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Lalu Prasad sparks row, blames Railways for New Delhi stampede

Sanjay Kumar Patna, Feb 16: RJD chief Lalu Prasad lashed out at the BJP-led central government over the New Delhi railway station incident, demanding the railway minister's resignation...

complete failure of the Railways," said the former Union minister. At least 18 people were killed and over a dozen injured in the stampede that erupted late Saturday night at the crowded New Delhi railway station...



Rahul Gandhi accuses railways of 'negligence' in New Delhi station stampede

Simmi Kaur Babbar New Delhi, Feb 16: Congress MP Rahul Gandhi expressed grief over the stampede at New Delhi Railway Station that killed 18 people, calling it "extremely saddening and distressing..."

around 10 pm when thousands of devotees were heading to Prayagraj for the Maha Kumbh 2025 festival, causing severe overcrowding at the station. Indian Railways Northern CPRO told ANI that a tragic incident unfolded at New Delhi Railway Station...



Sheela Devi, 50, Vyom, 25, Poonam Devi, 40, Lalita Devi, 35, Suruchi, 11, Krishna Devi, 40, Vijay Sah, 15, Neeraj, 12, Shanti Devi, 40, Pooja Kumar, 8, Sangeeta Malik, Poonam both aged 34, Mamta Jha, 40, Riya Singh, 7, Baby Kumari, 24, and Manoj, 47. NDRF Commandant Daulat Ram Chaudhary confirmed that the situation was now under control...

Police remove illegal checkpoints put up on national highway in Manipur

New Delhi, Feb 16: Security forces on Saturday dismantled checkpoints illegally mounted by local residents on the highway connecting Imphal and Churachandpur districts of Manipur...

AAP accuses Centre of covering up New Delhi station stampede

Navdeep Singh Sahni New Delhi, Feb 16: The Aam Aadmi Party on Sunday accused the Centre of trying to cover up the stampede incident at the New Delhi railway station, which claimed 18 lives and rendered several injured...

change from 12 to 14. That was also the cause of the stampede. Was railways not aware that such an announcement may cause a stampede? Singh asked. He also extended his party's condolences to the families of the deceased and demanded adequate compensation for the affected persons and the railways minister's responsibility in the incident...



Congress demands railway minister's resignation over New Delhi stampede

ST Correspondent New Delhi, Feb 16: Congress leader Supriya Shrinete alleged it was the administration's failure that led to the stampede at the New Delhi railway station. The Congress on Sunday accused the government of gross negligence following the stampede at New Delhi Railway Station on Saturday, which claimed 18 lives...



FM calls for a new model for bilateral investment treaties

Tejinder Kaur Babbar New Delhi, Feb 16: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday that the country needs a new model for bilateral investment treaties (BITs), saying the 2016 template is "inadequate" for meeting countries' requirements...

"Issues related to BIT are so unique to the sovereign that we think BIT should be negotiated as a standalone negotiation rather than make it as a part of an FTA agreement," said the finance minister, who mentioned an overhaul was in the works while presenting the Union Budget on February 1...

noted these nations have "borne the brunt" of such treaties as they encroached upon their policy space. She indicated the forthcoming model BIT would "restore revamped and made more investor-friendly," she said in her Budget speech on February 1, adding that the new framework would help reduce arbitration costs...



Travel advisory against Assam major hurdle in attracting foreign investment: CM Himanta Sarma

Naresh Malhotra Assam, Feb 16: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that travel advisory against the northeastern region by several countries is a major challenge in attracting investments, even as the state gears up for a mega business summit here later this month...

advisory, with a team from the Asian country already here to look into the matter while an Australian delegation is scheduled to reach shortly. There is no adverse situation in Assam, time, we also have to show them our strengths, like skilling options for our human resources, peace and stability - politically, economically and in law and order," he said...

Mukesh Ambani and N Chandrasekaran, among others. Japan, Australia, Bhutan, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia have confirmed participation as 'partner countries'. Philippines, Finland, Iceland, Austria and the Republic of Korea have confirmed presence in the summit, while confirmation from 14 other countries is awaited.



Akhilesh Yadav demands extension of Maha Kumbh: 'There are elderly people'

Lucknow, Feb 15: According to the UP government, as of today, nearly 50.11 crore people have taken holy dips in the Triveni Sangam at Prayagraj. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav urged the Uttar Pradesh government to extend the Maha Kumbh period so that elderly devotees could take a holy dip at Triveni Sangam...

disclosing the actual number. They are deliberately underreporting figures so that, in the future, if someone studies the administrative or management aspects, their failures and mismanagement will be exposed. "There are many elderly people—those above sixty-five or seventy years—who have not been able to take a bath. They wished to participate in religious programs, but due to various reasons, they couldn't. At one time, the Kumbh used to last seventy-five days. During Emperor Harshavardhana's time, it was even longer, attracting people from all religions and distant places. So, we demand the government extend it," ANI quoted the former UP chief minister as saying...



## NEWS BOX

### Producer Listin Stephen initiates talks to solve difference of opinion in KFPA

KOCHI. Producer Listin Stephen has taken a conciliatory approach to resolve the ongoing issues in the Malayalam film industry. Speaking to the media on Saturday, Listin, who is also the treasurer of the Kerala Film Producers Association (KFPA), announced that he will take steps to address the concerns.

The recent controversy sparked a war of words between producers and artists. Acknowledging the tension, Listin admitted that social media posts and remarks between producers were unnecessary. He said he has initiated discussions with Antony Perumbavoor and Suresh Kumar, the vice-president of KFPA, to find a solution. Listin said that the issues should have been discussed between the two producers. "Both of them are association members. The Facebook post and personal remarks were unnecessary. They are our members and will stand for the decisions of the association. I have initiated a discussion with both Antony Perumbavoor and Suresh Kumar," he said. "There was a discussion in the association about the rising production cost, remuneration of the actors and technicians, and low demand for our films on OTT platforms. Antony Perumbavoor was not aware of the discussion as he didn't attend the meeting," he said, adding that the association will go ahead with the indefinite strike from June if the discussions with the government fail to bring a solution for the financial crisis the film industry is facing.

According to him, other issues that were discussed in the meeting of representatives of film bodies held last week were minimum theatre guarantee, actor/technician remuneration, and double taxation.

### Tirupati cheie's endeavour for sustainable growth, social change

TIRUPATI. Shivaji Paleti has carved a unique path by seamlessly integrating technology, social service and environmental activism for sustainability and social change. A software engineer, entrepreneur and environmentalist, his journey began as an NSS volunteer and student leader at Sri Venkateswara University (2005-08) in Tirupati. Over the years, he participated in the LEAD INDIA-2020 initiative and the India Against Corruption movement along with Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and Anna Hazare. Academically, Shivaji holds an MCA from India, an MS in Computers and Information Security Systems from the USA, and is currently pursuing a PhD in IT and Blockchain Technology. He is also the founder of Germinate Technologies Inc., a startup focused on sustainable, tech-driven solutions.

A dedicated environmentalist, Shivaji has lead afforestation projects, planting over 20,000 trees. His initiative, Connect2Farmers, promotes chemical-free farming and sustainability campaigns, including plastic-free Tirupati and plastic-free planet.

His contributions include 'Neeru-Chettu,' a rainwater harvesting project inspired by Isha Foundation's Green Hands initiative. "Water conservation is essential. Sustainable solutions like rainwater harvesting can safeguard our future," he says. His environmental efforts extend to seed-Ganesha awareness, organic markets, seed ball workshops, and plastic cleanup drives. As the Environment Club chairperson of Rotary Club Tirupati and Connect2Farmers, he continues to advocate for ecological preservation.

### From cultural cradle to global innovation hub: How Hyderabad is leading India's GCC revolution

Hyderabad, once known as a cradle of culture and history, is now rapidly transforming into a dynamic nerve centre for Global Capability Centers (GCCs). With over 355 GCCs employing more than 3 lakh professionals, the city accounts for nearly 15% of India's 2,000+ GCC ecosystem.

Over the past year, marquee names like Eli Lilly, Marriott International and Evernorth have either established or announced new GCCs, a sign of Hyderabad's rising prominence as a global innovation and technology hub.

GCCs, offshore units set up by MNCs to handle functions ranging from IT and R&D to finance and customer operations, are no longer mere support arms. They have evolved into strategic innovation hubs, driven by Hyderabad's talent pool, technological advancements, and collaborative ecosystems. GCCs are India-based extensions of global firms, handling technology, business operations and other back-office functions exclusively for their parent company. Unlike BPOs and call centres, which are typically third-party vendors serving multiple clients, GCCs are owned and operated by the parent company and dedicated to its needs. The GCC boom has spawned a thriving support ecosystem led by three key players: consulting firms, outsourcing partners and new-age enablers offering end-to-end solutions. Vikram Ahuja, co-founder of ANSR, explains, "Successful GCCs thrive.

## Tension after burial of intercaste couple's kin barred in Tamil Nadu

TIRUPATTUR. Vaniyambadi DSP A Vijaykumar on Saturday arrested Govindapuram panchayat president K Palani under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act for refusing to bury 80-year-old Kanakammal in her native Kanavaipudur village, as her grandson, B Sasikumar, who belongs to a dominant caste had married a Dalit woman. Following the arrest, villagers (predominantly belonging to the same dominant caste) gheraoed the DSP office, demanding Palani's release. The village "heads", backed by the villagers, had also demanded that they would only permit the burial if the couple wouldn't attend the funeral and Sasikumar and his mother give up their property rights.

