "head bowed in shame," while political and civic circles witnessed intense debate over how such a high-profile international event could descend into chaos.

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Prime organiser of Messi event arrested for 'mismanagement and chaos'

MI News Service, Kolkata: Satadru Datta, the prime organiser of the Lionel Messi football event at Salt Lake Stadium here was arrested on Saturday following widespread chaos at the venue, which prompted the Argentine World Cup-winning captain to leave the field early.

Taking suo motu cognisance of the stadium unrest, Datta was held by the Bidhannagar Police for "mismanagement" of the event from the Kolkata airport, where he had gone to see off Messi and his entourage on their way to Hyderabad. "We are looking into whether there was any mismanagement from the organiser's side, which led to the chaos at the stadium. He has been detained, and the police have now brought the situation under control," West Bengal DGP Rajeev Kumar said at a press conference. "We are looking into whether there was any mismanagement from the organiser's side, which led to the chaos at the stadium. He has been detained, and the police have now brought the situation under control," West Bengal DGP Rajeev Kumar said. The organiser has given in writing that he will refund the prices of tickets he sold to the disappointed spectators, Kumar added. What was supposed to be a marquee football spectacle turned into widespread violence and disorder at the stadium after Messi's brief and tightly ring-fenced appearance, his first at the venue since 2011, left large sections of the crowd frustrated as they failed to catch a glimpse of their superstar despite having paid hefty sums for tickets.

4 accused charged with murder by SIT in Zubeen Garg death case

MI News Service, Guwahati : A Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing into the death of popular singer Zubeen Garg, charged four accused with murder in its chargesheet filed in a Guwahati court on Friday.. The accused are Shyamkanu Mahanta, Sidhartha Sharma, Shekhar Jyoti Goswami and Amrit-prava Mahanta, lawyers said. Shyamkanu Mahanta was the chief organiser of the North East India Festival, which was attended by Garg in Singapore, where he died under mysterious circumstances while swimming in the sea on September 19. The Special Investigation Team (SIT) of Assam Police investigating the death of noted singer Zubeen Garg submitted a detailed chargesheet before the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court in Guwahati on Friday. The filing marks a major step forward in the high-profile case that has drawn intense public attention across the state and the country as well . .

The charge sheet, running into nearly 3,500 pages, was prepared after months of inquiry into Garg's death in Singapore on September 19. The SIT examined around 300 witnesses, travelled to Singapore to collect evidence, and scrutinised electronic devices, personal items and other materials linked to the singer. The investigation

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Argentine superstar footballer Lionel Messi during the Kolkata leg of the GOAT Tour at Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata on Saturday. Pic: Prabir Bhattachary

Mamata Banerjee sincerely apologises to Lionel Messi and his fans after the mess

MI News Service, Kolkata : Expressing her strong dismay and apologising to the Argentine superstar Lionel Messi and thousands of football fans in the city after a massive chaos erupted inside the Yuba Bharati Krirangan (Salt Lake Stadium) on Saturday, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said she was "deeply disturbed and shocked" by the mismanagement at the stadium during an event featuring the global football icon in the midst of his brief appearance.

In a post on X, Mamata Banerjee said this afternoon that she was on her way to the Yuva Bharati Krirangan along with thousands of football lovers when reports of disorder and crowd unrest emerged. "I am deeply disturbed and shocked by the mismanagement witnessed today at Salt Lake Stadium," the Chief minister said adding "I sincerely apologise to Li-



onel Messi, as well as to all sports lovers and his fans, for the unfortunate incident." The Chief minister also announced the formation of a high-level enquiry committee headed by retired Calcutta High Court judge Justice Ashim Kumar Ray, with the state's Chief Secretary and Additional Chief Secretary (Home and Hill Affairs) becoming

members. The panel has been tasked with conducting a detailed probe, fixing responsibility and recommending corrective measures to prevent similar incidents in

I am deeply disturbed and shocked by the mismanagement witnessed today at Salt Lake Stadium

--Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee

future. Her statement came within an hour after Messi was escorted out of the venue within minutes of his arrival following the unruly behaviour of a section of a massive 70,000 odd crowd who had gathered at the stadium to have a glimpse of the Argentine superstar since early this morning. . Taking immediate action, the chief minister announced the constitution of the enquiry committee under the chairmanship of retired Justice Ashim Kumar Ray. She concluded her statement by once again extending

her "heartfelt apologies to all sports lovers", as criticism mounted over the authority's alleged failure to properly handling the situation in front of the VIP guests . Her imme-

diated decision of instituting a judicial enquiry signals potential accountability measures following the chaotic scenes that overshadowed what was expected to be a super success of the government. As a result, what was meant to be a celebratory event, descended into a chaos. During his brief stay inside the stadium Messi could manage only a brief wave to the spectators before being escorted out within minutes under heavy security, with none of the scheduled programmes taking place.

Thousands welcome Argentine icon as Messi mania grips Kolkata



Messi Mania grips Kolkata as thousands welcome Argentine icon

MI News Service, Kolkata : Thousands braved the December chill and waited past midnight to give a rousing welcome to Argentine superstar footballer Lionel Messi as he arrived in Kolkata for his whirlwind three-day, four-city GOAT India Tour 2025. The Barcelona legend's 2.26 am touchdown in the early hours of Saturday sent the city into a frenzy. Gate 4 of the international arrivals turned into a roaring sea of chants, flags and flashing phones, with fans sprinting between gates for even a fleeting glimpse of their

favourite star. Children perched on shoulders and drums rolled as Messi was whisked out through the VIP gate under massive security. A heavy convoy then escorted him to his hotel, where another huge crowd was waiting deep into the night. Barri-cades, police deployment, and non-stop cheering completed a citywide eruption of "Messi mania."Messi arrived with long-time strike partner Luis Suarez and Argentina teammate Rodrigo De Paul. Over the next 72 hours, he will zip across Kolkata, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi,

I'm a die-hard Ronaldo fan, so what? His biggest rival is coming to my city and I cannot miss the moment. So we planned to stay in the hotel a day in advance

Krish, a Class 9 student of Birla High School

meeting chief ministers, corporate leaders, Bollywood celebrities and eventually Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday. Despite keeping vigil through the night, the wait ended in disappointment for many fans as they could not catch a glimpse of their icon.

Heavy security meant Messi was whisked out of the airport and taken to his hotel around 3.30 am through a back entrance, giving hundreds of waiting supporters a complete miss. Only a handful of lucky airport staff managed a fleeting glimpse of the Argentine superstar as he stepped off the private Gulfstream V, looking dapper in a black suit over a white T-shirt, before being driven straight off the tarmac. The Hyatt Regency lobby turned chaotic as fans sprinted across corridors

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Indian Defence forces committed to adapting to changing environment: CDS

MI News Service, Hyderabad : Asserting that war and warfare is at the cusp of a major revolution, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan on Saturday said the Indian Defence forces are committed to adapting to changing environment and imbibing reforms to remain ready and relevant for the modern day warfares. Addressing the Combined Graduation Parade (CGP) of 216 Course at the Air Force Academy at Dundigal near here, General Chauhan said India's strength rests on robust institutions, democratic stability, and unwavering professionalism of our Armed Forces. He said the intensity of operations may have ebbed, but Operation Sindoor continues.

"You (new officers) also join the Air Force at a moment when a new normal has firmly taken shape. An era defined by a high degree of operational preparedness, 24-7, 365 days. The intensity of operations may have ebbed, but Operation Sindhur continues," he said. He further said the newly trained officers are entering the Indian Air Force during a phase of deep transformation of the Indian Armed Forces. Integrated struc-



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CDS General Chauhan

tures, joint operations, and national pursuit of Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence are shaping the future of India's military strength, he said.

"Your journey ahead will be accordingly guided by Jai, the first word of Jai Hind, that's victory. 'J' stands for jointness, fighting as one nation, one force. 'A' stands for Atmanirbhar Bharat, trusted platforms and systems made not just for India but for the world.

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Fans on rampage as Messi's Kolkata tour turns "Messy"



Police personnel used mild force to disperse the angry crowd after they tried to vandalise the Salt Lake Stadium, alleging poor management of the Argentine Legend Lionel Messi's GOAT Tour event in Kolkata, on Saturday.

MI News Service, Kolkata : Argentine football superstar Lionel Messi's brief visit to Kolkata descended into chaos as angry fans broke security protocols after failing to catch even a glimpse of the world's most popular footballer during his blink-and-miss 22-minute appearance at the Salt Lake Stadium on Saturday morning. What was meant to be a red-letter day for thousands of football fans in the City of Joy turned into a virtual nightmare, with "less of Messi" and more of what many described as a "royal mess", as massive disorder

player during the programme in the city, as ticket prices were "hefty", he said.

Bose asked about the role of the state government in Messi's visit to Kolkata and questioned why a person was allowed to earn money at the expense of the common people's emotions. "The Lok Bhavan has been receiving calls and mails from football fans complaining that they were unable to get tickets for the Messi match as the prices are beyond their reach. Now, the Governor is keen to know why this is happening. Why are the common people un-

The Governor has written to the state, asking for a detailed report on the private person who is earning from Messi's visit. Why are the common people barred from seeing Messi?--Lok Bhavan official

erupted and prevailed for over an hour inside the stadium in absence of required police force during the superstar's visit inside the stadium. Moments after Messi emerged from the tunnel, the situation spiralled out of control. Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan, who had arrived in Kolkata for the special event, along with former India captain Sourav Ganguly and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, were unable to be part of the programme as the event was cut short amid the chaos.

Meanwhile, West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose has written to the state government, seeking an elaborate report on the arrangements for Argentine superstar footballer Lionel Messi's programme in Kolkata on Saturday, a Lok Bhavan official said. The Governor sought the report after several football enthusiasts complained to him that they could not get an opportunity to have a glimpse of their favourite

able to see their favourite star when he is here?" the Lok Bhavan official said.

Messi who arrived here last night on the first leg of a brief visit to the city as part of his four city tour programme in India, attended a tribute programme in Salt Lake Stadium, featuring music, dance and an exhibition match between Mohun Bagan 'Messi' All Stars and Diamond Harbour 'Messi' All Stars. The Governor is "shocked to learn that only a few people who have paid a hefty price for the tickets would be able to see the star Argentine footballer", he said. "The Governor has written to the state, asking for a detailed report on the private person who is earning from Messi's visit. Why are the common people barred from seeing Messi?" the official added. Messi began his India Tour on Saturday with a sponsors' meet-and-greet before heading to the Salt Lake

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Cabinet nod for Census 2027; Rs 11,718 crore sanctioned

MI News Service, New Delhi : The Centre has approved Rs 11,718 crore for conducting the Census of India - 2027. Information and Broadcasting minister Ashwini Vaishnav announced here on Friday The Union Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the proposal to conduct the Census which will be the first digital exercise of its kind. I&B Minister Vaishnav told reporters here. The Census will be conducted in two phases -- house-listing and housing census from April to September, 2026; and population enumeration (PE) in February 2027. For Ladakh and snow-bound non-synchronous areas of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the PE exercise shall be conducted in September, 2026, he said. The Census 2027 will also capture caste data electronically in the PE phase, Vaishnav said adding about 30 lakh field functionaries will complete this gigantic exercise of national impor-

tance.Use of a mobile app for data collection and the central portal for monitoring purposes will ensure better quality data, Vaishnav said. Data dissemination will be much better and in a user-friendly way so that all queries on required parameters for policy-making will be available with a click of a button, he said. Census-as-a-Service (CaaS) will deliver data to ministries in a clean, machine-readable and actionable format, he said.

Earlier, the Registrar General of India (RGI) has sought a Rs 14,618.95-crore budget to conduct the Census 2027, which will be the first "Digital Census" and collect data on caste. The RGI, which comes under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), circulated a note seeking the approval of the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC), a central body under the Ministry of Finance that appraises government schemes and projects. Once cleared by the EFC, the MHA moved the proposal for the approval of the Union Cabinet.

Bus horror in Salboni: 13 in critical condition after flip

MI News Service, West Medinipur: A passenger bus went out of control and plunged into a roadside ditch at Nayanjuli under Salboni police station on Friday morning, injuring at least 13 people and triggering scenes of chaos and terror. The bus, which was traveling from Midnapore to Lalgarh, was reportedly packed with passengers when the accident occurred in the Bhatmor area.

Eyewitnesses described a horrifying moment as the vehicle, allegedly moving at high speed, suddenly veered off the road before overturning violently. Inside the bus, passengers were thrown against one another amid twisted metal, shattered glass, and desperate screams. Panic gripped the area as locals rushed to the scene to help the injured. According to local sources, the driver is suspected to have lost control due to reckless over-speeding, a factor residents say is a recurring menace on this stretch of road. Several passengers sustained serious injuries, including severe trauma to the head, arms, and legs. At least a few victims remain in critical condition and are undergoing round-the-clock medical supervision at Midnapore Medical College and Hospital. Others with less severe injuries were initially taken to a nearby health center before being referred for advanced treatment. Rescue operations were swiftly carried out with the help of villagers and personnel from the Pairakata police outpost, who worked together to extricate trapped passengers from the wreckage and transport the wounded to medical facilities. Fortunately, no fatalities have been reported so far, though the incident once again highlights the persistent danger on regional highways. Police have launched an investigation to determine the exact cause of the crash and to assess possible negligence. Meanwhile, anger is mounting among local residents. "This road has become a death trap. How many more accidents will it take for the administration to act?" questioned outraged locals, demanding stricter enforcement against speeding and negligent driving. The overturned bus is being recovered, but the accident has reignited urgent calls for accountability and stronger road safety measures to prevent further avoidable tragedies in West Bengal.