Sasikumar's wife P Sandhya said that after Kanakammal's death on February 5, the family had informed the village "heads" as per the customary practice. "Immediately, they said there was no place for her in the village. After several negotiations, they said both my husband and I had to leave during the funeral ceremony. We agreed to it. Then, they said my mother-in-law Amudha would not be allowed to perform the last rites and watch it from a distance. We agreed to that as well." They further demanded that Amudha donate her properties to the village and that Sasikumar give up his property rights to his sisters and cut ties with his family and village.

Sandhya added that villagers did not allow the icebox (to store the body) to be brought inside



the village. They allegedly threatened Amudha that she too would not be given a place for burial when she died. The family was then forced to travel 10 kilometres to Munnur village, where Kanakammal's elder daughter resided, to bury her there. "This is the village in which she grew up and was married to as well. It was sad to see that there was no place given for her," Sandhya said. In April 2024, Sasikumar and Sandhya got married in a private ceremony as Sasikumar's family had not agreed to their marriage. Following their wedding, Sandhya told TNIE that the village heads, including president Palani, and "seniors" like Babu, Udayakumar,

Balu, and Velu, ostracised Sasikumar from the village.

"When we came to collect certificates needed to register our marriage, my husband was physically assaulted, and I was derogated with casteist remarks." Her husband was assaulted a second time when he attended a village festival, she alleged.

On February 7, Sandhya filed a complaint against all five village heads with Vaniyambadi taluk police. DSP Vijaykumar confirmed to TNIE that all five individuals named in the complaint had discriminated against the family due to Sandhya's caste.

## Discriminatory wall will block access to our only pathway, say SC residents of Thindiyur

MADURAI. Around 20 Scheduled Caste families residing in Ward 1 of Thindiyur village objected to the construction of a 'discriminatory' wall by a caste Hindu on encroached land near their houses, as it would affect access to the pathway. While they also staged a protest, the police denied their claims that the wall is discriminatory or is being built on encroached land. A Ramamoorthy (39), a SC resident from the locality said, two sides of the houses are surrounded by a stream of the Thathankulam kanmai, and to reach the road on the third side, they must cross the house of a caste Hindu. While the fourth side was the only access point, a caste Hindu attempted to build a wall, Ramamoorthy said, adding that it was being built on encroached land.

"If the wall is constructed, it would block access for the families as they already have a dispute



with the families residing on the third side," he added.

M Muthuselvam (45), another SC resident of Thathankulam, said a total 40 families, including caste Hindus, settled in the locality

about twenty years ago and were issued pattas by the government in 2023-24. On the second side, the water level goes up and breaches into the homes during rains. "We have been able to manage as the fourth side allows the water to escape," he said.

U Vijay (28), a resident of Thindiyur flagged how the government issued land for people without providing a proper pathway. A top police official said the land was not encroached upon, but the caste Hindu attempted to build the wall on his unused land, used as a pathway by members of the SC community. As the people staged a protest, revenue officials will again measure the land in front of their houses, and an alternate path will be provided on the third side, he added. District Collector M S Sangeetha was not available for comments.

### Sub-registrar offices to get new queue system in Andhra

GUNTUR. The State government has decided to implement a Dynamic Queue Management System in all sub-registrar offices across the State. The initiative aims to reduce congestion, improve efficiency, and provide a seamless experience for citizens availing registration services. Orders for its implementation have already been issued, and the system is expected to be operational from the first week of April. The primary objective of this system is to address the issue of overcrowding in registration offices, which often witness heavy footfall, especially on auspicious days when a large number of people visit for property and marriage registrations. With the new system in place, citizens will have the flexibility to book their appointment slots in advance, allowing them to plan their visits efficiently and avoid long waiting times at registration offices.

The new system will function through an online data entry and appointment booking mechanism. Citizens can complete data entry and document preparation through the Registration and Stamps Department's web portal or mobile application.

Slot booking to be free, Rs 100 to be charged for cancellation

After submitting details, an application ID is generated, which serves as a reference for paying duties online and booking a slot at the registration office. They can select the required service, such as document or marriage registration, and receive a unique digital token with a QR code for verification. Each token will be linked to a unique QR code, which will be assigned to the respective sub-registrar office, ensuring a structured and transparent process. This system will not only reduce manual workload, but also enhance accountability and minimise delays in service delivery.

## Karnataka eyes big gains as investors' meet, airshow boosts growth

Karnataka. Two high-octane events held earlier this week ended on an optimistic note. The Global Investors Meet-Invest Karnataka 2025 attracted Rs 10.27 lakh crore in investment commitments, while the 15TH edition of India's premier airshow, Aero India 2025, showcased a big leap ahead for the domestic defence manufacturing sector. However, the real action begins now, as accomplishing the task set out requires much time, effort and focus.

The biggest takeaway from the Global Investors' Meet is that 75% of the investment commitments are for outside Bengaluru. That is a big gain for the state and a relief to the state capital, which can no longer cope with burgeoning growth. Chock-a-block roads, which caused traffic congestion for several hours on high-density airport corridors during the air show, yet again proved the limitations of the city's infrastructure and the administrators. Given the profile of the two big events that had attendees from around the world, traffic should have been managed more aptly to give an even better impression of Bengaluru and India. A lack of coordination between the military and civil authorities was evident.

Notwithstanding its infrastructure limitations, Bengaluru and Karnataka

continue to be among the top investment destinations. The investors' meet again proved it. The real challenge is not attracting investments to Bengaluru — which has already attained a global status and a critical mass to continue on its growth trajectory — but to spread it to lesser developed regions of the state to ensure equitable growth and



development in Karnataka.

North Karnataka — especially Kalyan Karnataka — needs a bigger push. It is encouraging to know that 45% of the investments committed during the investors' meet are for North Karnataka. Although a district-wise break-up would throw more light, the government's focus on taking industries beyond Bengaluru is a welcome move.

Minister for Industries and Infrastructure MB Patil is confident of converting commitments into investments and is realistic that the process will take its own time. Those associated with previous editions of investors' meets and the process of following up with investors are cautiously optimistic about the outcome. The Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) merely reflect the intent of the firms to invest in the state and that the government will provide facilities and concessions as per its policies.

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## Kasturi Nagar residents take charge of reviving Channasandra Lake

BENGALURU. Residents of Kasturi Nagar in CV Raman Nagar have taken the initiative to save 6.19 acre of the Banaswadi-Channasandra (B Channasandra) Lake in CV Raman Nagar assembly constituency in Bengaluru East Taluk. After repeated appeals to the authorities fell on deaf ears, the residents, with support from an NGO, initiated fencing the lake's buffer zone.

According to residents, the lake originally spanned 19.17 acre as per the forest department records. However, due to rampant encroachment, its size has drastically reduced, with parts of the lake being used to dump debris, plastic waste, and even burn garbage.

The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) began developing the Kasturi Nagar Layout in 1989, forming it on about 6.35 acres of the lake area. Earlier, 4 acres had already been taken over by the

Railway Department. "Construction debris and plastic waste were regularly dumped in the lake, and there were even incidents of bodies being dumped in the past," said Abhijith MS, a member of the Kasturi Nagar Lake Rescue Team. "The Kasturi Nagar Welfare Association and Lake Rescue Team approached BBMP and BDA for help, but the agencies did not respond.

Eventually, it was discovered that the lake's Record of Rights, Tenancy, and Crops (RTC) was under the Forest Department. Deputy Conservator Of Forest (Urban) Ravindra issued an NOC for rejuvenation. With the help of an NGO, we cleared silt, constructed inlet and outlet channels, and installed a 1,000 foot-long running fence," he explained. He also mentioned that the residents raised around Rs 6.5 lakh through community contribution to

protect the lake.

Murugan Muniarathnam, vice president of Kasturi Nagar Welfare Association, said that despite efforts, BBMP and BDA kept passing the responsibility. "In 2019, BDA wanted to hand over the lake to BBMP, but the Palike refused due to clear documentation. Once it was confirmed that the lake belongs to the Forest Department, we escalated the matter to Forest Minister Eshwar Khandare, who promised to visit the area soon," said Muniarathnam. He added that, with support from the NGO 'Hands-On' and CSR funding, nearly Rs 40 lakh has been spent so far on the lake's restoration. DCF Ravindra said the department issued an NOC after residents expressed their willingness to protect the water body. "The residents are now set to plant 6,000 saplings and create a Miyawaki forest around the lake," he added.



development in Karnataka.

# Staying or going Stop-start bid to take Ghaziabad's many weekly markets off roads

**Ghaziabad.** Opinion is divided on whether they are more of a boon or bane. They are among top causes of traffic jams in Ghaziabad. But regulars also deem them an indispensable element of their week. Yes, they squat right in the middle of the road but also bring almost to the doorstep nearly everything that a householder needs. Needles and pajama strings to fresh saag and fruits, you name it and they have it. For decades, weekly markets — which are revolving flea markets that have fixed days at fixed places in fixed localities and are known by the day of the week they appear on, Sombazar on Monday, Mangal Bazar on Tuesday and so on — have been regular features across Ghaziabad. The practice began in the old city but extended to newer townships.