12-Yr-Old Girl Killed in Fair Swing Accident

MI News Service, Murshidabad: What began as an evening of innocent joy at the bustling Lalpur fair ended in unimaginable tragedy for 12-year-old Asnir Khatun, a fifth-grade student from Shamsheganj under Dhulian Municipality. The young girl had gone to the fair with friends on Friday evening, eager to enjoy the festivities, unaware that the outing would become her last.

Asnir was riding one of the fair's most popular swing rides when disaster struck. Her long hair became entangled in the ride's rapidly spinning wheels, violently yanking her down in a horrifying split second. Eyewitnesses recalled scenes of chaos as her desperate screams cut through the festive crowd, instantly turning celebration into panic. Locals rushed forward, frantically attempting to free her severely injured body from the machinery. She was immediately taken to Anupnagar Hospital in a desperate bid to save her life. Tragically, doctors declared her dead on arrival. Shamsheganj police soon reached the scene, secured the area, and later sent the body to Jangipur Hospital for post-mortem examination. Preliminary findings point to shocking safety lapses at the fair. Faulty equipment, lack of protective measures, and the complete absence of supervision on a ride crowded with unsupervised children are being cited as major factors behind the tragedy. Residents allege that such negligence is routine at local fairs, where profit often takes precedence over safety. Grief and anger have engulfed the village. Classmates and teachers mourn the loss of a bright and cheerful student, while Asnir's family remains inconsolable. "These fairs are death traps waiting to happen. Where was the oversight?" questioned distraught neighbors, blaming the administration for its failure. Police have assured a thorough investigation, but public outrage continues to grow. Many now demand accountability, asking when fairground operators will finally be held responsible for endangering innocent lives.



West Bengal Governor Dr C. V. Ananda Bose attends the pre-Christmas celebrations at Lok Bhavan, where various cultural programmes were organised on Saturday.

"Investigation going on": Bengal Sports Minister Aroop Biswas on chaos at Lionel Messi's Event

MI News Service, Kolkata: West Bengal Sports Minister Aroop Biswas has revealed that the government has ordered an investigation into the matter, and he will not comment on anything regarding the chaotic incident at Kolkata's Salt Lake Stadium during Argentine legend Lionel Messi's GOAT Tour event on Saturday.

The government has ordered to investigate this matter. An investigation is going on, and I will not comment on anything," Aroop Biswas told reporters.

Messi's Kolkata leg of the GOAT Tour descended into chaos on Saturday after fans expressed disappointment when the Argentine legend left the event at Salt Lake Stadium much earlier than planned, leaving the crowd

angry.

Many fans who paid a hefty amount to watch a glimpse of the football icon Messi became angry and began throwing water bottles and chairs from the stands. The angry mob also entered the ground and tried to vandalise the tent and the goal post. The situation escalated, and police personnel used mild force to disperse the angry crowd.

After the incident, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) issued a statement clarifying that Messi's Kolkata show was a private event organised by a PR agency.

"The All India Football Federation is deeply concerned by the events that transpired at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati

Krirangan, where thousands of fans gathered to witness world football stars Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez, and Rodrigo de Paul," AIFF shared an Instagram post.

"This was a private event organised by a PR agency. The AIFF was not involved in the organisation, planning, or execution of this event in any capacity. Furthermore, the details of the event were neither communicated to the AIFF, nor was any clearance sought from the Federation," the post read.

"We urge all attendees to extend their full cooperation with the relevant authorities and to maintain order. The safety and security of all individuals involved must remain the paramount priority," the post read.



Football legend Lionel Messi with Bengal Sports Minister Aroop Biswas during the Kolkata leg of the GOAT Tour at Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata on Saturday. PIC: Prabir Bhattacharya

"We want our money back..." Messi's Kolkata event turns into chaos, fans express disappointment

MI News Service, Kolkata: What started as a celebratory moment during Lionel Messi's Kolkata leg of the GOAT Tour turned into absolute chaos on Saturday after fans expressed their disappointment when the Argentine legend left the event at the Salt Lake Stadium much earlier than planned, leaving the crowd angry.

Many fans who paid a hefty amount to watch a glimpse of the football icon Messi became angry and began throwing water bottles and chairs from the stands. The angry mob also entered the ground and tried to vandalise the tent and the goal post.

An angry fan told ANI that the event was a total scam and they want their "money back." "Seeing the utter chaos, the management, the authorities, it was absolutely rubbish. All the people you see here love football. We all wanted to see Messi, but it was a total scam. We want our money back... The management was so bad. It is a black day for Kolkata. Kolkata is known for football, and we love football, we love Argentina, but this experience is absolutely a scam. The ministers were there with their children, and the other people could not see anything... We are very hurt."

Another fan said that Messi came for just 10 minutes during the Kolkata leg event at the Stadium. "Absolutely terrible event. He came for just 10 minutes. All the leaders and ministers surrounded him. We couldn't see anything. He didn't take a single kick or a single penalty. He came for 10 minutes and left. So much money, emotions, and time wasted. We couldn't see anything."

A fan of Messi said, "It is very disappointing that after paying such a hefty amount. They had 50 people around him, and we could not even get a glimpse of him for once... He just waved a



The angry mob entered the ground and attempted to vandalise the tent and the goalpost after Argentine footballer Lionel Messi left early following his brief appearance during the Kolkata leg of the GOAT Tour at Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata on Saturday.

couple of times, and that's it."

An angry fan told ANI that they spent a hefty amount to watch the event, but they couldn't get a glimpse of their icon. "We have given so much money for this event and the most important thing is that Messi has come for this event and what message we have given to him... The sports minister is clicking a picture with Messi, and everyone is trying to manage the people... I don't know about Shah Rukh Khan, whether he came or not... It is very shameful for the event management and the government as well."

"It was really disappointing, we came all the way from Darjeeling for this... We couldn't even see him properly, and that was the most disappointing thing I have ever witnessed," a fan of Messi said.

A fan of star footballer Lionel Messi said, "We are very disappointed... My child was very excited to see Messi... I think it's a scam for the people. When Messi arrived, everyone surrounded him."

"Only leaders and actors were surrounding Messi... Why did they call us then... We have got a ticket for 12 thousand, but

we were not even able to see his face." an angry fan said to ANI.

"The minimum price of the ticket was 5 thousand, and why were the VIPs around Messi? We couldn't even see him... Why weren't the police taking action? I don't know anything. Everyone was furious... We want the refund," an angry fan told ANI.

Earlier, Messi virtually inaugurated a 70-foot-tall statue of himself at Lake Town in Kolkata on Saturday, along with West Bengal Minister and Sree Bhumi Sporting Club President Sujit Bose. The Argentine football legend arrived in the City of Joy early on Saturday morning to an overwhelming reception from fans. E

Demonstrating its admiration for Lionel Messi, the Sree Bhumi Sporting Club has completed the construction of a massive 70-foot iron statue at Lake Town in South Dum Dum, Kolkata. The statue depicts Messi holding the FIFA World Cup trophy, symbolising his historic triumph with Argentina at the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

The statue will be virtually unveiled by Messi himself, making the occasion even more special for fans.

"Commercialisation of Messi's visit": Governor slams organisers for 'ignoring' sentiments of fans after chaos at Kolkata stadium

MI News Service, Kolkata: West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose on Saturday slammed the organisers for "callously commercialising" the GOAT India tour of Football Icon Lionel Messi and completely "ignoring" the sentiments of fans after chaos erupted at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata during the event.

"The organizers have callously gone the way of commercialisation of Messi's visit here and ignored the sentiments of the fans. After all it is fans who make an icon an icon. Fans have the right to see their hero. Knowing all these things the organisers only focused on money-making, which a civilised society cannot endure," CV Ananda Bose said.

Governor CV Ananda Bose urged people not to blame the fans for their reaction after authorities failed to meet expectations.

"The fan mentality should be understood properly. We cannot blame them. They came with great expectations to see their hero. The concerned authorities did not take care of these instances, which is where the failure lies. The organisers are all those associated with the event," he said.

Messi's Kolkata leg of the GOAT Tour descended into chaos on Saturday as fans who paid high ticket prices at Salt Lake Stadium's event began throwing bottles and attempting to break the gates between the stands after the Argentine legend left early. Angry fans resorted to vandalism at the Kolkata stadium, alleging poor event management and criticising VIPs and politicians for 'hogging' the football icon's attention and



Angry fans vented their frustration at Salt Lake Stadium as chaos erupts during Lionel Messi's Kolkata leg of the GOAT Tour with spectators throwing bottles, attempting to break gates between stands, and vandalising property after the Argentine superstar left the venue early on Saturday.

time to the extent that fans did not even get a glimpse of Messi. The situation escalated when angry fans attempted to enter the ground to vandalise the tent and the goal post. To control the situation, police personnel used mild force to disperse the angry crowd from the ground.

West Bengal police has arrested the organiser of Lionel Messi's GOAT Tour event for mismanagement of the event.

"The organiser has been arrested, and an investigation has been done," the West Bengal Governor said.

CV Ananda Bose said that he has suggested the state government to order a judicial inquiry, demand the refund of ticket prices and compensate the stadium authorities for the damage.

"This resulted from the mis-

management. The organiser who conducted this event did not take any precaution necessary while holding such a huge congregation... The suggestion given for the directives issued to the government are - order a judicial inquiry into the event... Immediately arrest the organiser, ticket should be refunded, the account of the organizer to be frozen immediately, organiser must compensate the damage to the public property in the stadium, injured should be taken care of and the responsibility should be taken by the organiser and the government," he said.

"Police have failed their own government and the constitution... Severe action should be taken against those found guilty of the lapses... What happened shamed India... Using Messi and sports for making money should

be prohibited... I am sure the government will look into the matter and I am happy that the suggestion to order a judicial inquiry has been accepted," he added.

Meanwhile, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee also apologised to fans after Messi's Kolkata event turned into chaos.

"I am deeply disturbed and shocked by the mismanagement witnessed today at Salt Lake Stadium. I was on my way to the stadium to attend the event along with thousands of sports lovers and fans who had gathered to catch a glimpse of their favourite footballer, Lionel Messi. I sincerely apologise to Lionel Messi, as well as to all sports lovers and his fans, for the unfortunate incident," Mamta Banerjee wrote on X

PM felicitates photography contest winners

MI News Service, Kolkata: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday felicitated the top 12 winners of HT@100 My Country, My Lens, a nationwide photography contest launched by Hindustan Times to mark its centenary. The report received by New Delhi said.

The report said The ceremony unfolded at the Hindustan Times Leadership Summit 2025, where the Prime Minister presented citations to the winning photographers in the presence of Hindustan Times Chairperson and Editorial Director Shobhana Bhartiya. The contest invited citizens to capture their vision of India through four themes — Borders, Rivers, Monuments, and Communities — drawing an overwhelming response of over 10,000 entries from more than 30 cities. "I believe it can become a source of great strength for photography in the country," PM Modi said. Bhartiya remarked, "As Hindustan Times marks 100 years, we wanted to celebrate not just our own milestone, but the collective stories of India and its people." A jury of noted photographers — Rohit Chawla, Dhritiman Mukherjee, and Ajay Aggarwal — evaluated submissions to select the top 100 photographs.

Fish van fury: Youth killed in head-on horror on NH-512

MI News Service, South Dinajpur: A tragic road accident claimed the life of a 25-year-old motorcyclist late Saturday night after a high-speed, head-on collision with a fish-laden pickup van on National Highway 512 near Dhumsadhi under Banshihari police station. The incident has sparked fresh anger among local residents over what they describe as unchecked reckless driving on the busy highway.

The deceased has been identified as Tanmoy Sarkar, a resident of Patharghata in Banshihari. According to police sources, Sarkar was riding his motorcycle when a pickup van carrying fish, traveling from Buniadpur toward Dhumsadhi, crashed into his bike with tremendous force. The impact hurled Sarkar onto the road, leaving him critically injured. Passersby and local residents rushed to help and immediately transported the injured to Rashidpur Rural Hospital. Despite desperate efforts by medical staff, doctors declared him dead on arrival. Blood stains on the highway bore grim testimony to the brutality of the crash, sending shockwaves through the community. Banshihari police promptly reached the spot, cordoned off the area, and initiated an investigation to determine the exact cause of the collision.

Lionel Messi virtually inaugurates his 70-foot statue at Lake Town in Kolkata

MI News Service, Kolkata: Legendary footballer Lionel Messi virtually inaugurated a 70-foot-tall statue of himself at Lake Town in Kolkata on Saturday, along with West Bengal Minister and Sree Bhumi Sporting Club President Sujit Bose.

The Argentine football legend arrived in the City of Joy early on Saturday morning to an overwhelming reception from fans. Enthusiastic supporters gathered in large numbers across key locations in Kolkata, eager to catch a glimpse of the global football icon, reflecting the immense popularity Messi enjoys in the country, particularly in West Bengal.

Demonstrating its admiration for Lionel Messi, the Sree Bhumi Sporting Club has completed the construction of a massive 70-foot iron statue at Lake Town in South Dum Dum, Kolkata. The statue depicts Messi holding the FIFA World Cup trophy, symbolising his historic triumph with Argentina at the 2022 FIFA



World Cup in Qatar. The statue will be virtually unveiled by Messi himself, making the occasion even more special for fans.

West Bengal Minister and President of the Sreebhumi Sporting Club, Sujit Bose, had earlier said that the monumental structure was completed in a record 40 days.

"This is a very big statue, 70 feet in height. There is no other statue of Messi this big in the world. Messi is coming to Kolkata, and there are a lot of fans of Messi," he had told ANI.

Notably, this marks Lionel Messi's first visit to India since 2011. During his previous visit,

the legendary footballer played a friendly match at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata, where Argentina defeated Venezuela 1-0.

His return after 14 years has generated immense excitement among football fans, who have been preparing for a grand celebration to welcome the global icon.

Promoter and organiser of Lionel Messi's GOAT India Tour, Satadru Dutta, said that Messi's visit has created an atmosphere of joy and renewed enthusiasm for football across the country.

"There's a great atmosphere of joy that Messi is coming to India after 14 years... It's also good for the fans, an opportunity to see Messi. Football's connection to India is growing again. Never before have so many sponsors come to Indian football," Satadru Dutta told reporters.

The 70-foot statue stands as a symbol of Messi's unparalleled achievements and the growing passion for football in India.

Three years, No answer: Citizenship delay sparks distress in North Bengal

MI News Service, Cooch Behar: A prolonged delay in granting Indian citizenship to a Bangladeshi woman married to an Indian national has triggered serious concern in Cooch Behar, with her husband alleging administrative apathy and seeking the urgent intervention of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Chanchalkanti Roy, a resident of the Pundibari area under Cooch Behar-II block, married Apritarani Chakraborty, a native of Netrokona district in Bangladesh, on December 1, 2014.

Following their marriage, Apritarani shifted to Cooch Behar and has been residing there with her husband for the past 11 years. In 2022, Apritarani formally applied for Indian citizenship through the prescribed legal process. However, despite the passage of more than three years, the application remains unresolved.

Chanchalkanti alleges that all required documents were duly submitted and that the file has been lying pending at the Cooch Behar District Magistrate's office since then. Speaking to reporters, a visibly distressed Chanchalkanti said repeated visits to the district administration have yielded no result. He alleged that the former District Magistrate did not grant him an audience and that he faced considerable difficulty even in meeting the current Additional District Magistrate (General). The couple has two minor children—a son and a daughter—whose education, Chanchalkanti claims, is being adversely affected due to their mother's unresolved citizenship status. He expressed deep anxiety over the family's future, stating that he was unwilling to violate any law and was only seeking citizenship for his wife through legitimate means. On Friday, Chanchalkanti once

again approached the District Magistrate's office, pleading for immediate resolution. In a desperate appeal, he warned that continued inaction would leave him with "no other option," hinting at suicide if the issue remains unaddressed. Reacting to the matter, BJP District General Secretary Biraj Basu said that citizenship through marriage is a legally recognised process and that such an extended delay is a matter of serious concern. "We are looking into why citizenship has not been granted despite the marriage and submission of documents. Had the district administration acted decisively, the process could have been completed much earlier," he alleged. The case has once again brought the spotlight on delays in citizenship-related procedures and the human cost of bureaucratic inertia, as a family in north Bengal waits for clarity, dignity and legal security.

SIR panic claims another life: TMC worker dies outside BDO office

MI News Service, Malda: A second death allegedly linked to anxiety over the Special Intensive Rectification (SIR) of electoral rolls has been reported from West Bengal, intensifying the political and administrative storm surrounding the controversial exercise. A 32-year-old Trinamool Congress worker, identified as Barkat Sheikh, died of a heart attack on Friday evening outside the Block Development Officer (BDO) office in Kaliachak-III, Malda district.

According to local sources, Barkat, a resident of Chaksehherdi village under Kaliachak, was under severe mental distress after discovering a discrepancy in voter data uploaded on the Election Commission's website. It is alleged that his father's name was incorrectly recorded—listed merely as "Sheikh" instead of the full name Rashul Sheikh—raising fears that his name could be deleted from the electoral rolls. Alarmed by the error, Barkat reportedly rushed to the Kaliachak BDO office on Friday seeking clarification and correction. However, family members and local party workers

claim that he failed to receive any assurance from officials regarding rectification or inclusion of his name in the list. Witnesses allege that he left the office in a state of extreme panic and collapsed shortly thereafter. Despite being rushed to hospital, doctors declared him dead on arrival. The incident triggered tension in and around the BDO office premises as well as the hospital. Upon receiving the news, Vaishnavnagar MLA Chandana Sarkar rushed to the spot and launched a scathing attack on the Election Commission and the Central government, holding what she termed "administrative negligence" responsible for the young man's death. "This is not an isolated incident. People are living in fear because of faulty data and lack of clear communication. The Election Commission must take responsibility," the Trinamool MLA alleged. The BJP, however, responded by targeting the ruling party, dismissing the allegations and accusing Trinamool of politicising the issue. The SIR process was launched in West Bengal on Oct 28, and controversy has followed it from the outset.



(L) Angry spectators erupted in protest at Salt Lake Stadium during Lionel Messi's Kolkata leg of the GOAT Tour, hurling bottles, forcing gates between stands, and damaging property alleging lack of mismanagement, after the Argentine superstar exited the venue prematurely on Saturday.(R) Police personnel use plastic chairs thrown by spectators as makeshift shields to protect themselves amid unrest by enraged fans at Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata on Saturday. Pic Prabir Bhattacharya

Police Promise Strict Action,Order Refund After Chaos at Lionel Messi's Kolkata Event

MI News Service, Kolkata: Unprecedented chaos erupted at the Vivekananda Yuba BharatiKrirangan (Salt Lake Stadium) in Kolkata on Saturday after Argentine football legend Lionel Messi was forced to leave the venue early, triggering violent scenes that shocked the nation and drew global attention. What was meant to be a historic and celebratory event during the Kolkata leg of Messi's GOAT Tour quickly spiralled into disorder, raising serious concerns over event management, crowd control, and administrative accountability. Disturbing visuals from the stadium

showed angry spectators hurling bottles, damaging property, and attempting vandalism soon after Messi's departure. Opposition parties described the incident as a moment that left Bengal with its "head bowed in shame," while political and civic circles witnessed intense debate over how such a high-profile international event could descend into chaos.

Amid mounting outrage, senior officials of the West Bengal Police addressed the media directly from the stadium premises. Director General of Police Rajeev Kumar and Additional Director General (Law

and Order) JavedShamim were present and openly questioned the role of the organisers. DGP Rajeev Kumar stated that organisers had been instructed to refund ticket money to spectators who were deprived of the programme. ADG JavedShamim confirmed that formal complaints were being received and that FIRs would be registered. "There are allegations and FIRs will be filed. We will investigate where the lapses occurred and who is responsible. The police are treating this matter with utmost seriousness," Shamim said. He further emphasised that no one responsible for

the incident would be spared, adding, "Those found guilty will face strict punishment." From the beginning, it had been reported that the event was organised under the leadership of Shatadru Dutta. Responding to questions from journalists, Shamim confirmed that the FIR process was underway and that Dutta had been detained. Shortly afterwards, it emerged that Shatadru Dutta had been arrested from Kolkata airport. Police sources said he would be interrogated thoroughly and that the investigation would determine whether responsibility lay solely with him or if others

were also involved.Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee issued a public apology to Lionel Messi for the unfortunate incident. Posting on social media platform X, she expressed regret over the events that unfolded and assured that an investigation had been ordered. Anger among fans continued to mount, with many stating that they had paid between ₹4,000 and ₹10,000 for tickets but were unable to see Messi due to the disorder. Some spectators said they had been waiting for months and arrived at the stadium in the early hours, only to return disappointed.

West Bengal to Host Major Business and Industry Conclave on Dec 18

MI News Service, Kolkata: West Bengal is set to host a major Business and Industry Conclave on December 18 at DhanaDhanyo Stadium, with a special focus on eight key sectors: steel, gems and jewellery, food processing, information technology, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, tourism, and textiles. While these sectors will receive special emphasis, other industries will also be represented. The conclave is expected to play a significant role in attracting investment to the state and boosting employment opportunities. A final preparatory meeting for the event was held recently at Nabanna, attended by the state Chief Secretary Manoj Pant, Chief Economic Advisor to the Chief Minister Amit Mitra, and other senior administrative officials. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is scheduled to inaugurate the conclave, which will see the participation of leading industrialists from across the state. According to sources at Nabanna, the first session of the conclave will showcase West Bengal's progress in the industrial sector and present the current investment landscape. The Chief Minister is expected to highlight the state government's support for industrial development. Eminent industrialists, including Harsh Notia, Sanji Goenka, RudraChattopad-

hyay, Sanjay Budhia, and Umesh Chowdhury, will also share their insights and discuss investment opportunities in the state. The second session, or plenary session, will focus on projects being implemented in West Bengal with support from the World Bank. Key initiatives include the modernization of inland water transport in Kolkata and surrounding areas, the restoration of river channels in the Sundarbans, and improving the quality of life for residents on the islands. In addition, projects aimed at flood control and irrigation development in the Damodar river basin will be highlighted. On the advice of the Chief Minister, eight sectors have been specially selected for focused attention during the conclave. These include tourism, information technology, steel, and artificial intelligence, with additional emphasis on leather, pharmaceuticals, and healthcare-related industries. Departments associated with these sectors have been instructed by the top administration to prepare detailed presentations that highlight their importance and potential. The conclave aims to present a comprehensive picture to invited guests, demonstrating why these eight sectors have been prioritized for industrial development in West Bengal.

4 accused charged with murder by SIT in Zubeen Garg death case

From PG 1
was led by senior officials of the Criminal Investigation Department. Seven people arrested during the probe are currently in judicial custody. Those named in the charge sheet also include the singer's cousin Sandipan Garg, and two personal security officers, Nandeswar Bora and Paresh Baishya. According to the findings, four of the accused have been charged with murder under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Sandipan Garg has been charged with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, while the two security personnel face charges related to criminal breach of trust. The charges were framed after corroboration of witness testimonies, electronic data and forensic material. rites performed with full Zubeen Garg Lawyers representing the accused were not present during the filing of the charge sheet, and reports indicate that several local advocates have declined to take up defence in the case. The development follows strong reactions across Assam after the singer's sudden death, which was initially reported as a drowning incident during a recreational activity in Singapore. The state government had earlier stated that certain circumstances surrounding the death appeared suspicious, prompting the formation of the SIT.

Indian Defence forces committed to adapting to changing environment: CDS

From PG 1
And finally, 'I' for innovation, daring to think ahead and to be ahead of the curve," he explained. General Chauhan further said battles in the older domains will always remain contested, often brutal. But in the new domains, they will be smart, swift, and shaped by intellect, innovation, and initiative. The force that masters new frontiers is more likely to prevail in future conflicts.



Angry fans forcibly broke through the barricades and stormed onto the turf at Salt Lake Stadium, alleging mismanagement by the organisers during Lionel Messi's Kolkata leg of the GOAT Tour after the Argentine superstar left the venue early on Saturday. Pic Prabir Bhattacharya

AIFF Clarifies No Role in Kolkata Messi Event Chaos

MI News Service, Kolkata: Vandalism at Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata during Lionel Messi's India tour, leaving thousands of fans frustrated and raising questions about event management and crowd control. The Argentine superstar spent only about 10 minutes at the venue, but the brief appearance was enough to trigger a series of incidents, including fans throwing water bottles, breaking chairs, and vandalising parts of the stadium.

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has now responded to the Kolkata event, clarifying its role and distancing itself from the chaos. According to the federation, the programme was a "private event" organised by a PR agency, and AIFF had no involvement in its planning, execution, or organisation. In an official statement, the AIFF expressed concern over the unruly scenes that unfolded, stressing the importance of safety and security for all attendees. In its statement, AIFF clarified that no official clearance or communication had been sought from the federation regarding the event. "The details of the event were neither communicated to the AIFF nor was any clearance sought from the federation. We urge all attendees to cooperate fully with the relevant authorities and maintain order," the statement read. The federation also emphasised that the safety and security of all individuals involved must remain the top priority. Fans had paid between INR 4,000 and INR 12,000 to watch Messi, 2022 FIFA World Cup winner Luis Suarez, and Rodrigo de Paul, but many were left disappointed as a large number of VIPs surrounded Messi, forming a human blockade. Once Messi exited the stadium, frustration erupted among the spectators. Water bottles and food packets were hurled at the field, and several chairs were broken. Fibreglass seats were left smashed across the pitch and synthetic track. Two canopies set up for Messi and even the Chief Minister's enclosure suffered damage during the unrest.