Their provenance was in road corners, a few carts that would visit once a week. But the convenience they offered institutionalised them as weekly markets that wove themselves into the fabric of urban life in the city, growing in size and

variety. There was, however, no overlooking the glaring anomaly of these friendly flea markets — they simply took over roads, blatantly violating traffic and civic rules. And in a city that has already seen much of its roadside fall to encroachers, and therefore struggles with traffic management, weekly markets made driving even tougher. Lately, the utility vs disruption talk around weekly markets gained steam after the police, recognising that the practice of occupying roads cannot be allowed to go on in a city with growing population pressure, undertook a survey and began relocating the markets to places away from roads.

The survey, ordered by the police commissioner, found there are 49 weekly markets that set up shop — 30 of these in the main city area and 19 in the newer trans-Hindon towns that are closer to Delhi. Subsequently, police relocated 19 weekly markets. Police's decision to relocate weekly markets from roadsides to an adjacent open ground, benefiting

local residents, was overturned when the Chief Secretary visited Ghaziabad earlier this month and informed the media that the authority to relocate markets rests with the town planner, not the police force.

Chief secretary Manoj Kumar Singh said police do not have the authority to remove markets and it's the civic body's job to do so. After that, some of the weekly markets that were removed from areas like Vaishali, Vijay Nagar and Indirapuram have begun to return. Suniti Chaudhary, who lives in Vasundhara, wonders why a police move that made perfect civic sense was stopped. "There is a serious traffic problem every Wednesday because of the market in Sector 7 that captures more than half the space of the road to put up stalls and benches. People come to buy things, so there is very little space left for traffic," said Suniti. Deepak Kumar, a resident of Amrapali Village, concedes they create traffic problems but says the convenience they bring to people cannot be overlooked. "Residents get vegetables and other

things at cheap rates easily, so we need such markets in the locality. But they should not be roads. This creates heavy traffic jams. Recently, I needed to visit a doctor whose chamber is just a kilometre from my place, but because of the jam, it took me almost an hour to get there," he said. Alok Kumar, founder of AOA federation, said the weekly markets also leave behind tonnes of garbage. "This garbage is not immediately cleared and the area becomes a den for stray animals. It's a major hazard for residents, not to mention the foul smell emanating from the rotten waste," he said. "Weekly markets need to be organised. Police should stand by their decision. Most residents are happy with the markets being taken out of the roads," he said.

Mala Tiwari, a resident of Indirapuram, agreed. "Walls adjacent to the weekly markets have turned red from spit. Sewer lids are broken and the smell from drains is unbearable. So the authorities need to take action for sure," she said.

## Man held for Link Road robbery, aide on the run

**Ghaziabad.** A 30-year-old man was arrested for breaking into a house and stealing Rs 7 lakh cash and jewellery worth about Rs 70 lakh earlier this week.

The police have seized some cash and jewellery from the accused. Another accomplice, the suspect's brother, remains at large. Rafiq, a resident of Usmanpur in Delhi, was arrested in a joint operation by officials of the SWAT team, surveillance team of trans-Hindon, and Link Road Police. "On Feb 12, Tarun Maheshwari, a resident of Suryanagar Colony, Link Road, registered a complaint alleging his house was broken into while the family was asleep. They were robbed of Rs 7 lakh, gold and silver jewellery worth Rs 60-70 lakh, and two mobile phones," said Nimish Patil, DCP, trans-Hindon.

A case was registered under sections 303 (theft) and 331(4) (punishment for house-trespass or house-breaking) of BNS and teams were formed to investigate. Rafiq was arrested from Rampuri Railway in Link Road, with the help of manual input and CCTV footage. Charges under BNS Section 317(2) (stolen property) were added to the FIR. Rafiq revealed that he made his brother Jameel consume drugs and break into houses to steal cash and valuables, to buy drugs. They conducted recesses of houses, and then broke into them. To avoid arrest, they sold the stolen goods to random people at cheap prices.

## Fire breaks out in plastic factory, rages for five hours



**Noida.** A massive fire broke out at Sati Poly Plast, a factory manufacturing plastic wrappers, in Phase 2 industrial area around 3 am on Saturday. Smoke engulfed premises as flames spread rapidly, prompting a large-scale firefighting operation involving 15 fire tenders. The blaze was brought under control after five hours, with no casualties reported.

CFO Pradeep Kumar Choubey said the fire department initially dispatched five fire engines, but as the situation escalated, more units were called in. "The factory was filled with smoke. Despite our response, the fire intensified, requiring additional resources. It took about five hours to control the flames," he said.

Factory workers and locals attempted to douse the fire before authorities arrived, but their efforts were in vain. Two fire engines from Ghaziabad were also deployed. Officials said the fire originated outside the facility, but the exact cause is under investigation. Since the fire station was nearby, responders reached the site quickly despite a delay in receiving the alert. The fire department also evacuated nearby factories, preventing further damage. While the company has suffered losses, adjacent industrial units remained unaffected. A probe has been launched to determine the cause of the fire.

## Sri Lanka team visits schools in Gurgaon, to take back lessons



**Gurgaon.** A high-level delegation from Sri Lanka, comprising 18 members from their ministry of education and Unicef officials, conducted a visit to three govt schools in the city to study NIPUN Bharat mission's implementation.

The city, which achieved the top position in Nipun Haryana rankings with 91% in 2023, hopes to retain the leading position this year as well and the delegation aims to adopt strategies learnt from here in Sri Lankan schools. The team, headed by deputy director-general of Sri Lanka National Institute of Education, undertook a three-day study of the execution of the primary education initiative, which stresses on foundational literacy and numeracy skills in primary school students. The delegates observed Classes 1 to 3 in GPS Arjun Nagar, GGMSPS Sukhrani and GMSPS, Sector 43. They also visited the schools' libraries and laboratories under the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission, which operates as part of Nipun Haryana Mission.

They interacted with students and asked them questions about their school and learning processes and learnt about the educational methodology from the teaching staff. District nodal officer of NIPUN Bharat mission, Manoj Kumar Lakra, said that following the team's visit to the city, the delegation would proceed to inspect schools in Panchkula.

The teams also held discussions with educators and students on NIPUN Bharat curriculum which is issued by Haryana education department and covers Hindi, Maths and English language textbooks, teacher guides and workbooks. Officials of the education department told the delegates about NIPUN Haryana Mentor App, which facilitates mentoring and monitoring activities. They also showcased the setup box called S Box, developed by Sampark Foundation, through a smart board demonstration. The box has chapters of English, Hindi and Maths, stories, poems, worksheets and even quizzes for the students. "We have plans to explore Sri Lanka's education framework through an exchange initiative."

## Noida uses only 26% treated water, empties rest into rivers

**Noida.** Despite having six sewage treatment plants producing 260 million litres of treated water daily, Noida utilises only 68 MLD of it, barely 26%, while releasing the remaining 192 MLD (74%) back in drains that empty into the Yamuna and Hindon rivers. The National Green Tribunal has now asked Noida Authority to achieve 100% utilisation of treated water, following its suo motu action on a news report (published on June 11 last year) highlighting this wastage. The order, issued on Feb 6, was recently uploaded on the NGT website.

A bench of NGT chairperson Prakash Shrivastava, judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi, and expert member Afroz Ahmad, who were hearing the matter, was informed that Noida was discharging STP-treated water into drains instead of using it for irrigation and other non-drinking purposes. The Authority also submitted that it was working to expand its infrastructure to increase the use of treated water. It said a supply pipeline is being laid to connect the STP in Sector 123 with sectors 74-79, 112, 113, 115, 116, 117, and 118. This network is expected to boost treated water utilisation by an additional 18-20 MLD. The tribunal emphasised the importance of utilising treated sewage water for non-potable purposes, as it can help conserve natural water resources. "Noida is directed to ensure 100% utilisation of STP-treated water. We direct the respondent to submit a comprehensive plan along with a timeline for achieving full utilisation," the tribunal stated. The next hearing is scheduled for May 15. STP is designed to treat and process wastewater from households, industries and commercial areas before it is released back into the environment or reused. The main purpose of an STP is to remove contaminants, making the water safe for discharge or non-drinking purposes like irrigation, construction, and industrial cooling. The Noida Authority claimed that it has already instructed the water and horticulture departments to use treated wastewater for the purpose of irrigating parks, green belts along roads and other green zones in the city.

# Four set up fake coaching centre & run away with admission fee, held

**Noida.** Four persons, including a couple, were arrested for setting up a coaching centre offering several skill and personality development courses, like Vedic maths and robotics, for children and vanishing within a week after collecting nearly Rs 30 lakh in admission fees.

Cops recovered 146 approval letters and payment receipts from the office of 'Rising India IQ Academy Pvt Ltd' after several parents submitted complaints.