Kunal Ghosh Slams Organisers After Chaos at Lionel Messi's Kolkata Event

MI News Service, Kolkata: Chaos at Salt Lake Stadium during Lionel Messi's Kolkata leg of the GOAT Tour on Saturday triggered sharp political reactions, with Trinamool Congress state general secretary Kunal Ghosh strongly criticising the organisers and calling the incident shameful for the city. Thousands of fans who had paid hefty amounts for tickets were left disappointed after the Argentine football legend left the venue early following a brief appearance.

As frustration spilled over, spectators hurled bottles from the galleries, attempted to break gates between stands, and entered the field, where vandalism was reported. Police personnel were forced to use plastic chairs thrown by the crowd as makeshift shields to protect themselves. The situation quickly descended into chaos, forcing security agencies to step in and restore order. Reacting to the incident, Kunal Ghosh publicly questioned the event's planning and execution. In a strongly worded social



media post, he asked why Messi was surrounded by what he described as a chaotic crowd of "hangers-on" instead of being allowed to walk freely during the stadium parade. He also questioned why gallery spectators, who had waited for hours, were deprived of the opportunity to see the football icon. "Was it only about money and business?" Ghosh asked, alleging that incompetent organisers failed to ensure even basic planning. "Everyone was deprived because of these organisers and a few sycophants," he wrote, accusing them of prioritising personal visibility over the fans' experience.

According to the organisers, Messi was scheduled to

arrive at the Vivekananda Yuba BharatiKrirangan around 11 am and take a round of the field as part of a felicitation programme. Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan was also expected to attend the event. Although Messi arrived on time, the programme quickly ran into trouble due to poor crowd management, leading to extreme disorder and his early departure. Fans voiced their anger, with many claiming they had purchased tickets four months ago or had been waiting outside the stadium since as early as 4 am. Despite the long wait, several spectators said they were unable to see Messi at all.

Recalling Messi's earlier visit to Kolkata in 2011, Ghosh pointed out that the footballer had watched a match calmly from near the corner flag at the same stadium without any chaos. "What we witnessed today was not about seeing Messi but about a few people trying to project themselves," he said, adding that the lack of planning had tarnished Kolkata's image.

Thousands welcome Argentine icon as Messi mania grips Kolkata

From PG 1
shouting 'Messi! Messi!' that echoed well past dawn. The lobby resembled an Argentine fan club, dotted with sky-blue jerseys, scarves and flags as the frenzy built up. Messi checked into Room 730, with the entire seventh floor sealed off to ensure no movement around his suite. With security at its peak, some fans who could afford it booked rooms in the hotel to stay as close to Messi as possible. "I'm a die-hard Ronaldo fan, so what? His

biggest rival is coming to my city and I cannot miss the moment. So we planned to stay in the hotel a day in advance," said Krish, a Class 9 student of Birla High School. He roamed the coffee shop with his mother and elder sister, anxious for a peek at the icon. "I just want to let him to play football with me. And if I'm not successful, I will go to the gym tomorrow morning to catch a glimpse of him. I have my autograph book ready and hopefully I will get a selfie." Satadru Dutta, the sole promoter of the tour who received Messi at the airport, said the moment was historic for Kolkata.

Fans on rampage as Messi's Kolkata tour turns "Messy"

From PG 1
Stadium for a tribute programme featuring music, dance and an exhibition match between Mohun Bagan 'Messi' All Stars and Diamond Harbour 'Messi' All Stars.

On his arrival at 10.50 am, the superstar Argentine footballer interacted with both teams, before participating in the felicitation of Bengal's Santosh Trophy-winning side and a "Master Class with Messi" for kids. Thousands braved the December chill and waited past midnight to give a rousing welcome to Lionel Messi as he arrived in Kolkata for his whirlwind three-day, four-city GOAT India Tour 2025. The legend's 2.26 am touchdown on Saturday sent the city into a frenzy. Messi arrived with long-time strike partner Luis Suárez and Argentina teammate Rodrigo De Paul. Luis Suárez, Rodrigo De Paul and Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan joined the programmes in Kolkata

Lionel Messi reaches Hyderabad, football icon's second pit stop for 'GOAT India Tour'

MI News Service, Hyderabad: Legendary FIFA World Cup-winning Argentina football icon Lionel Messi reached Hyderabad on Saturday, his second pit stop for his 'GOAT India Tour' 2025.

Messi was brought to Hyderabad with a high level of security after the chaos that unfolded earlier today in Kolkata during his first stop of the tour.

Messi's itinerary in Hyderabad includes a highly anticipated 7v7 exhibition football match at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, where Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is expected to join him on the field. The evening will conclude with a grand musical extravaganza celebrating Messi's illustrious career and his achievements in world football. The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi have also reached Hyderabad.

Earlier, event organiser Anuttam Reddy shared details of Messi's schedule, saying, "Lionel Messi is expected to come at the stadium by 7:00-7:30 pm. Musical programs will start at 5.30 pm onwards. There is plenty of entertainment for everyone... Messi will be here with us on the ground for about 1 hour... There will be a lot of events... As UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors, he will engage with children."

Fans are incredibly excited about the football legend's Hyderabad visit, with one of the fans, named Abhishek, saying to ANI, "I am from Maharashtra. I came here to catch a glimpse of Lionel Messi. It is very great of him to come to India... I have been a supporter of Lionel Messi since childhood. It is a dream-come-true moment for me... Even if I get to see



him for two minutes, that would be enough for me"

Notably, Messi's Kolkata leg of the GOAT Tour descended into chaos on Saturday after fans expressed disappointment when the Argentine legend left the event at Salt Lake Stadium much earlier than planned, leaving the crowd angry. The crowd also voiced anger at VIPs and politicians, including West Bengal sports minister Arup Biswas, for hogging Messi's time and preventing them from catching a glimpse of the football legend.

Many fans who paid a hefty amount to watch a glimpse of the football icon Messi became angry and began throwing water bottles and chairs from the stands. The angry mob also entered the ground and tried to vandalise the tent and the goal post.

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) issued a statement clarifying that Lionel Messi's event in Kolkata was a private event organised by a PR agency and the federation was not involved in the

"planning or execution" of the event at Salt Lake Stadium on Saturday.

"The All India Football Federation is deeply concerned by the events that transpired at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan, where thousands of fans gathered to witness world football stars Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez, and Rodrigo de Paul," AIFF shared an Instagram post.

"This was a private event organised by a PR agency. The AIFF was not involved in the organisation, planning, or execution of this event in any capacity. Furthermore, the details of the event were neither communicated to the AIFF, nor was any clearance sought from the Federation," the post read.

"We urge all attendees to extend their full cooperation with the relevant authorities and to maintain order. The safety and security of all individuals involved must remain the paramount priority," the post read.

In October, Satadru Dutta, the principal architect

behind Messi's visit, stated that the visit was organised independently and that there was no involvement of the All India Football Federation (AIFF). "No, this is a private event," he clarified.

"AIFF is a big organisation. Let AIFF run like AIFF. I am tying up in my private capacity. They have their own programs, and AIFF is a federation. If they ask me for anything then I will try to help them. AIFF have not asked anything from me. I also did not say anything to AIFF. Every federation has a policy. They will not be able to go beyond that policy," he noted.

West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose said that the organiser of Lionel Messi's GOAT Tour event has been arrested after the chaos.

Speaking to ANI, Governor Ananda Bose said the event organiser was arrested. "The organiser has been arrested, and an investigation has been done..."

Following the chaotic incident at Salt Lake Stadium, Additional Director General

(ADG) Law and Order Jawed Shamim said the situation is under control. He added that an FIR has been lodged and the chief organiser has been arrested, and promised that organisers will refund money to fans.

"There is normalcy now. The second part is the investigation; the FIR has been lodged, and the chief organiser has been arrested... I'm telling you, they (organisers) are promising that they will return (ticket fee to fans). We will see how it can be done," Jawed Shamim told reporters.

Meanwhile, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee also apologised to fans after Messi's Kolkata event turned into chaos.

"I am deeply disturbed and shocked by the mismanagement witnessed today at Salt Lake Stadium. I was on my way to the stadium to attend the event along with thousands of sports lovers and fans who had gathered to catch a glimpse of their favourite footballer, Lionel Messi. I sincerely apologise to Lionel Messi, as well as to all sports lovers and his fans, for the unfortunate incident," Mamta Banerjee wrote on X."

I am constituting an enquiry committee under the chairmanship of Justice (Retd.) Ashim Kumar Ray, with the Chief Secretary and the Additional Chief Secretary, Home and Hill Affairs Department, as members.

The committee will conduct a detailed enquiry into the incident, fix responsibility, and recommend measures to prevent such occurrences in the future. Once again, I extend my heartfelt apologies to all sports lovers," West Bengal CM added.

Local Cuisine To Be Served in Vande Bharat Trains and Progressively Introduced in All Trains

MI News Service, 13 Dec 2025, New Delhi: Union Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting and Electronics & Information Technology, Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw took a review meeting of the officers at Rail Bhawan on Saturday. Ravneet Singh Bittu, Minister of State for Railways and Food Processing Industries was also present in the meeting.

The Union Minister directed officials to provide local cuisine of the region in Vande Bharat trains. Introducing local cuisine will significantly enhance the passenger experience by offering food that reflects the culture and tastes of the regions being traversed. This facility will be expanded to all the trains progressively in future.

The Union Minister also noted that crackdown by Indian Railways on train ticket booking through fake identities is yielding positive results. Following the introduction of a stringent system to establish user identity and detect fake IDs, about 5,000 new user IDs are now being added daily on the IRCTC website. Before the latest reforms, this number had touched nearly one lakh new user IDs per day.

These steps have already helped Indian Railways deactivate 3.03 crore fake accounts. Another 2.7 crore user IDs have either been temporarily suspended or identified for suspension based on the suspicious activities they are indulging in..

The Union Minister and the Minister of State directed officials to ensure that the ticketing system is reformed to a level where all travellers are able to book tickets easily through a real and genuine user ID.

Rescheduling of trains for track maintenance work

MI News Service, 13 Dec 2025, Kolkata: In connection with track maintenance work between Sujnipara & Jangipur road stations in Malda Division, 53053 Katwa - Nimitita passenger & 53027 Azimganj - Malda Town passenger will be rescheduled by 90 minutes & 30 minutes respectively on 15.12.2025.

Delhi AQI turns Severe Plus; GRAP IV restrictions imposed

MI News Service, New Delhi: Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) on Saturday invoked Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) after the Air Quality Index (AQI) near the 'Severe Plus' mark at 450. According to the order released by CAQM, the AQI of Delhi, which was recorded as 431 today at 4 PM, exhibited an increasing trend and has been recorded as 446 at 6 PM on the date owing to slow wind speed, stable atmosphere, unfavourable weather parameters and meteorological conditions and lack of dispersal of pollutants.

Lionel Messi graffiti unveiled in Mumbai ahead of football icon's visit on Sunday

MI News Service, Mumbai: Graffiti of Argentina football icon Lionel Messi was unveiled on a building ahead of the legend's visit to Mumbai as a part of his 'GOAT India Tour' 2025.

The football legend, after the visits to Kolkata and Hyderabad, is set to come to Mumbai on Sunday. Delhi will be the last stop of Messi's tour on Monday.

In September, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis confirmed Messi's visit to India for the first time since 2011.

During his last visit, he played a friendly match with his Argentina team against Venezuela in Kolkata.

During his time in India, under-14 young football players from across the state will be selected by the Maharashtra Sports Department, and they will get the opportunity to practise with Messi on December 14.

Notably, Messi's Kolkata leg of the GOAT Tour descended into chaos on Saturday after fans expressed disappointment when the Argentine legend left the event at Salt Lake Stadium much earlier than planned, leaving the crowd angry. The crowd also expressed its anger on VIPs and politicians, including the West Bengal sports minister Arup Biswas, for hogging Messi's attention and time and not letting them catch a glimpse of the football legend.

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Assam Minister Pijush Hazarika lays foundation stone of Rs 5 crore Science Block at Jagiroad College

MI News Service, Jagiroad: Assam Water Resource Minister Pijush Hazarika on Saturday laid the foundation stone for a state-of-the-art science block at Vigyan Bhawan at Jagiroad College and distributed scooters to meritorious students under the Pragyan Bharati scheme.

The newly sanctioned science building will be constructed at a cost of Rs 5 crore, spanning 14,000 square feet and housing four modern laboratories to provide a hands-on environment for scientific research and learning.

During the event, the Minister also distributed scooters to 88 beneficiary students of Jagiroad College under Dr Bani Kanta Kakati Merit Award, 2025, under



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Shamim said the situation is under control. He added that an FIR has been lodged and the chief organiser has been arrested, and promised that organisers will refund money to fans.