DCP (Central Noida) Shakti Mohan Avasthy said the academy offered three-tier courses—silver, gold, and platinum—in Vedic maths, Abacus, AI, photogenic memory and robotics for children up to 15 years. "We arrested Neeraj Kumar, his wife Shweta and two others, Kanchan and Mohammad Aarif on Friday when the four went to their Greater Noida office to collect some documents. Our team had set up electronic surveillance and deployed some local



units after an FIR was filed at Bisrakh police station under BNS sections 318(4) (cheating) and 316(2) (breach of trust) on the complaint of some parents," the officer said. During questioning, the suspects said they took Rs 25,000 for the silver course plan, Rs 35,000 for gold, and Rs 50,000 to 60,000 for platinum. "They convinced parents by showing interviews conducted to hire teachers who they claimed would offer three-hour classes on

Saturdays and Sundays for the courses. But a week after students were enrolled, classes did not start. When parents questioned, the accused told them classes would be held online within seven days. However, when after seven days, the online classes did not start, some parents approached them again. This time, the accused claimed the coaching centre would shift to a new premise, but parents demanded a refund. This is when the accused ran away with the admission fee," said the DCP. Cops said Neeraj completed BPharma from Jaipur in 2015, worked in a BPO, and established RI Kids Brain Developer Pvt Ltd in Delhi's Jagatpuri some years ago.

"When Covid hit, the institute was shut, following which he worked in a tour and travel company. When some money was collected, Neeraj started the Rising India IQ Academy in Noida with Shweta as a counsellor," an investigating officer said.

# UP plans fixed work hrs for drivers, breath test at tolls

**Noida.** Transport commissioner BN Singh said UP govt was considering several measures to bring down fatal accidents in the city and state by almost 50%, such as limiting the working hours of drivers to prevent exhaustion and introducing breathalyser tests in toll plazas.

Speaking at a public gathering at Indira Gandhi Kala Kendra in Sector 6, Singh called for public cooperation to reduce traffic fatalities. He also outlined several measures that the state govt has initiated following chief minister Yogi Adityanath's road safety meeting on Jan 1.

Among them, the govt has launched a 'no helmet, no fuel' campaign, making the safety gear mandatory for both riders and pillion passengers. The safety campaign has gained momentum in educational institutions as well. Gorakhpur University, for instance, has prohibited helmetless riders from entering the campus. Officials

said the transport department was now encouraging other universities to adopt similar regulations. "Public mindset needs to change. Many people follow traffic rules only when they spot cameras. This casual approach to safety often leads to fatal accidents," Singh said. The transport commissioner particularly criticised the common practice of motorcyclists wearing helmets while leaving their pillion-riding family members unprotected. Many petrol pump workers have also said that two-wheeler riders often fight with them after being denied fuel for not wearing the safety gear, forcing cops to intervene. Singh also urged people to promote road safety measures by engaging on social media. Reports suggest a concerning trend in road accidents across UP. Through 2024, Noida alone reported 1,165 accidents, resulting in 462 deaths and 966 injuries. This

represents a significant portion of the state's road safety challenges, considering that the city alone has 10 lakh of the state's total vehicle population of 4.8 crore. Apart from asking people to maintain road discipline, the transport department is implementing comprehensive measures to address various aspects of road safety.

These include regulating the working hours of drivers in association with cab aggregators to prevent fatigue-related accidents and initiating breathalyser tests at toll plazas to combat drunk driving on expressways. The govt also wants smart cards to replace paper-based vehicle registration certificates and to make the Vahan portal accessible in Hindi as well. The department is also planning to recognise drivers who have not been involved in any accident in the last decade. So far, 10 U roadways drivers have been given letters of appreciation.

# Ghaziabad: 50 markets, hundreds of vendors, all controlled by 3



**Ghaziabad.** There's fine organisation behind the informal weekly markets, private street business ventures that began with a handful of pushcarts in the early 90s but platforms now for thousands of sundry vendors who earn their livelihoods from it. None of the nearly 50 weekly markets that revolve around the city's streets is authorised by the corporation. Neither do they pay any taxes. They are organised by a few individuals with local influence and political clout, the latter helping them run the business smoothly without the rule book being thrown at them. Market vendors refer to them as 'contractors'. Each weekly market has vendors who come to sell vegetables, fruits, clothes, spices, jewellery and sundry items not just from within the city but also Meerut, Delhi, Faridabad,

Gurgaon, and Bulandshahr, among other places. It's often the same set of vendors at different markets under the same contractor. Each weekly market sees 150-200 vendors set up stalls. Low investment and high profits make them lucrative. Vegetable vendors are among the most successful, earning double their investment on a good day. A standard practice is buying stocks of Rs 10,000 from the mandi. On good days, this nets an income of Rs 20,000 by the time the market wraps up. Contractors earn from commission. Sources said their revenue is more than Rs 1 lakh from each weekly market. "The contractor charges Rs 250 to Rs 1,000 for a wooden cart from every vendor. The electricity charge is Rs 50-200, varying according to the area," said a police source. During the survey police

undertook to organise the weekly markets, they found that the contractors also act as moneylenders, giving initial capital to those who want to set up stalls at the markets at 10% interest, said the source. A vegetable vendor at the Shani Chowk weekly market, Sushil Kumar, said he comes from Delhi to sell his produce. He said he spends three days of the week selling at weekly markets in Ghaziabad and one day in Noida.

A vegetable seller at Patel Nagar's weekly market, Santosh Singh, commutes daily between Ghaziabad and Bulandshahr, where he lives. He

began his vegetable vending business at weekly markets in 2002 and is now assisted by his 20-year-old son. "We sell fresh items at cheap rates, which people like. That's why they come to us. We give a fixed amount to the contractor daily, as he arranges all facilities like electricity, benches and space for all vendors," Singh said.

There are three contractors who dominate the weekly market scene — Liaqat Ali in the trans-Hindon area and Vijay Gautam and Ramesh Pal in the main city area. Liaqat, according to police sources, controls 14 of the 19 trans-Hindon markets.

## Temperature in Gurgaon to rise 4°C, but rain will bring it down

**Gurgaon:** The city may experience higher daytime temperatures with maximum temperatures rising by 3-4 degrees Celsius across southern Haryana over the next four days, due to the absence of strong north-westerly winds.

Residents, however, may expect some relief as isolated light rainfall is expected in parts of the state on Wednesday and Thursday due to a western disturbance that is likely to impact the western Himalayan region from Feb 17.

On Saturday, the minimum temperature recorded a three-degree dip to 10.2 degrees Celsius, near normal for this time of year—down from 13 degrees Celsius a day earlier. The maximum temperature rose to 25.8 degrees Celsius from Friday's 24.6 degrees Celsius, a notch above the seasonal normal. On Sunday, the maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to hover around 12 and 26 degrees Celsius, respectively. Weather is likely to be dry and clear.

NEWS BOX

'We Are Preparing For What Comes Next, In Every Sense': Israeli PM Netanyahu



World. In a statement, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed the three former hostages "with a big embrace". The PM assured that Israel has been preparing for their return and "along with their families, will assist in their rehabilitation after a long and excruciating period of captivity".

Meghan Markle, Prince Harry's Charity Donated Over \$600,000 To Democratic-Linked Causes

World. British royal couple Meghan Markle and Prince Harry, who are currently living in the United States, have donated hundreds of thousands of dollars from their Archewell Foundation to Democratic Party-linked causes, according to a report, raising speculation over their involvement in US politics.

Furthermore, the group also donated \$25,000 to the Marcy Lab School in Brooklyn, where Craig joined the board in 2024 and an additional \$120,000 was further donated to Craig in 2022, as per public records.

'It's Actually Outrageous' Craig, 33, previously worked at Washington DC research firm Greenberg, Quinlan and Rosner. Considered an expert on elections, Craig worked her way up to being Senior Director of Digital Strategy by 2016 and then became Vice President of the company between 2018 and 2021.

US Military Aircraft Carrying Second Batch Of Indian Immigrants Lands In Amritsar

World. A United States military aircraft with a second batch of 119 illegal Indian immigrants landed in Amritsar, Punjab on Saturday. This is the second such aircraft to arrive at Amritsar airport in the span of 10 days as part of the deportation of illegal immigrants by the Donald Trump regime.

The first batch was deported on February 5 when 104 Indians were deported and sent back to Amritsar in a US military plane. Another plane with 157 deportees is set to land in India on Sunday.

Among the deportees, 67 were from Punjab, 33 from Haryana, eight from Gujarat, three from Uttar Pradesh, two each from Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, and one each from Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.

Punjab CM Mann Slams Centre Over Deportation In the wake of the return of deportees to Amritsar, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann criticised the central government and said that this is an effort to "defame Punjab and Punjabis" by turning the city into "a deportation centre".

US treasury watchdog audits Elon Musk-led DOGE's access to key payment system

WASHINGTON. The Treasury Department's Office of Inspector General on Friday said it was launching an audit of the security controls for the federal government's payment system, as Democratic lawmakers raised red flags about the access provided to Trump aide Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency team.

immediately," Sciurba wrote. "Given the breadth of this effort, the audit will likely not be completed until August; however, we recognize the danger that improper access or inadequate controls can pose to the integrity of sensitive payment systems.

Tech billionaire Musk, who continues to control Tesla, X and SpaceX among other companies, claims to be finding waste, fraud and abuse while providing savings to taxpayers.