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I am constituting an enquiry committee under the chairmanship of Justice (Retd.) Ashim Kumar Ray, with the Chief Secretary and the Additional Chief Secretary, Home and Hill Affairs Department, as members. The committee will conduct a detailed enquiry into the incident, fix responsibility, and recommend measures to prevent such occurrences in the future. Once again, I extend my heartfelt apologies to all sports lovers," West Bengal CM added.

CBI opposes Rabri Devi's plea for transfer, says bid seeks to 'demean the judge' and stall trial

MI News Service, New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday opposed the plea filed by former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi seeking transfer of criminal cases from the court of Special Judge Vishal Gogne, telling a Delhi court that the application is a "forum-shopping" exercise aimed at "demeaning the judge" and interfering with the administration of justice.

Appearing for the CBI, Senior Advocate DP Singh submitted that Rabri Devi's pleas casts unwarranted aspersions on the judiciary and seeks to browbeat the trial court.

He argued that the special judge has followed the procedure established by superior courts and consistent judicial practice, and that an accused cannot choose a forum or undermine a judicial officer because the proceedings are not

going in their favour.

"You cannot bulldoze a court. You cannot go forum shopping. You cannot demean a judge," Singh told the court, asserting that such attempts directly affect the independence and dignity of the judicial process.

Responding to Rabri Devi's allegation that Judge Gogne deliberately delayed the order on framing of charges in the IRCTC corruption case to coincide with the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct for the Bihar elections, Singh said the claim was baseless.

He clarified that the court had only sought clarifications from the investigating agency, which was a legitimate judicial exercise.

"These clarifications were sought for the court's clarity and conscience. It is the duty of the judge to ask questions," Singh submitted.

The CBI further contended that Rabri Devi's transfer plea was intended to delay the proceedings at a crucial stage. Referring to the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNS), Singh pointed out that arguments on framing of charges are required to be concluded within 60 days, whereas in the present case, more than two years have already elapsed.

He emphasised that the inconvenience faced by an accused during trial cannot be a ground for seeking transfer of a case, and that such pleas undermine the dignity of the court and obstruct the course of justice.

The submissions were made before Principal District and Sessions Judge Dinesh Bhatt, who heard the CBI's arguments at length and posted the matter for further hearing on December 15, 2025.

Rabri Devi, in her plea, has

sought the transfer of four cases pending before Judge Gogne, in which she and several of her family members are accused. These include the IRCTC scam case, the alleged land-for-jobs case, and the related money-laundering proceedings.

On October 13, Judge Gogne framed criminal charges against RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav, Rabri Devi, Tejashwi Yadav and others in the IRCTC case.

In her transfer application, Rabri Devi has alleged that the special judge is biased and conducting the trials with a premeditated mind, claiming that he is "unduly inclined" towards the prosecution and that his conduct has created a reasonable apprehension of bias. The CBI has denied the allegations, terming them an attempt to scandalise the court and delay the trial.

Delhi Govt working to shift Tihar Jail, expand courts: CM Rekha Gupta



MI News Service, New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday announced plans to relocate Tihar Jail, South Asia's largest prison complex, to the city's outskirts to alleviate severe overcrowding and improve prison conditions.

Emphasising that justice delivery is central to governance, Gupta also said that her government is actively working to expand judicial infrastructure, strengthen fast-track courts to improve access to justice.

"Ease of living cannot be achieved unless ease of justice is fulfilled. That is why we are focusing on creating more courtrooms and court complexes, strengthening fast-track courts, and working towards shifting Tihar Jail out of Delhi," Gupta said while addressing the 25th anni-

versary celebrations of the Society of Indian Law Firms (SILF).

The current Tihar Jail, established in 1958, is designed to hold approximately 10,026 prisoners but currently houses over 19,500 inmates, resulting in severe overcrowding and security challenges.

The Chief Minister also highlighted legal reforms undertaken at the national level, noting that after the Modi government came to power, hundreds of obsolete laws were repealed and nearly 1,500 statutes were removed to simplify the legal framework and reduce procedural hurdles.

The event, which also witnessed the launch of the SILF Mediation Centre, was attended by Attorney General of India R. Venkataramani, senior members of the judiciary and leading representatives of the legal fraternity.

The new mediation centre aims to promote alternative dispute resolution and reduce the growing burden on courts.

Congratulating SILF on completing 25 years, Gupta recalled the contribution of late Arun Jaitley, under whose guidance the organisation was established, and said SILF has evolved into a strong institutional platform for the legal profession across sectors.

SILF President Dr. Lalit Bhasin said the organisation has completed a new building on Deendayal Upadhyaya Marg with dedicated facilities for online arbitration and mediation. "Two floors have been earmarked for online arbitration to reduce costs, while a separate space has been created for mediation and settlement of disputes as a pro bono initiative," he said, adding that

the centre will offer free, non-litigation advisory services to help citizens explore settlements over prolonged litigation.

Senior Vice President of SILF Manoj Singh underlined that accessibility is the cornerstone of justice delivery. "If justice is accessible only through face-to-face systems, we must ask whether it is truly a right or merely a privilege," he said, stressing the need to use technology, artificial intelligence and clear legislation to make legal remedies affordable and timely.

Concluding the session, SILF Vice President Pallavi Shroff, Managing Partner at Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas, traced the origins of SILF to the year 2000, when law firms lacked a collective institutional voice. She said SILF was created to address that gap and has since worked to strengthen Indian law firms by improving technology adoption, skills development, and infrastructure.

"Our endeavour has always been to enable Indian law firms to compete globally while contributing meaningfully to access to justice and institutional development in India," Shroff said.

During the event, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta also felicitated Zia Mody, Jyoti Sagar, Shardul Shroff, V. Lakshminikumar, Justice Tejas Karia of the Delhi High Court, Dr. Manoj Kumar, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Law and Justice, and Rajiv Luthra, Founder of Luthra & Luthra, for excellence in their respective fields.

Regulation of trains for maintenance work over Howrah Division

For track maintenance work, **Traffic Block for 4 hours (12.40 hrs. to 16.40 hrs.)** each day will be necessary on Down Line between Dhatrigram & Ambika Kalna stations in Bandel-Katwa section over Howrah Division for 10 days i.e. from 15.12.2025 to 05.01.2026 intermittently. Consequently, the following trains will be regulated on 15.12.2025 (Monday), 17.12.2025 (Wednesday), 19.12.2025 (Friday), 22.12.2025 (Monday), 24.12.2025 (Wednesday), 26.12.2025 (Friday), 29.12.2025 (Monday), 31.12.2025 (Wednesday), 02.01.2026 (Friday) & 05.01.2026 (Monday) as under :- **Cancellation: From Bandel : 37749. From Katwa : 37748. Rescheduling: 37924 Katwa-Howrah local will be rescheduled at 15.45 hrs. instead of 14.45 hrs. from Katwa.**

For track maintenance work at point & crossings, **Traffic Block for 3 hours 30 minutes** each day will be necessary during day time on Down line between Katwa & Dainhat station limit in Bandel-Katwa section over Howrah Division for 5 days i.e. from 16.12.2025 (Tuesday) to 20.12.2025 (Saturday). Consequently, the following trains will be regulated as under :- **On 16.12.2025 : Cancellation: From Bandel : 37741. From Katwa : 37742. Controlling: 13421 Nabadwip Dham-Malda Town Express will be controlled for 10 minutes enroute. On 18.12.2025, 19.12.2025 & 20.12.2025: Cancellation : From Bandel : 37749. From Katwa : 37748. On 20.12.2025 : Rescheduling : 37924 Katwa-Howrah local will be rescheduled at 15.45 hrs. instead of 14.45 hrs. from Katwa.**

Note.: Special or late running trains during block period, if any, will be suitably diverted/controlled enroute. Passengers are requested to follow the public address system at stations. Inconvenience is regretted.

Divisional Railway Manager, Howrah
EASTERN RAILWAY

Researchers unveil new tool that reveals gene behaviour in bacteria



LOS ANGELES [US]: Bacterial infections are responsible for millions of deaths each year, with the global threat made severe by the increasing resistance of microbes to antibiotic treatments.

This is due, in part, to bacteria's capacity to switch genes on and off when they detect environmental changes, including the presence of drugs.

Such switching is accomplished through transcription, which converts the DNA in genes into its chemical cousin in mRNA, which guides the building of proteins that make up the microbe's structure.

Understanding how mRNA production is regulated for each bacterial gene is central to efforts to counter resistance, but approaches used to study this regulation to date have been laborious. According to a new study, scientists revealed a trick that may speed such efforts.

According to the study authors, organisms from bacteria to humans grow as their cells multiply by dividing, with each cell becoming two. Before cells divide, they must copy their DNA such that each of the two daughter cells has a copy. To do so, a molecular machine called DNA polymerase ticks down the DNA chain, reading and making a copy of each gene one by one.

Publishing online Jan. 24 in the journal Nature, the study adds to explanations of how gene expression throughout the genome is shaped by DNA replication during bacterial growth.

Specifically, the research team found that when DNA polymerase arrives at any specific gene, it disrupts the transcription in a way that reveals the state of that gene's regulatory status.

"Our study results show that the constant replication of genes during the cell cycle as the bacterial cells reproduce and grow can be exploited to learn about many aspects of how genes are regulated," said study lead investigator Andrew Pountain, PhD, a postdoctoral research fellow at NYU Langone Health and its Institute for Systems Genetics.

"We like the analogy of the electrocardiogram in medicine," said Itai Yanai, the senior investigator of the study and professor at NYU Langone's Institute for Systems Genetics.

By monitoring patterns of electrical activity in the heart, the ECG reveals a series of waves that provide a detailed, graphical view of a patient's cardiac health. Similarly, waves of changes in the abundance of mRNA in response to a gene's replication produce a signature on a graph, which the authors termed the transcription-replication interaction profile, or TRIP.

The researchers showed how specific waves can be linked to certain features. For example, whether a gene is under a specific form of control, known as repression, where a protein blocks that gene's mRNA from being made. These repressed genes were found to have characteristic, spiked TRIP patterns. "Our aim is to understand how gene regulation shapes these TRIPs, with a goal of using them to diagnose gene regulation across the entire set of thousands of genes in the bacterium," added Yanai.

"We hope that our further investigations of gene expression profiles will offer insight into how groups of genes respond to disruptions or changes in their environment."

High blood pressure may increase risk of strokes, finds study

MICHIGAN [US] : A Michigan Medicine study found that high systolic blood pressure (the top number on the blood pressure reading and how hard the heart pumps blood to the arteries) increases the risk of the two most common types of strokes over time.

The study looked at the average systolic blood pressure years before the first stroke in over 40,000 adults aged 18 and older who had no history of stroke.

Researchers covered three types of stroke: ischemic, a clot that cuts blood supply to the brain and the cause of over 85 per cent of all strokes; intracerebral hemorrhage, a bleed within the brain; and subarachnoid hemorrhage, bleeding between the brain and the tissues that cover it. They found that having a mean systolic blood pressure that is 10-mm Hg higher than average was associated with a 20 per cent higher risk of overall stroke and ischemic stroke, as well as a 31 per cent greater risk of intracerebral hemorrhage.

"Our results suggest that early diagnosis and sustained control of high blood pressure over the lifespan are critical to preventing



stroke, ischemic stroke and intracerebral hemorrhage, especially in Black and Hispanic patients who are more likely to have uncontrolled hypertension than white patients," said senior author Deborah A. Levine, M.D., M.P.H., professor of internal medicine and neurology at University of Michigan Medical School.

Black patients had a 20 per cent higher risk of ischemic stroke and a 67 per cent higher risk of intracerebral hemorrhage than white patients. Hispanic patients had a 281 per cent higher risk of sub-

arachnoid hemorrhage, but not any other stroke type, compared to white patients. While Black and Hispanic patients had a higher risk of stroke, researchers found little evidence to suggest that race and ethnicity affected the association between cumulative systolic blood pressure and the type of stroke that affected any patient.

"Examining racial inequities advances our understanding of the social, economic and political structures that affect health behaviors and risk for stroke

Research explores secrets of lipid synthesis inside cells

LOS ANGELES [US] : South Korean researchers at the IBS Center for Molecular Spectroscopy and Dynamics (IBS CMSD) have made a useful discovery concerning cellular microscopy.

The team has successfully developed Two-Color Infrared Photothermal Microscopy (2C-IPM), a unique method for studying neutral lipids within lipid droplets of living cells.

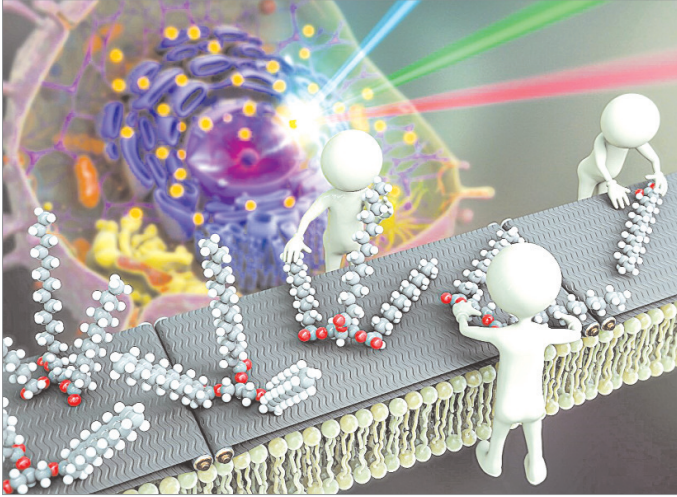
This new microscopy can be combined with isotope labelling, which allows thorough monitoring of neutral lipid synthesis within individual lipid droplets. Lipid droplets (LDs) are structures made up of pockets of neutral lipids (triglycerides) enclosed in a monolayer of phospholipids.

They have long been regarded as uninteresting organelles whose sole function is to store excess energy in the form of neutral lipids.

However, recent studies indicate these droplets actually are dynamic players in various cellular metabolic activities.

It was found they are actively involved in regulating lipid toxicity and cell communication, as well as their correlation with prevalent diseases like obesity and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

Understanding the functions of LDs is thus imperative for the



diagnosis and treatment of these conditions.

Researchers have traditionally stained the cells with lipophilic dyes and employed fluorescence microscopy to study LDs within cells. However, this method has several significant limitations. First is photobleaching of the dyes, which restricts the observation duration of the LDs to very short time windows. Another limitation is the fluorescent dyes themselves. The currently used fluorescent dyes simply target the hydrophobic environment within LDs, utilizing unspecified binding mechanisms. As such, they are

incapable of accurately analyzing the composition and quantity of neutral lipids.

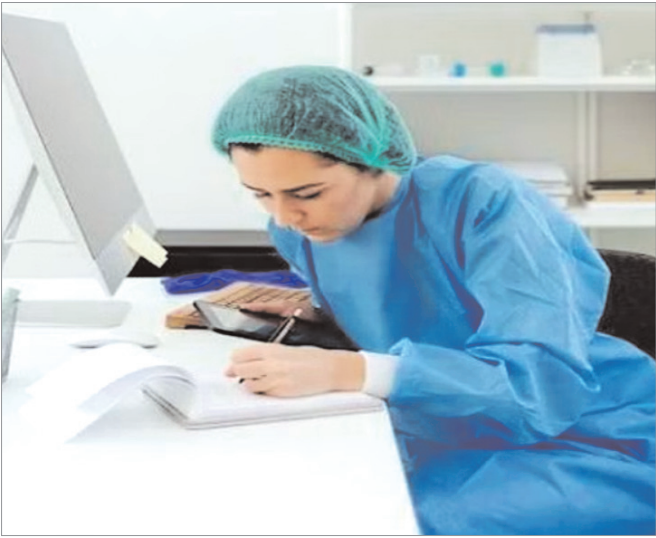
Unlike previous methods that relied on fluorescent microscopy, the new 2C-IPM technology uses an infrared (IR) spectroscopic method and does not require the use of fluorescent dyes. The new method monitors neutral lipids within LDs directly by detecting changes in IR absorbance. Importantly, this advantage allows researchers to observe the synthesis of neutral lipids within individual LDs in living cells over a long period. Employing the newly developed method, the research

team studied the synthesis of neutral lipids in cells when they were exposed to excess fatty acids. The researchers were able to distinguish freshly synthesized neutral lipids from pre-existing neutral lipids within cells by subjecting deuterium-labeled fatty acids, which have distinct spectroscopic properties from non-deuterated forms. The analysis results verified excess fatty acids caused lipid toxicity, and cells respond by increasing the synthesis of neutral lipids.

The lead author, researcher PARK Chanjong, remarked, "This study serves as a fundamental example demonstrating the possibility of long-term research on lipid droplets and internal neutral lipids in living cells. The analytical method established in this research can be applied to the diagnosis and treatment of diseases closely associated with lipid metabolism, such as non-alcoholic fatty liver disease."

Director CHO Minhaeng commented, "By successfully observing the process of neutral lipid synthesis in living cells, we have laid a new foundation for studying the functions of lipid droplets within cells at the molecular level. This method is expected to be widely used in the investigation of various cellular metabolic phenomena."

Study assesses therapeutic strategies for severe obesity in adolescents



ILLINOIS [US] : According to a study, adolescents with severe obesity who got both meal-replacement therapy and financial incentives had a higher reduction in body mass index compared to those who just received meal-replacement therapy. The finding was published in JAMA Pediatrics. Justin Ryder, PhD, Vice Chair of Research for the Department of Surgery at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago and Associate Professor of Surgery and Pediatrics at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, was a co-author of the study.

Severe obesity currently affects about one in five children and adolescents in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and is defined as having a body mass index, or BMI, either at or above the 95th percentile for age and sex. The condition is associated with an increased risk of adult obesity, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and other conditions.

Previous research has found that meal replacement therapy (MRT), rather than traditional lifestyle modifications, is more effective in helping reduce BMI in adolescents with severe obesity. In the current study, the investigators sought to determine if MRT paired with financial incentives to adolescents with severe obesity would increase the efficacy of MRT and lead to a greater reduction in BMI, when compared to MRT alone. "There's literature for adults that supports that tying in financial incentives to weight loss or physical activity programs increases adherence,

and so we wanted to see whether or not adding financial incentives to a behavioural/nutrition weight loss program using meal replacement therapy would increase adherence and through adherence, increase the efficacy of the treatment," Dr Ryder said. Of the 126 adolescents enrolled in the study, 63 participants received MRT plus financial incentives and 63 participants received only MRT for one year. MRT included pre-portioned meals totalling 1,200 calories per day, and financial incentives were provided based on reduction in body weight from baseline. After 52 weeks, the MRT plus financial incentives group had a greater BMI reduction (a reduction of 6 percentage points) and a greater reduction in total body fat mass (a loss of 4.8 kilograms) compared to those who only received MRT therapy.

"Using a cost-effectiveness analysis, we looked at mean fat mass lost between the two treatments and found that despite providing the additional meal replacements for per pound lost, it was cost-effective to do so," Dr Ryder added. Additional work is also needed to develop interventions that extend beyond one year, according to the authors.

"While financial incentives plus MRT appears to be a longer-term strategy than MRT alone, treatment withdrawal will likely result in BMI increase. As such, research is needed to identify strategies that are scalable and feasible in the long term given the chronic nature of obesity," the authors wrote.

Hypertension guidelines do not include potassium-enriched salt: Study

NEW SOUTH WALES [AUSTRALIA] : An international panel of experts published a suggestion in the scientific journal Hypertension published by the American Heart Association, calling for the inclusion of low-sodium potassium-enriched salt in hypertension therapy guidelines.

High levels of sodium intake and low levels of potassium intake are widespread, and both are linked to high blood pressure (hypertension) and a greater risk of stroke, heart disease and premature death. Using a salt substitute where part of the sodium chloride is replaced with potassium chloride addresses both problems at once.

Professor Alta Schutte at The George Institute for Global Health and UNSW Sydney said that despite data from randomised controlled trials demonstrating the health benefits of potassium-enriched, sodium-reduced salt substitutes, they are rarely used.

"We found current clinical guidelines offer incomplete and inconsistent recommendations about the use of these salt substitutes," she said.

"Given the wealth of evidence available, we feel it's time to include salt substitutes in treatment guidelines to help address spiralling rates of uncontrolled high blood pressure around the world and reduce preventable deaths."

Potassium-enriched salt can be used as a direct replacement for regular salt (sodium chloride) when seasoning, preserving or manufacturing foods. Importantly, while other salt reduction strategies make foods taste less salty, switching to potassium-enriched salt is

"No issues with serious harm from hyperkalaemia were recorded in any of the trials to date, though all were done in clinical settings. Our recommendation for use in hypertension is based on patients being managed by a healthcare worker. Healthcare workers know not to recommend potassium-enriched salt in the presence of kidney disease and risks for these patients can be avoided."

undetectable by most people. "Unwanted taste effects are the main reason why efforts to reduce salt intake have failed for more than two decades. The willingness of patients to keep using potassium-enriched salt removes that barrier, which is why it can be a game-changer," Prof Schutte added. A global collaboration of researchers from the US, Australia, Japan, South Africa and India reviewed 32 separate hypertension treatment guidelines - two from global organisations, five from regional organisations and 25 from country organisations - published between 1 January 2013 and 21 June 2023. They found all guidelines referred to sodium reduction, with most recommending reducing salt intake.



Many also recommended increasing dietary potassium intake, but only two - the Chinese and European guidelines - made a specific recommendation for using potassium-enriched salt.

Dr Tom Frieden, President and CEO of Resolve to Save Lives, a global public health organisation focused on preventing 100 million deaths from cardiovascular disease, said that the number of people living with hypertension had doubled in the past 30 years to about 1.3 billion. "High blood pressure kills more than ten million people every year - almost 20 people every minute. Twenty percent of these deaths can be linked to a single culprit: eating too much salt," he said. "Based on the evidence, there is little

doubt that most patients with hypertension and their families should reduce their overall salt intake and, when choosing to consume salt, should switch from regular salt to potassium-enriched salt. This will help reduce blood pressure and protect against serious complications such as stroke and premature death."

Dr Frieden emphasized the shift required to our food environment. "As a society, we must prioritize availability and accessibility of low-sodium, potassium-enriched salts - at home, in restaurants, and in grocery stores. These products should not be marketed or priced as a luxury. Low-sodium, potassium-enriched salt can become the new default." Another barrier to uptake has

been concerns about causing elevated levels of potassium in the blood (hyperkalaemia) in people with advanced kidney disease.

Professor Bruce Neal, Executive Director at The George Institute Australia and Professor of Clinical Epidemiology at Imperial College London, said it is clear that patients with advanced kidney disease should not use potassium-enriched salts, but this applies to a very small proportion of the population, and these patients are already recommended to avoid salt intake.

"No issues with serious harm from hyperkalaemia were recorded in any of the trials to date, though all were done in clinical settings. Our recommendation for use in hypertension is based on patients being managed by a healthcare worker. Healthcare workers know not to recommend potassium-enriched salt in the presence of kidney disease and risks for these patients can be avoided."

The authors argued that given potassium-enriched salt is one of the few dietary interventions patients comply with long-term, it is logical to at least consider the use of potassium-enriched salt for all those with hypertension.

"We strongly encourage clinical guideline bodies to review their recommendations about the use of potassium-enriched salt substitutes at the earliest opportunity - if the world switched from using regular salt to potassium-enriched it would prevent millions of strokes and heart attacks every year at very low cost," added Prof Schutte.

Azharuddin announces action after Hyderabad school students suffer food poisoning



MI News Service, Hyderabad: The minister for minorities welfare of Telangana, Mohammed Azharuddin, on Saturday announced the action taken after school students in Hyderabad suffered food poisoning.

On Thursday night, sixteen students from the Minority Gurukul School in Baghlingampally fell ill after reportedly consuming contaminated food.

According to reports, after consuming the food, the children began experiencing severe stomach aches and vomiting.

Seeing the health condition of the students, the school staff rushed them to King Koti Hospital for urgent medical care.

Fortunately, doctors have confirmed that all students are now in stable condition. In response to the situation, Mohammed

Azharuddin made a statement. He announced the immediate suspension of the hostel deputy warden, the school principal, and the in-charge official connected to the incident.

He also confirmed that action is being initiated against the supplier of the food materials. The health of the children is improving and they are expected to be discharged from the hospital within the next day or two, he added.

The minister further emphasized that it was inappropriate for certain groups to attempt to politicize the unfortunate event.

Martyred journalist Hossam Shabat's brother dies after Israel denies medical aid

MI News Service, Gaza: Hassan Shabat, the brother of slain Palestinian journalist Hossam Shabat, died on Friday, December 12, after Israel blocked medical aid from entering Gaza. According to Hassan's family, Hasan's deteriorating health needed his immediate evacuation from war-torn Gaza. But the requests were reportedly denied.

His family said that Hasan's death was preventable if he had access to life-saving medicines. Gaza's healthcare has been



crippled by Israel's blockade and consistent bombardment, leading to lack of crucial supplies.

Al Jazeera journalist Hossam Shabat was killed in an Israeli airstrike in Beit Lahia in northern Gaza on March 24, 2025. The 23-year-old was struck while covering protests in Jabalia. Prior to his death, the journalist mourned the loss

of Mansour, who was killed alongside his wife and son when an airstrike hit their apartment in Khan Younis.

Indian national gets over seven years in federal prison for US elderly fraud scheme

MI News Service, Chicago: A 38-year-old Indian national, Ligneshkumar H. Patel, has been sentenced to 90 months in federal prison for his involvement in an "imposter scam" that defrauded 11 victims, including elderly individuals across five US states, officials said.

Patel pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and financial institution fraud, and two counts of wire fraud. In addition, the judge ordered him to pay more than USD 2 million in restitution, the Department of Justice said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Imposter scams are international conspiracies often using US-based money mules to meet victims

in person to take their money," said US Attorney Steven D. Weinhoef. "The US Attorney's Office prosecutes these fraudsters aggressively, and anyone who targets elderly victims will face certain justice."