Many of his claims are so far unsubstantiated. But there is a risk that his team's aggressive efforts could lead to the failure of government computer systems and enable



Musk and his partners to profit off private information maintained by the government.

The audit would overlap with increased pressure that the Trump administration is placing on inspectors general, presidential appointees who are supposed to serve as an independent check against mismanagement and abuse of government power.

In January, the administration fired several independent inspectors general at government agencies, a move that some members of Congress said violated federal

oversight laws. The firings prompted a lawsuit filed on Wednesday in federal court in Washington that seeks to return the inspectors general to their jobs.

Democratic Sens. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Ron Wyden of Oregon led the push in the Senate for the inspector general office's inquiry at the Treasury. On Wednesday, Warren, Wyden and Sen. Jack Reed, D-Rhode Island, sent a letter to Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent noting the inconsistencies in the accounts provided by his department about DOGE.

"Your lack of candor about these events is deeply troubling given the threats to the economy and the public from DOGE's meddling, and you need to provide a clear, complete, and public accounting of who accessed the systems, what they were doing, and why they were doing it," the Democratic lawmakers wrote in their letter. Democrats on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform also called on inspectors general to investigate DOGE and welcomed the Treasury audit.

US cuts 21 million grant for voter turnout in India, 29 million for Bangladesh

World. The United States has cancelled millions of dollars in funding for several countries, including India and Bangladesh as the new administration led by President Donald Trump makes budget cut. Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) on Sunday announced that the US has decided to slash a \$21 million program designed to increase voter turnout in India and a \$29 million initiative aimed at strengthening Bangladesh's political landscape.



The decision, part of broader cuts to international aid, will impact key initiatives aimed at improving electoral processes and political stability in both countries. The cuts reflect a reassessment of US foreign aid priorities and a broader push to curtail spending on international development projects.

time and again asserted that "America would go bankrupt" without budget cuts and the initiative seems to be in line with the budget overhaul that the administration has been planning. FUNDING FOR INDIA, BANGLADESH CANCELLED The \$21 million earmarked for India was specifically targeted to boost voter participation in the country's elections.

However, this funding will no longer be available, as announced by DOGE on social media platform X. Notably, the announcement comes just days after Donald Trump met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the two leaders made significant announcements to strengthen US-India ties. However, this did not find a mention in the joint statements or the press conference.

In Bangladesh, the \$29 million program was designed to foster political stability and enhance democratic governance. The country has been grappling with a political crisis with Army ousting Sheikh Hasina-led government amid violent protests. Even though Hasina fled to India and an interim government led by Mohammad Yunus is now ruling the country, political stability has not been achieved yet.

Legislative immunity under scrutiny in Arizona after speeding ticket dispute

PHOENIX. When a police officer cited Arizona state Sen. Mark Finchem for speeding, he had little to worry about. That's because the Arizona Constitution shields lawmakers from civil processes and arrests for anything but treason, felonies, or breaches of peace during legislative sessions and the 15 days prior. Legislative immunity exists in most states, allowing lawmakers to avoid lawsuits and minor infractions, including traffic tickets.

In 2019, a West Virginia politician cited immunity after a violent outburst. In 2022, a Wisconsin lawmaker attempted to avoid a subpoena regarding a conversation with former President Donald Trump about overturning the 2020 election. Last year, legislative immunity shielded Kansas lawmakers who falsely accused a man on social media of being involved in the Kansas City Chiefs' Super Bowl victory shooting.

"The people we serve are expected to follow traffic laws, and legislators should be no different," Nguyen said. "If a lawmaker is caught speeding or running a red light, they should face the same consequences as everyone else." Nguyen represents a district two hours north of Phoenix, which includes Prescott—the same district where Finchem was cited. The senator was pulled over for driving 48 mph (77 kph) in a 30 mph (48 kph) zone. Two days later, Finchem wrote to Prescott's police chief, requesting the citation be "voided and stricken from the record."

Legislative immunity generally falls into two categories: protection for speech and debate, and protection from arrest related to legislative service, according to the nonpartisan National Conference of State Legislatures. Across the U.S., 43 states provide immunity for legislative speech and debate, while 45 states offer protection from arrest. However, specific provisions vary. For example, New Mexico limits immunity to travel to and from the Legislature, whereas Arizona has no such restriction.

Members of Congress also have legislative immunity, though courts have interpreted it narrowly. Former U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez attempted to use it in his bribery case last year but was ultimately sentenced to 11 years in prison. More recently, U.S. Rep. Nancy Mace of South Carolina cited the "speech and debate" clause to shield herself from potential civil lawsuits after accusing her ex-fiancé of assault and other crimes on the House floor.

Zelenskyy Calls For Creation Of European Army At Munich Security Conference

World. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has called for the creation of a European Army in response to Russia's military build-up, Politico reported. In his speech at the Munich Security Conference (MSC), Zelenskyy also raised suspicion of a possibility that the US might say "no" to Europe on issues that might pose a threat to it.

Putin is adding 150,000 soldiers to his armed forces, which is said to be larger than the majority of European armies, and is opening army recruitment offices every week. Zelenskyy said, "Oil prices are still high enough for him to ignore the world."



According to a Politico report, Zelenskyy stressed that Europe needed to unite and have a single foreign and defence policy that would show the US that the bloc is serious about its own security. He said, "Europe has everything it takes. It just needs to come together and start acting so that no one can say 'no' to it, boss it around, or treat it like a pushover."

"Oil prices are still high enough for him to ignore the world." Ukrainian President said his intelligence services "have clear intel that this summer Russia plans to send troops to Belarus under the pretext of training exercises," adding that might be the beginning of operations against neighbouring European nations.

He said that despite facing battlefield losses, Russian President Vladimir Putin is adding 150,000 soldiers to his armed forces, which is said to be larger than the majority of European armies, and is opening army recruitment offices every week.

NATO's military committee chair, Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone, said the alliance was unable to confirm Zelenskyy's warning about Belarus. He said, "I believe that Western intelligence agencies are perfectly active in this, so I would expect confirmations."

US, Russian officials to hold Ukraine war talks in Saudi, Zelenskyy 'not invited'

Munich/Washington. US and Russian officials will meet in Saudi Arabia in the coming days to start talks aimed at ending Moscow's nearly three-year war in Ukraine, a US lawmaker and a source familiar with the planning said on Saturday. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who met with US Vice President JD Vance in Germany on Friday, said Ukraine was not invited to the talks in Saudi Arabia and Kyiv would not engage with Russia before consulting with strategic partners.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, national security adviser Mike Waltz and White House Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff will travel to Saudi Arabia, US Representative Michael McCaul told Reuters. It was not immediately clear who they would meet from Russia.

Those fears were largely confirmed on Saturday when Trump's Ukraine envoy said Europe won't have a seat at the table, after Washington sent a questionnaire to European capitals to ask what they could contribute to security guarantees for Kyiv. EARLIER ON SATURDAY Rubio spoke with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov. They agreed on regular contacts to prepare for a meeting between Putin and Trump, Russia's Foreign Ministry said.



Ukraine but is seeking security for US funding for Kyiv. The US and Ukraine are currently negotiating a deal that could open up Ukraine's vast natural wealth to US investment. Three sources said the US proposed taking ownership of 50% of Ukraine's critical minerals. Zelenskyy said on Saturday that the draft deal did not contain the security provisions Kyiv needed.

army grapples with manpower shortages and tries to hold a chunk of territory in western Russia. Russia has demanded Kyiv cede territory and become permanently neutral under any peace deal.

Ukraine demands Russia withdraw from captured land and wants NATO membership or equivalent security guarantees to prevent attack by Moscow. The United States and Europe have given Ukraine tens of billions of dollars in military aid since the war started. Trump has said he backs Ukraine but is seeking security for US funding for Kyiv.

The US and Ukraine are currently negotiating a deal that could open up Ukraine's vast natural wealth to US investment. Three sources said the US proposed taking ownership of 50% of Ukraine's critical minerals. Zelenskyy said on Saturday that the draft deal did not contain the security provisions Kyiv needed.

NEWS BOX

Andhra: SIT raises doubts on AR's production capacity



TIRUPATI. The Supreme Court-appointed Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)-led Joint Special Investigation Team (SIT) continued its probe into the Laddu adulteration case for the second day, focusing on quality control measures in private dairies, particularly in the production of ghee. Investigators questioned accused Rajashekara, owner of AR Dairy in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, regarding the quality assurance processes followed before sending ghee in tankers to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD). The inquiry aimed to determine what quality control procedures were in place, how ghee quality was assessed, and whether the dairy adhered to standard operating procedures (SOPs) and food safety parameters. Officials questioned why AR Dairy failed to maintain the required quality in four tankers of ghee rejected by TTD in June 2024. The SIT sought clarification on whether the dairy followed any formal food safety standards and, if so, why those were not upheld in this instance. On the second day of the investigation, the SIT examined the four accused, Rajashekara (A2), Pomli Jain (A3), Apurva Chavada (A4), and Vipil Jain (A5), in the presence of a technical expert from the Food Corporation of India (FCI).