According to court documents, Patel drove to the residences of at least 11 elderly victims in five states, stealing assets totaling USD 2,231,216.99. He operated within a broader conspiracy involving at least 85 additional victims, with an intended loss exceeding USD 6.9 million.

"This case highlights the serious consequences for individuals who prey on the elderly through sophisticated fraud schemes," said Matthew

J. Scarpino, special agent in charge of HSI Chicago.

"HSI remains dedicated to protecting our communities from financial crimes and ensuring that those responsible are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

Patel admitted to acting as a courier, or "money mule," collecting money and gold from victims in Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin to further the conspiracy, according to the statement.

The investigation was carried out by Homeland Security Investigations and the Edwardsville Police Department, with Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter Reed prosecuting the case, local media reported.

Erdogan calls for "limited ceasefire" in Russia-Ukraine conflict



MI News Service, Ankara: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday called for a "limited ceasefire" to halt attacks targeting energy and port facilities in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. According to the Turkish presidency, Erdogan made the remarks during a meeting with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, on the sidelines of an international peace forum in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.

During their talks, Erdogan said that the efforts to end the Ukraine-Russia conflict with a just and lasting peace are "valuable." He added that progress can be made "in areas with practical benefits for both sides," noting that "a limited ceasefire targeting energy facilities and ports would be beneficial." Erdogan stressed that Türkiye is closely following the negotiation processes aimed at ending the conflict and that "Türkiye, within this framework, can host talks in all formats," according to the statement. The statement noted that the talks also covered bilateral relations, the EU's freezing of Russian assets, the latest developments in Gaza and Syria, and the peace process in the South Caucasus.

On Friday, a forum dedicated to the International Year of Peace and Trust was held in Ashgabat. The event has drawn high-level delegations and representatives of international organizations.

Pakistan, 7 others voice support for UNRWA's humanitarian role in Gaza

MI News Service, Islamabad: Eight leading Muslim countries, including Pakistan, have expressed strong support for the UN relief agency for Palestinian refugees, saying its role in Gaza is "irreplaceable" amid an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

In a joint statement shared by Pakistan's Foreign Office on Friday, the foreign ministers of Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates reaffirmed "the indispensable role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in safeguarding the rights and well-being of Palestinian refugees".

They said that for decades, UNRWA has carried out a unique mandate entrusted to it by the international community, providing protection, education, health care, social services, and emergency assistance to millions of Palestinian refugees in its areas of operation.

"In light of the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, the ministers underscore the essential role UNRWA plays in delivering humanitarian assistance through its network of distribution centres, ensuring that food, relief items, and basic necessities reach those in need fairly and efficiently," the statement said.

The ministers noted that the UN General Assembly's decision to renew UNRWA's mandate for an additional three years reflected international confidence



in the agency's vital role and the continuity of its operations.

UNRWA's schools and health facilities remain a lifeline for refugee communities in Gaza, the statement said, underlining that UNRWA's role is "irreplaceable".

"No other entity possesses the infrastructure, expertise, and field presence required to meet the needs of Palestinian refugees or to ensure continuity of services at the necessary scale," it read.

The statement warned that any weakening of the agency's capacity would have grave humanitarian, social and political repercussions across the region.

The ministers also condemned the storming of the UNRWA headquarters in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem by Israeli forces, describing it as a "flagrant violation" of international law and the "inviolability" of UN premises.

Thailand, Cambodia have agreed to cease all shooting effective Friday evening: Trump

MI News Service, Washington: U.S. President Donald Trump said Friday on social media that Thailand and Cambodia have agreed to cease all shooting effective Friday evening.

"I had a very good conversation this morning with the Prime Minister of Thailand, Anutin Charnvirakul, and the Prime Minister of Cambodia, Hun Manet, concerning the very unfortunate reawakening of their long-running War," Trump said on Truth Social, adding that both countries are ready for peace.

Following armed clashes in late July, the Thailand-Cambodia border conflict reignited on Sunday afternoon. Both sides accused each other



of initiating the attack and confirmed casualties.

Thai Defense Ministry spokesperson Surasant Kongsiri said Thursday that the latest border clashes with Cambodia have left nine Thai soldiers dead, more than 120 people injured, and nearly 200,000 Thai civilians displaced.

As of Friday afternoon local time, the number of Cambodian evacuees from the border fighting has risen to more than 300,000, the Cambodian Ministry of Interior said in a press release.

IDF says it killed terror operative who crossed Yellow Line in south Gaza

MI News Service, Tel Aviv: The IDF says it killed a Palestinian terror operative who crossed the Gaza ceasefire line in the Strip's south yesterday.

According to the military, two operatives were identified crossing the Yellow Line and approaching troops of the 7th Armored Brigade, "in a way that posed an immediate threat."

"The troops eliminated one terrorist to remove the threat," the army says.

Pressure Mounts on Centre to Restore Minority Scholarships as Government Begins Process for Revival



MI News Service, New Delhi: Three years after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government at the Centre discontinued a series of key scholarships and fellowships for Muslim students, the demand for their restoration is growing louder. Mounting pressure from students, civil society groups, and opposition parties has now compelled the government to begin the process of reviving financial support for minority students.

The issue reached Parliament recently when Amra Ram, CPI(M) MP from Sikar, Rajasthan, questioned the government on the abrupt termination of these schemes. Responding to his query in the Lok Sabha on December 3, Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju confirmed that the Central government is currently seeking approval from the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) to restore scholarships for minority communities under the upcoming finance cycle.

However, the government's justification—that alleged embezzlement of scholarship funds forced it to halt the schemes—has been criticised by many as a pretext to indefinitely delay the release of funds. MP Amra Ram had asked for clarity on the year in which the scholarships were discontinued, the reasons behind the decision, and whether the government intended to reinstate them.

In his written reply, Rijiju stated that the Ministry of Minority Affairs earlier implemented Pre-Matric, Post-Matric, and Merit-cum-Means scholarships for

BJP registers big win in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation polls

MI News Service, Thiruvananthapuram: The lotus bloomed in the state capital as the BJP-led NDA achieved a resounding win in the polls for the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, snatching it from the CPI(M)-led LDF and marking an end to 45 years of continuous Left rule in the local body.

The win in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation will act as a boost for the BJP in the 2026 assembly polls, especially in the state capital. Of the 101 wards in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, the BJP won 50, LDF 29, UDF 19 and two by independent candidates.

The BJP is one seat short of a decisive majority in the corporation. Besides this, the NDA retained the Palakkad municipality after a close battle with the Congress-led UDF and wrested the Thrippunithura Municipality from the grand old party.

In Thrissur, from where Suresh Gopi won in the Lok Sabha polls last year, the BJP won 18 out of the 46 wards in Kodungallur Municipality, 8 in Thrissur Cor-



poration, two each in Guruvayoor and Vadakkancherry municipalities, 7 in Kunnamkulam Municipality, 6 in Irinjalakuda Municipality and one in Chalakudy Municipality. It won 4 wards in the block panchayats and 167 in the grama panchayats, but none in the district panchayat in Thrissur district.

The BJP-led front won 1,085 grama panchayat wards and 44 block panchayat wards in Kerala, according to the State Election Commission (SEC) figures at 2.30 pm. These also include 11 wards in the Kollam Corporation, 13 in Kozhikode Corporation, 4 in Kannur Corporation and 6 in Kochi corporation, coming third in these local

bodies.

In the fight for the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, the BJP campaign highlighting the alleged corruption during the tenure of the LDF appears to have worked for the NDA. The Sabarimala gold loss-related campaign of the BJP helped it to win 142 grama panchayat wards, 6 block panchayat wards and 21 municipality wards in Pathanamthitta district where the Lord Ayyappa shrine is located.

The saffron party won nine wards, including Pandalam Town and Pandalam Town West, under the Pandalam Municipality and three wards in the Pandalam block panchayat in Pathanamthitta district.

Uttarakhand private school under fire after video shows students reciting Kalma



MI News Service, Dehradun:

A private school in Uttarakhand has come under scrutiny after a video showing students reciting the Kalma, an Islamic declaration of faith, went viral on social media. The incident has triggered protests from local groups and raised questions about the school's adherence to educational guidelines. The controversy centres on Adarsh Janata Montessori Junior High School in Sultanpur Patti—recently renamed Kaushalya Puri—in Udham Singh Nagar district. Principal Girish Chandra Saini told reporters that the school has around 110 Hindu students and 80 Muslim students. "For the past year, we had been including the kalma in morning prayers for all students," he said. Following the circulation of the video, the school halted the practice from Monday, acknowledging that it was not appropriate to include all children in a religious ritual. The video, which shows a teacher leading students in the recitation, sparked anger among several right-wing groups, who staged protests outside the school and accused the administration of "religious indoctrination." Local police were deployed to prevent any escalation of tensions.

Muslim community alarmed as UP govt moves to take control of Madrasah teacher recruitment

M News Service, Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh government's latest move targeting madrasas has triggered renewed fear and disappointment among Muslims, who believe the state is slowly dismantling the autonomy of minority educational institutions.

After months of crackdowns that included shutting down unregistered madrasas and demolishing buildings with bulldozers, the government is now attempting to take charge of how teachers are appointed in government-funded madrasas.

Speaking at an event in Bahraich on 7 December, Minority Welfare Minister O. P. Rajbhar announced that future recruitment would be conducted through a state-level commission rather than by madrasa management committees.

These committees currently oversee appointments under the Madrasa Regulations 2016, a framework specifically designed to uphold minority rights under Articles 28-30 of the Constitution. Rajbhar argued that the selection system should mirror the process used in government schools.



Two days after his remarks, the Director of Minority Welfare and the Registrar of the Madrasa Board issued a circular instructing all district minority officers to submit a detailed list of teachers employed in government-aided madrasas within three days.

The order referenced a legislative audit meeting held in May 2025, where the government claimed that widespread irregularities had occurred in several institutions including allegations that some management members hired their own relatives.

Committees were also ordered

to file affidavits confirming that previous appointments complied with 2016 regulations and did not involve nepotism.

Madrasa operators and community leaders say the accusations are exaggerated and being used as a justification for deeper interference. A senior madrasa administrator in Lucknow, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the pattern is unmistakable.

He said, "First it was shutting down unregistered madrasas, then bulldozers, now this. These are not administrative corrections, they are steps to gain control."

If implemented, the new system will directly affect around 560 government-funded madrasas and nearly 8,400 teachers, raising concerns about thousands of students who depend on these institutions.

Under the current mechanism, teacher appointments require the approval of a five-member committee, verification by the District Minority Welfare Officer, and final endorsement by the Madrasa Board.

Operators argue that the process already bars close relatives of committee members, and any violations are rare exceptions. Voices from the community have strongly criticised the government's plan. They say that irregularities cannot be used to paint an entire system as corrupt.

They term the police as a direct assault on constitutional protections. For now, Muslim organisations remain convinced that the intention is not reform but control.

They warn that the push to centralise appointments, along with recent closures and demolitions, could weaken institutions that have shaped community education for generations

**YASH DHULL
SCORING LOTS
OF RUNS IN DPL
WILL CERTAINLY
HELP HIM IN IPL,
SAYS CHOPRA**

NEW DELHI : Ex-opener Aakash Chopra spoke about Yash Dhull's potential of getting an Indian Premier League (IPL) team when the mini-auction happens in Abu Dhabi on December 16, saying that the right-handed batter being among the top run-scorers in this year's Delhi Premier League (DPL) will certainly help his case.

Dhull, who captained India to the U19 World Cup win in 2022, amassed 435 runs in eight games for Central Delhi Kings in this year's DPL, where they finished as the runners-up. Dhull was with the Delhi Capitals in IPL 2023, but never got going in the four games he played.

"Yash Dhull's journey is quite inspiring. He was touted as an upcoming youngster who would play for India soon. That dream has not happened yet, but he keeps making runs. He uses every opportunity he gets, wherever he plays," said Chopra on JioStar. "Sometimes it is very important to stay relevant for a long time, so that when an opportunity comes, people think of him. This season of the Delhi Premier League was quite good for him with the bat, where he scored tons of runs, and those performances will certainly help him in the IPL." "He's an Under-19 World Cup winner, and as far as IPL is concerned, he was picked by the Delhi Capitals a few seasons ago and was given some chances too, but he wasn't able to capitalize on them. I think Yash Dhull is ticking all those boxes and keeping himself in the thoughts of everybody who's following the sport with his DPL performances," he added. Though other DPL stars like Tejasvi Dahiya and Arpit Rana will also be on the mind of the IPL scouts, former India women's cricketer Reema Mahotra thinks someone like Sarthak Ranjan, who made 449 runs in nine innings in this year's competition, can also get into any of the ten teams.

**Messi event chaos in Kolkata:
Principal organiser arrested**

KOLKATA : Satadru Dutta, the principal organiser of the mega event held at Salt Lake Stadium on the northern outskirts of Kolkata earlier in the day, featuring Argentine football star Lionel Messi, was arrested on Saturday after chaos and vandalism broke out at the venue over high ticket prices and limited access to the football icon, an official said.