Police nab acid attack accused within 24 hours in Andhra

NELLORE. Annamayya district police on Saturday arrested Sankarapu Ganesh (22) within 24 hours, who was involved in an acid attack on a young woman in Gurramkonda. District Superintendent of Police (SP) V Vidyasagar Naidu said the attack occurred on February 14 at 6.00 am in Pyrampalle village, where the accused forcibly entered the home of Dasari Gowthami (22), threw acid on her face and into her mouth, and inflicted knife injuries on her throat, head and hands. Ganesh had reportedly been harassing Gowthami for some time, but she had rejected his advances. Upon learning of her engagement to her relative Srikanth from Pileru, he became enraged and planned the attack. Before fleeing the scene, he told her, "If you can't be mine, you can't be someone else's either." Her parents rushed her to Madanapalle hospital in a 108 ambulance, where she is undergoing treatment. Upon receiving the report, four special teams led by three Circle Inspectors were deployed to track down the accused. The police, acting swiftly, arrested Ganesh near Angallu on the same day. They also seized critical evidence, including his mobile phone, blood-stained clothes, and the acid purchase bill. SP Vidyasagar assured that a comprehensive investigation, including forensic and digital analysis, is underway to ensure strict legal consequences for the accused.

Heart of India beats at Swadeshi Mela

KARIMNAGAR. Step back in time and experience the charm of a traditional Indian village at the Swadeshi Mela. Till February 16, Ambedkar Stadium in Karimnagar is a bustling marketplace, showcasing the best local crafts, traditions and produce. With over 200 stalls, sand art displays and even a replica of the Vemulawada temple, the mela offers a unique glimpse into the heart of India.

According to locals, a diverse array of products, including cosmetics, essential oils, live plants, organic vegetable seeds and Ayurvedic medicines in herbal and powdered forms, are drawing significant attention. The entire setup has transformed Ambedkar Stadium into a charming rural landscape, complete with artistically crafted sand art, lifelike portraits and thematic huts. The inclusion of cattle installations adds to the authentic village-like ambience, transporting visitors to a bygone era of simplicity and self-sufficiency.

Organised by Swadeshi Jagarana Manch, the mela is a grand celebration of self-reliance, showcasing products that are proudly made in India. With several other states actively participating, the mela also serves as a platform to promote indigenous goods and crafts. The organisers have ensured that only non-harmful, locally produced goods are sold. Vishwa Ayurveda Parishad member Dr K Amarnath emphasised the benefits of turmeric varieties sourced from different states, highlighting their high curcumin content and antiseptic properties. Beyond the vibrant marketplace, the mela is enriched with workshops, job fairs and motivational sessions on women's empowerment, conducted by esteemed personalities. A striking replica of the Vemulawada temple stands as a centrepiece, celebrating India's spiritual and architectural heritage. Adding to the ingenuity, Akshita Bashaboni and Andasi Navya, students from Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), have crafted and displayed exquisite woollen caps.

Opposition slams TN government for murder of two youths in Mayiladuthurai

CHENNAI/MAYILADUTHURAI. Leaders from various opposition parties, including AIADMK, PMK, BJP, and also DMK ally CPM strongly condemned the brutal murder of two youngsters allegedly by a gang of bootleggers in Mayiladuthurai. Alleging government inaction, they urged the state to take strict measures against the culprits. PMK and CPM

Edappadi K Palaniswami, in a post on X expressed shock about the order and said they were killed for preventing the sale of illicit liquor. Criticising the narrative of police, he asked, "Is the police writing the verdict before



Alleging that Chief Minister MK Stalin was focussing more on promoting himself, he urged the CM to instead focus on public service and ensuring safety.

have demanded adequate compensation for the bereaved families. They criticised the explanation given by police that the murder was due to previous enmity and termed it as an attempt to cover it up as it was indeed due to illicit sale of liquor. AIADMK general secretary

the investigation." Alleging that Chief Minister MK Stalin was focussing more on promoting himself, he urged the CM to instead focus on public service and ensuring safety. PMK founder Dr S Ramadoss criticised the police for allegedly trying to cover up the issue. He demanded action on local police authorities for their negligence and urged

the government to provide `50 lakh as compensation to each of the victims' families. BJP state president K Annamalai alleged that the state was heading towards a situation worse than DMK's 'dark rule' from 2006 to 2011. TMC(M) president GK Vasan, AMMK general secretary TTV Dhinakaran, and other leaders also strongly condemned the murders and called for immediate action. Meanwhile, CPM urged the state government to take action against the accused and the local police station. The party further urged the government to provide Rs 25 lakh as compensation to the bereaved families.

MP, Ranjith raise concern over attacks on Dalits

Chennai : Villupuram MP D Ravikumar and director Pa Ranjith have expressed deep concern over rising caste-based attacks in Tamil Nadu. Referring to a recent incident where a Dalit youth was assaulted by a three-member caste Hindu gang for riding a motorcycle, Ravikumar condemned the increasing violence against Dalits. In a post on X, the VCK leader stated, "It is distressing that Tamil Nadu, which competes with Maharashtra for the top spot in economic growth and Kerala for the top spot in literacy, is competing with Uttar Pradesh for the top spot in caste-based atrocities."

Bengaluru court hands over to TN govt jewellery, others seized from Jayalithaa in DA case

BENGALURU. A small gold replica of former Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalithaa along with a gold pen, gold sword and gold watches were among the 27 kg of valuable items that were handed over to the Tamil Nadu government on Saturday, after the completion of documentation and valuation. The items were seized in connection with the Disproportionate Assets (DA) case registered against Jayalithaa. On Friday morning, the valuation and documentation process began in the presence of City Civil and Sessions Court Judge H A Mohan, who handles cases related to the CBI and ED; J Anne Mary Swarna, joint secretary, home prohibition and excise department, Government of Tamil Nadu, a superintendent of police and other officials. The valuation was completed on Saturday afternoon, after which 1,606 items, including gold jewellery, diamonds, emeralds, rubies and silver articles weighing around 27 kg, were officially handed over to representatives of the Tamil Nadu government.

Around 2.30 pm, under heavy police security, six trunks containing the valuables were transported to Tamil Nadu in a private logistics vehicle. Two Tamil Nadu police vans and two cars escorted the vehicle. A total of 25 police personnel from Tamil Nadu were assigned to escort the valuables, while Karnataka police provided security until the convoy crossed the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border.

Addressing a press conference on Saturday, Special Public Prosecutor Kiran S Javali said the decision on the next steps whether to auction the items or deposit them with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) rests with the Tamil Nadu government. Apart from these valuables, a luxury bus was also seized during the proceedings, and the court has directed that it be auctioned.

Additionally, properties registered under six different companies, covering an extent of 1,526 acres across the districts of Chennai, Thanjavur, Chengalpattu, Kanchipuram, Tiruvallur and Thoothukudi have been confiscated. These properties will either be auctioned or converted into government land, he said.

KSRTC set to roll out inter-state AC sleeper buses

"The AC sleeper buses will be introduced on high-demand routes like Thalassery-Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram-Bengaluru.

KOCHI. To enhance the availability of affordable and comfortable travel options to long-distance commuters in the state, the KSRTC is all set to introduce air-conditioned sleeper buses on high-demand inter-state routes, currently dominated by private players. "The AC sleeper buses will be introduced on high-demand routes like Thalassery - Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram-Bengaluru. The same will provide much relief to commuters who are forced to pay an exorbitant amount to private operators enjoying monopoly. We've already invited tenders for the sleeper buses and the services will be kicked off as and when we start receiving them," Transport Minister K B Ganesh Kumar told. The corporation has already floated tenders for the "design, manufacture, supply, testing and commissioning" of bus chassis and bus body for



34 AC sleeper buses. A main condition is that the 13.5 metre-long, diesel-propelled buses should be suitable "for a minimum daily operation of 16 to 20 hours under all loads, different terrains and operating conditions." The budget allocation of Rs 107 crore exclusively for buying new buses is

what fuelled the plan. "Budget allocation for new buses a relief to KSRTC" "The budget allocation to buy new buses is a big relief to KSRTC. We're replacing the old buses, both in the higher class and ordinary categories. We'll focus on Super Fast buses as they bring in more revenue. There are also plans to make all superfast buses air-conditioned without increasing the fare. The same is expected to boost ridership in a major way," the minister said. The KSRTC will also deploy AC semi-sleeper buses to provide connectivity to the airports. The same will be initially operated from the Kochi airport before expanding to other airports. The highlight of the services will be that the buses won't have scheduled departure timings and will leave only after the flights arrive.

Fish kill, foul air: People want waste plant at Chikkanagamangala to be closed

BENGALURU. Thousands of residents from Electronic City staged a protest demanding the immediate closure of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Municipal Solid Waste Processing Plant at Chikkanagamangala. The protest comes in response to alarming findings from inspection reports by Joint Committees formed under National Green Tribunal (NGT) orders in 2019 and 2022. These reports exposed severe operational lapses at the plant, along with a strong, foul odour spreading up to a 4 km radius.



Pranay Dubey, president of Electronics City Rising, a resident welfare association, stated that leachate from the plant has been contaminating nearby water bodies, leading to environmental hazard. "Due to leachate entering the water and air pollution, we have witnessed mass fish kills in Chikkanagamangala Lake. "Despite the NGT's penalties and High Court directives to contain leachate leakage, odour, and pollution, the issue remains unsolved," said Dubey. Rajesh Reddy, former member of Town Municipal Corporation of Konappana Agrahara said, "The cattle must have consumed water from a pond that is contaminated due to the leachate seepage. The air is polluted, groundwater is contaminated, and lakes and ponds are toxic. There's also a severe mosquito menace-- all because of BBMP's failure to manage this waste processing plant," he added. Following the protest, Zonal Joint Commissioner Madhu visited the site and assured residents that she would escalate the matter to the Chief Commissioner and other authorities within a week.

CBI tightens noose around Walayar sisters' parents, seeks to reopen three cases

Two of the accused in the three cases — Pradeep Kumar, a close associate of the parents, and Madhu M alias Kutty Madhu, a cousin of the victims — died by suicide during trial in various courts.

KOCHI. Tightening the noose around the parents of the Walayar sisters, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has moved the special court in Ernakulam seeking permission to reopen three cases and further investigate their role in abetting the minors' sexual abuse and alleged suicide — less than two months apart — in 2017.

The court's approval will make them an accused in three additional cases. The central investigating agency recently filed six chargesheets implicating the mother and her husband — the stepfather of the elder child — as additional accused in each case. Two of the accused in the three cases — Pradeep Kumar, a close associate of the parents, and Madhu M alias Kutty Madhu, a cousin of the victims — died by suicide during trial in various courts. In its plea, the CBI said that reopening the cases is essential to file three supplementary chargesheets against the parents.

It asserted that the two played an active role in abetting and facilitating the crime, as well as engaging in wilful negligence as parents — offences punishable under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the



Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act and the Juvenile Justice Act. The petition, accessed by , said the role of the parents came to light during further investigation.

The CBI stated that Pradeep Kumar — named in two of the cases which the agency has sought to reopen — committed suicide while appeals were pending before the Kerala High Court. On January 6, 2021, the HC set aside

the order of the trial court acquitting all the accused. In the same order, charges against Pradeep Kumar were abated as he was no more. "During further investigation, it has been revealed that the parents had abetted the

principal offences committed by Pradeep Kumar," the agency said. Pradeep Kumar was accused of the rape and death of the two girls, while Madhu, who died by suicide on October 25, 2023, was named in the first case, involving the rape of the elder girl, who was 12 years old. In its chargesheet in a related case, the CBI said that many witnesses had revealed that the parents used to drink with first-accused Shibu and other accused in their one-room shed during evenings and holidays. The presence of Shibu within the house raises doubts about his intention, the agency said. To prove the abetment charge, it produced video clippings retrieved from the mobile phone of the mother.

Teacher arrested under Pocso in Puducherry, victim's kin allege cops biased

PUDUCHERRY. The Puducherry police booked a private school teacher under Section 6 of the Pocso Act, 2012 on Friday night, for aggravated penetrative sexual assault of a six-year-old girl studying in Class I at the school. The accused, A Manikandan (25), was arrested and is set to be remanded by Saturday evening, sources said. Meanwhile, allegations are rife that the police are biased and forcibly remove protesters due to the school correspondent's political connections. On Friday, the girl's relatives and villagers had gathered at the school premises, assaulted the accused when police attempted to arrest him. They had demanded strict action against the teacher, the school correspondent, and the headmaster. They



also sought action against the police personnel who forcibly removed them from the school premises and called for the school's immediate closure. After assurances from collector, the protest was withdrawn after seven hours. Puducherry Union Students Federation

founder S Saminathan alleged that the survivor's parents feared biased police action due to the school correspondent's political connections. "Parents of the girl worry that police action is one-sided as the correspondent is from a national party. Protestors alleged that other female students in the school may have also been affected. The education department and child helpline must conduct a proper inquiry. We demand that those supporting the accused be booked under the Pocso Act," Saminathan said in a statement.

Fishers boycott work in protest Fishermen from eighteen hamlets in Puducherry boycotted fishing on Saturday, demanding strict action against the accused and the school. A meeting was held in Nallavadu village with fishermen

associations, village panchayat representatives, along with revenue and police officials. In the meeting, resolutions were passed demanding action against the teacher, the school correspondent, and the headmaster under the Pocso Act. The protestors also sought action against police personnel who attacked villagers, a judicial inquiry into the case, and Rs 1 crore compensation for the girl's family. The resolutions were conveyed to the officials present. Likewise, Makkal Urimai Kootamaipu secretary G Sugumaran criticised the education department's inaction in similar cases. "Education department officials failed to act in similar incidents at government and private schools in Puducherry. They hide such incidents, allowing offenders to escape. Officials do not monitor private schools properly, which leads to students being affected."

## Steel industry braces to meet fallout of Trump's tariff war

US President Donald Trump has imposed a massive 25 per cent import tariff on steel and aluminium that will hit India hard. It is the eighth country among the leading exporters of these commodities to the US, having sent out \$4 billion in 2023. Now, India will have to immediately undertake trade diversification and identify new export strategies.

As a result of this pressure on export earnings, the rupee which has already been grappling with the uncertainties will be under greater pressure. Over the last few years, the rupee has already been depreciating and global investors have been pulling out of emerging economies, including India. In response, the central bank has been putting more dollars in the market to counter the pressure. Fortunately, the RBI has been able to manage because of the high level of the country's reserves which still remain above \$600 billion. But for how long can this go on?

The Indian steel industry, in particular, is likely to face the consequences foremost as it is a large player and relies on key domestic raw materials like coal and iron. This comes at the head of what has been taking place over the last 12 months when domestic prices have dampened as a result of aggressive imports into India. India started out on the journey on modern industrialisation with the steel industry which was conceived by Jamsheerji Tata who set up a steel plant.

Where do we go from here? In the short run, countries across the world will have to wait and watch till President Trump sees reason. Tariff is a weapon which cuts both ways. Higher imports will be a boon for the domestic industry as it will be able to charge higher prices because of costly imports. But the US consumers will end up paying more, raising price levels across the board. Over time, the global competitiveness of US firms will be affected as it will get to live in a market of costlier prices. Eventually, US voters have to decide if Trump will be good. The Indian authorities have only a couple of options to play around with. Foremost, it will have to engage with the US authorities so as to try and soften the impact of tariffs, pointing out that India is now a key strategic partner and deserves a special treatment. In particular, India will have to argue that it needs to get stronger in order to tackle the challenge posed by China which will get into its own act in order to fight the turmoil that Trump has plunged this world into. As the new RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra has made clear, India is not immune to the global storms brewing on the horizon. Geopolitical tensions, emerging new trade protection, erratic commodity prices and unpredictable financial markets are seriously affecting the overall economic outlook. The global scenario could negate the good work sought to be done on the domestic front. India is not insulated from rising global risks which could disrupt financial stability. So, a big job is yet to be done. The Indian economy must brace for shocks that are sure to lie ahead.

Fortunately, this has come at a time when the authorities were already set on a forward looking path. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) created wide attention by cutting the repo rate, the rate at which it lends to banks, by 25 basis points (that is a quarter of a percentage) to 6.5 per cent. As the central bank has changed the key rate for the first time in five years, economists and analysts are seeking to figure out what this can lead to for them or not. This rate cut will make money cheaper by lowering interest rates across the board and give a fillip to the economy. But even as the economy grows faster, there is also a chance that with more money around, the inflation rate will also go up. In fact, the economic growth rate has been lately going down, hence the desire to up it a little. The economy is currently expected to grow at about just a little over 6 per cent after having reached 8 per cent a couple of years ago, making India the fastest growing large economy in the world.

## Why Indonesia is holding up Brahmos deal

The will to acquire the Brahmos is there, but a way has not been found to overcome the bureaucratic hurdles.

The President of Indonesia, Prabowo Subianto, seems quick to strike but afraid to wound. This repudiates his derring-do image as the special forces commando who rose to be a General and married former President Suharto's daughter. But prevarication has trumped patience in clinching the long-awaited deal on the Indo-Russian Brahmos missile. In the 55-para joint statement after his state visit to India as the Chief Guest of the 76th Republic Day, the word Brahmos was conspicuously missing. Also, during the briefing by MEA officials, questions by journalists on Brahmos were sidestepped.

But PM Narendra Modi introduced the CEO of Brahmos, Jaiteerth Joshi, to Subianto and a presentation on the \$450-million Brahmos system was also made. Neither the Sabang port project in Indonesia nor the Aceh-Andamans connect has crystallised. Come to think of it, despite all the pomp and panoply accompanying the visit, there was no spectacular agreement, either economic or strategic. In contrast, after becoming President last year, Subianto's first visit was to China, where deals worth \$10.6 billion were realised even as Jakarta maintains an ambiguous policy towards it. The Indonesian archipelago occupies strategic geography in the Indo-Pacific, especially the South China Sea stretching east to west 5,150 km with 1,780 islands. It enjoys commanding heights along with littoral states Malaysia and Singapore in conducting the collective Malacca Strait patrol — a passage critical for China. And, in case it is blocked, Jakarta enjoys exclusive rights to alternative routes along the Sunda and Lombok Straits.