Confirming the arrest, Additional Director General (Law & Order) Jawed Shamim said that a first information report (FIR) would be registered in connection with the incident. "A thorough investigation will be carried out to ascertain the roots of the mismanagement that ultimately led to the chaos. The police are taking the matter very seriously. Every person found responsible for the mismanagement and the resulting disorder will be booked," Shamim said.

He also stated that the organisers of the event have been directed to arrange a refund of the money collected through the sale



of tickets.

Meanwhile, a senior police insider said that Dutta was arrested by police personnel at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata while he was attempting to leave the city. He is currently being interrogated.

The incident unfolded after agitated spectators, angered over

limited access to Messi despite purchasing tickets at what they described as exorbitant prices, went on a rampage inside the stadium. With the situation spiralling out of control, police were forced to resort to a large-scale lathi charge and deploy personnel from the Rapid Action Force (RAF) to restore order. In the wake of the unrest, Messi left the stadium ear-

lier than scheduled.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was on her way to the stadium at the time of the incident. However, after being informed about the ruckus and vandalism, she instructed her driver to turn back. Shortly thereafter, the Chief Minister announced the constitution of a judicial committee to probe the mismanagement that led to the chaos.

The probe panel will be headed by Justice (Retd.) Ashim Kumar Ray of the Calcutta High Court. The state Chief Secretary, Manoj Pant, and Additional Secretary to the Home and Hill Affairs Department, Nandini Chakraborty, will be the other two members of the committee.

"The committee will conduct a detailed inquiry into the incident, fix responsibility, and recommend measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents in future. Once again, I extend my heartfelt apologies to all sports lovers," the Chief Minister said in a statement.



**Fit India Sundays on Cycle
heads to Goa for Vijay Diwas
special; legendary footballers,
Olympians set to grace event**

PANAJI : The scenic coastline of Goa will turn into a vibrant arena of fitness, patriotism, and community spirit, as the Fit India Sundays on Cycle hosts its mega edition in the state to mark Vijay Diwas, paying tribute to India's armed forces.

The special edition will be held from Miramar Beach Circle to Dona Paula Circle, with the ride flagging off at 7 am. The event is a flagship event of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and is being organised in Goa in collaboration with the Directorate of Sports, Goa.

A press conference was held in Goa on Saturday and addressed jointly by Mayank Srivastav, Deputy Director General, Sports Authority of India, and Dr. Ajay Gaude, Secretary, Sports Authority of Goa, as a precursor to the mega event to be held on December 14.

Speaking at the press conference, Srivastav said, "Fit India Sundays on Cycle (SOC) will be a Fitness Carnival where people of Goa can participate in a plethora of activities such as zumba, yoga, rope skipping, besides Cycling. This is the 53rd edition of SOC, and already about 20 lakh citizens across the country have participated in the last year. We are very happy to bring this national event to Goa."

"Earlier, we used to have the mega event in Delhi, but on popular demand and also with an effort to promote fitness across the country, the event has now shifted out of the nodal event in New Delhi to other States and UTs. The first event hosted outside Delhi was in Varanasi, the

second event is being hosted in Goa, which has the perfect scenic beauty, wide roads, and fresh air," he further added.

Speaking about Goa's participation in the event, Dr. Gaude said, "We are happy to collaborate with the Sports Ministry for this event that strives to improve the overall health of citizens. I would also like to announce that the Sports Authority of Goa is also starting a cycling club where common citizens can participate."

The Goa edition will be graced by Dr. Ramesh Tawadkar, Sports Minister, Government of Goa, and Santosh Gunwantrao Sukhadeve, IAS, Secretary (Sports), Goa. Several renowned sportspersons will also be present, including Olympian and World Championship gold medalist boxer Jaismine Lamboria, Olympian Subedar Manish Kaushik, Arjuna Awardee footballer Bruno Coutinho, and Padma Shri and Arjuna Awardee Brahmanand Sankhwalkar, one of Goa's most iconic football legends.

Adding further inspiration, Maymol Rocky, the first-ever female head coach of the Indian Senior Women's National Football Team, will also join the ride. Renowned Telugu comedian Md. Ali and actor Manchu Manoj Kumar will also grace the Goa event to motivate citizens.

The Vijay Diwas theme will be strengthened by the presence of senior officers and units from the Army, Navy, and NCC, underscoring the deep connection between fitness, discipline, and national service.



CUTTACK : India will have strong representation in the finals of various categories at the Odisha Masters 2025 BWF World Tour Super 100 as Isharani Baruah,

Women's Singles top seed Unnati Hooda, and Men's Singles second seed Kiran George booked their places in the summit clashes following hard-fought semifinal vic-

tories at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Cuttack, on Saturday.

Isharani Baruah booked her place in the final after overcoming Tanya Hemanth in the semifinal. After dropping the opening game 18-21, Isharani staged a dominant comeback, taking the next two games 21-7, 21-7 to seal the match in 54 minutes. She will now face top seed Unnati Hooda in the final.

Unnati earned her spot in the title clash with a composed semifinal win over Tasnim Mir. Tasnim, who had enjoyed an impressive run after defeating top seeds in the earlier rounds, claimed the first game 21-18. However, Unnati responded strongly, winning the next two games 21-16, 21-16 to close out the contest in 60 minutes.

In the men's singles, second seed Kiran George progressed to the final following an all-Indian semifinal against Rounak Chouhan. Kiran edged the opening game 21-19 before Rounak bounced back with a 21-8 com-

fortable win in the second to force a decider. Kiran held his nerve in the third, clinching it 21-18 to book his place in the final in 53 minutes, where he will face Indonesia's Muhammad Yusuf.

India's doubles campaign came to an end with defeats in the semifinals, as Sathwik Reddy and Reshika Uthayasooryan in mixed doubles, along with Ashwini Bhat and Shikha Gautam in women's doubles, bowed out against their respective opponents.

Earlier on Friday, top Indian shuttlers continued their strong showing in the Odisha Masters with top seeds Unnati Hooda and Tharun Manneppalli, alongside Tanvi Sharma, Kiran George, and Anupama Upadhyaya, advancing to the singles quarterfinals.

In women's singles, top seed Hooda dominated Thailand's Tidaporn Kleebyeesun 21-7, 21-14 in just 25 minutes to book her quarterfinal spot. Joining her is Tanvi, who overcame fellow Indian Aditi Bhatt 21-18, 22-20 in a 33-minute battle.

**IPL teams will definitely eye
Nizar for firepower at
number five or six, says Karim**

NEW DELHI : Former India wicketkeeper-batter and selector Saba Karim said the Indian Premier League (IPL) franchises are likely to consider Salman Nizar for adding firepower in the number five or six role when the much-anticipated auction happens in Abu Dhabi on December 16.

The left-handed Nizar grabbed everyone's attention by smashing 11 sixes off his last 13 deliveries during a Kerala Cricket League (KCL) match for Calicut Globsters. "Salman Nizar's credentials are clear from how he has battled in the Kerala Cricket League. He has the power and the clarity to hit big shots."

"When you find a batter like him with so much promise, where do you place him? I think any IPL franchise looking for an explosive number five or number six batter will definitely consider Salman Nizar in the auction," said Karim on JioStar.

Former India batter Abhinav Mukund feels left-handed wicketkeeper-batter Tushar Raheja can trigger a bidding war in the mini IPL auction. Raheja played a pivotal role in Tiruppur Tamizhans' winning the 2025 Tamil Nadu Premier League (TNPL), amassing 488 runs in nine matches at a strike rate of 185.55.

"Many think Tushar Raheja is young, but he has played in the TNPL for almost seven or eight seasons. He focuses on making big scores, and that stood out this season. He hits the ball well in the Power-play and plays spin very well. He smashed bowlers like Varun Chakravarthy and Ravichandran Ashwin all over the ground."

"This is a player who earlier could not make the Tamil Nadu team. But with these performances, it will be hard to ignore him. I believe he has what it takes to succeed in the IPL. He strikes the ball well and hits big sixes. He is also a wicketkeeper, which adds to his value."

"It is a tough position to get into as an Indian opener, and you need extraordinary skill. But why not? We have seen players like Priyansh Arya make it big. Tushar Raheja definitely has the game, and I am sure some franchises will think about investing in him."

Another player the franchise will eye is seam-bowling all-rounder Sairaj Patil, who amassed 233 runs in six innings and took seven wickets, finishing as Player of the Tournament in the T20 Mumbai League.



**U19 ASIA CUP: SENEVIRATNE'S FIVE-FOR
POWERS SRI LANKA TO BIG WIN OVER NEPAL**

DUBAI : Sethmika Seneviratne's five-wicket haul set up Sri Lanka's emphatic eight-wicket win over Nepal in their Group B clash of the Men's Under-19 Asia Cup at The Sevens Stadium on Saturday.

Asked to bat first by Sri Lanka captain Vimath Dinsara, Nepal were steady at 30 without loss before a run out of Niraj Kumar Yadav for 10 in the eighth over resulted in the innings unravelling quickly.

Seneviratne struck in successive spells, removing Sahil Patel (12), Vansh Chhetri (0), and Dilsad Ali (0) to leave Nepal reeling at 37/4, with the side losing their four wickets for just seven runs within six overs.



Captain Ashok Dhami and Cibrin Shrestha (18) briefly resisted with a 24-run stand, but Rasith Nimsara struck to dismiss the former for nine at the start of the 21st over. From there, Nepal folded to 82 all out, with Shrestha being the top run-scorer.

Seneviratne completed incredible figures of 5-25, and was ably supported by Rasith Nimsara, Vigneshwaran Akash, Dulnith Siger, and Chamika Heenatigala, taking a scalp each.

Sri Lanka's chase of 83 was briefly dented when Nepal reduced them to 25/2, Dayanand Mandal getting a scalp. But Dimantha Mahavithana (39) and

Kavija Gamage (24) ensured there were no further alarms in Sri Lanka's chase.

Their unbroken 59-run stand for the third wicket sealed victory for Sri Lanka with 35.1 overs to spare. Sri Lanka will next face Afghanistan at the ICC Academy Ground in Dubai on Monday, while Nepal is slated to take on Bangladesh on the same day.

Brief scores:

Nepal U19 82 all out in 28.5 overs (Cibrin Shrestha 18, Sethmika Seneviratne 5-25, Dulnith Siger 1-3) lost to Sri Lanka U19 84/2 in 14.5 overs (Dimantha Mahavithana 39 not out, Kavija Gamage 24 not out, Dayanand Mandal 1-16) by eight wickets

**WBBL 2025: Lizelle Lee scripts history
as Hobart Hurricanes lift maiden title**

HOBART : Lizelle Lee produced a commanding performance to steer Hobart Hurricanes to their first-ever Women's Big Bash League title, dismantling Perth Scorchers in a one-sided final with a thunderous, unbeaten half-century.

After a disciplined bowling effort restricted the Scorchers to 137/5, the Hurricanes made light work of the chase, cruising home with five overs to spare. Lee set the tone immediately, striking three boundaries in the opening over, before Danielle Wyatt-Hodge followed suit to propel the Hurricanes to a brisk start. The early onslaught left the Scorchers on the back foot as Hobart raced to 24 without loss after two overs.

Wyatt-Hodge departed in the sixth over, but any hopes of a fightback were quickly dashed. Lee maintained her dominance against the bowlers, while Nat Sciver-Brunt contributed timely boundaries to keep the required rate comfortably manageable. The decisive moment arrived when Lee launched Alana King

for consecutive sixes, before finding the gaps for a couple of boundaries in the following over.

The flurry of shots brought up her half-century and effectively sealed the contest. Although Sciver-Brunt perished later in the game, Lee remained unbeaten, with her innings also setting a new record for the highest individual score in a WBBL final.

Earlier, the Scorchers struggled to find momentum after electing to bat, perhaps feeling the toll of a demanding schedule that had seen them play their third match in five days. The Power-play yielded little fluency, with Katie Mack falling for 17 off 21 deliveries. Beth Mooney, in fine form coming into the final, was handed several chances but failed to convert them before being eventually bowled by Heather Graham for 33.

Sophie Devine and Paige Scholfield attempted to lift the scoring rate through the middle overs, but the Hobart bowlers kept chipping away. With four overs remaining, Scorchers sat at 106/4 and were eyeing a late



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surge. Devine briefly threatened the opposition with a six before being stumped in the next over. Despite a few boundaries from Scholfield, a sluggish final over curtailed any hopes of a competitive total.

The Scorchers closed on 137 for 5, a score that proved well short of the mark against a Hurricanes side inspired by Lee's ruthless finishing, as Hobart celebrated a historic WBBL triumph.

BRIEF SCORES:

Perth Scorchers Women 137/5 in 20 overs (Sophie Devine 34, Beth Mooney 33; Linsey Smith 2-8) lost to Hobart Hurricanes Women 141/2 in 15 overs (Lizelle Lee 77*, Nat Sciver-Brunt 35; Amy Edgar 1-13) by 8 wickets.