Although it has expressed neutrality in South China Sea disputes and made no claims there, China has clashed with it over the Natuna Islands in its EEZ (exclusive economic zone), which overlaps the Chinese nine-dash line. In 2020, it was Defence Minister Subianto who prevented Chinese incursions in the Natuna island. So, the MoU on joint development in disputed waters of the South China Sea around Natuna was both surprising and risky, though later, Jakarta clarified that the MoU did not amount to recognition of the Chinese maritime claims. This is where the famed Brahmos missile comes in. In 2023, the Philippines was the first and, so far, the only country to buy Brahmos. It is deployed in Luzon, facing the Filipino Sea, to deter Chinese vessels from entering it. The US Typhon missile system has terrified the Chinese Coast Guard and fishing vessels though the Chinese Coast Guard ships have seriously jittered the movement of Philippines naval and fishing vessels from resupplying its disputed Scarborough shoal in its EEZ, which China claims falls within its nine-dash line. Last month, Manila said it would dismantle the US Typhon missile system if China stopped its bullying tactics in its waters.

Before Subianto's arrival in India, huge excitement



prevailed over the Brahmos deal. Reuters had reported that Jakarta had decided to sign the Brahmos deal. Jakarta said it was thinking 'positively', while most Indian newspapers reported categorically that Brahmos was a done deal. The Indian optimism was not misplaced. In December 2024, the Navy Chief, Admiral Dinesh Tripathi, had visited Indonesia and Brahmos was widely discussed. In January, the Indonesian Navy Chief, Adm Muhammad Ali, was in Delhi and Brahmos topped the agenda of defence issues. He toured various Brahmos production facilities, raising expectations.

Subianto is known to be a hands-on foreign and security policy President. He believes military strength is integral to national security and economic prosperity. In 2021, as Defence Minister, he had obtained \$10.6 billion for defence, with focus on navy modernisation. He secured another \$46.6 billion for modernisation in the 2024-29 period, when the defence budget rose from 0.7 to 1.5 per cent of the GDP. So, Jakarta, which runs a trade surplus with India is not short on funds and Delhi is ready to provide a letter of credit (LOC) for it. Jakarta has no enemies, internal or external, though, at one time, Australia used to fear it. In the 1965 war, Indonesia supported Pakistan and was its staunch partner in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Kashmir. In 1987, when India was spending nearly 3.5 per cent GDP on defence and was considering reviving a World War II airbase in the Andamans near Indira Point, which is just 90 nautical miles from Indonesia, it protested

strongly. But, it is bonhomie now. So, what is holding back Subianto from acquiring the Brahmos? The will is there, but a way has not been found to overcome the bureaucratic hurdles. The fear of annoying China and the reluctance to become a countervailing force (to China) in Asean is evident. Although China has laid claim in the Natuna Sea, Indonesia does not want to antagonise Beijing as it receives plentiful economic assistance and waits patiently for the Chinese code of conduct in the South China Sea. Like India, it is non-aligned (its constitution bars military alliance) and covets its strategic autonomy. A second problem is the equipment acquisition process which is more complicated than India's Defence Procurement Procedure 2020. The bureaucracy is the bane. Circumventing it is not easy, not even for Subianto. Third is the question of agents, who are a normal in Indonesia but banned in India following defence scandals two decades ago. Fourth, Jakarta is unfamiliar with the use of the LOC and is loath to provide sovereign guarantees. It prefers commercial loans, like the ones Chinese provide. Lastly, it fears attracting CAATSA (the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) ever more, now that Trump is back. Sources in the Indian Embassy in Jakarta say hesitation in decision-making has not diminished. But Admiral Tripathi seems convinced that sooner than later, the Brahmos deal will be done. For the present, an Indonesian naval officer will be posted at the Maritime Information Fusion Centre in Gurugram.

## Toxic waters

Punjab, Haryana in the throes of groundwater crisis

PUNJAB and Haryana are facing an escalating groundwater crisis, with toxic contamination, reckless extraction and poor water management pushing the region towards disaster. The situation demands urgent intervention before irreversible damage threatens public health, agriculture and the environment. The latest Central Ground Water Board report exposes alarming levels of uranium, nitrates, arsenic and fluoride in groundwater in both states. In Punjab, uranium contamination has spread to 20 districts, while 16 in Haryana exceed safe limits. The excessive use of phosphate fertilisers, along with aggressive groundwater extraction, has worsened the crisis. Prolonged exposure to uranium-laced water can cause kidney toxicity and urinary tract cancers, yet the response remains sluggish.



Punjab's worsening water crisis is exacerbated by its unsustainable agricultural practices. A 2019 study warned that groundwater at 100 m would be exhausted within a decade. Five years later, farmers are still forced to rely on borewells due to the government's failure to promote crop diversification. Paddy farming, which guzzles thousands of litres per kilogram, continues to drain reserves, pushing the state toward desertification. Adding to the crisis is Punjab's mismanagement of wastewater. Instead of investing in sewage treatment plants, authorities have resorted to deepening village ponds to contain sewage overflow. This reckless practice contaminates sub-soil water, posing a severe health hazard. The Punjab and Haryana High Court has rightfully questioned the legality and

## Kejriwal, Rahul should look within

AAP-weary residents of Delhi have plumped for a double-engine government

There are two key takeaways from the Delhi Assembly poll outcome. The first is that Narendra Modi strides the political arena like a colossus in India, that is Bharat. His brand of politics and his hold on voters remains unchallenged. The second is that Rahul Gandhi is no match for Modi. He should stop aspiring for the leadership of the INDIA bloc. Had the Congress supported the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi, the BJP might have finished second best and not the undisputed leader of all it surveys.

The Congress should democratise its leadership. It should not rely solely on the Nehru-Gandhi family. There are many in the country who adore the family, but Modi has reduced that base substantially through consistent, well-directed verbal assaults. Rahul is a good, likeable human being but not a good political animal. He spouts the wrong language too often, thus playing into the hands of the BJP's well-oiled propaganda machine. Rahul chose core concerns of the electorate in the run-up to the elections, but his rhetoric is nowhere as robust and hard-hitting as Modi's. It makes a very tepid impression on the listeners. I do not blame him for his lack of eloquence. It is a God-given gift. Modi has it; Rahul, unfortunately does not. Residents of Delhi will benefit initially from the double-engine government that will replace AAP. The party with a difference had made the AAP government irrelevant. It had appointed a Lt-Governor whose primary mandate was to scuttle the plans Arvind Kejriwal and his companions had made for the people of Delhi. The L-G succeeded in his mission of painting Kejriwal in a negative light.

The BJP has devised a strategy to install double-engine governments in every state of the Union. To consolidate its Hindutva ideology, it requires a centralised form of government, with the Centre calling the shots in the states as well. If it does not win elections in any state, it

first attempts to buy over the required number of Opposition legislators — if the difference in numbers permits. It did this twice in Goa and once, in a big way, in Karnataka. If engineering defections is not doable, it installs Governors or Lt-Governors — like it did in Delhi and Puducherry — to make the poll winners redundant. That experiment is going on in Tamil Nadu. So is the attempt to dislodge Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal. The task is proving very difficult in these two states, even as governance is being consigned to the boondocks. Consequently, the public is suffering.

The people of Delhi must have digested this reality. They realised that if there was a double-engine government, their lives would be better. Besides, Kejriwal, who was elected on the anti-corruption plank, had turned overtly rapacious. They realised this when they were told that he had fitted jacuzzi in his bath, a clear departure from the spartan life people thought he led. It is not only residents of Delhi who were disappointed with Kejriwal. His mentor, Anna Hazare, who led the movement against corruption that grabbed headlines at home and abroad in 2011, expressed happiness at the fall of a 'traitor' to the cause. Hazare had expected Kejriwal to become an activist like him to keep the movement against corruption alive. But the latter had other ideas. He imagined himself as a future Prime Minister. He might have got there had he not been in such a hurry. But, like many of his ilk, he tripped, or rather, was felled by a more astute politician's skills. Nothing can be predicted with certainty in the realm of



politics. Kejriwal may bounce back sometime. At this moment, he is licking his wounds. He would be well advised to reflect on his fate and the factors that militated against him. His runaway ambition for one, when patience and humility were needed.

There is one charge against him that I have not found credible. It is alleged that he has acquired wealth in the notorious excise policy scam. I have no doubt that the 'scam' did happen, but my gut feeling is that AAP required money to operate. All political parties do. If the BJP pretends that it does not, very few are going to accept its word. Even in the tiny state of Goa, the home

of my ancestors, where corruption was never a factor, that evil has now gone through the roof! BJP leader Manohar Parrikar had kept corruption in check when he was the CM. There is no control now, probably because secretive funding through electoral bonds has been disallowed by the Supreme Court.

The Kejriwal government started its innings on a positive note. It began with paying attention to the top priorities of any government — education and health. Neither the Congress governments at the Central and state levels nor non-Congress dispensations in some states, like the Left in Bengal and Kerala, had thought of doing that. Manish Sisodia, then Deputy Chief Minister, aided ably by Atishi, a

Rhodes scholar, revolutionised the working of public schools. AAP also brought medical help to every locality by opening local clinics and manning them. The less affluent were hugely benefitted. If the BJP wants to prove that it is a party of patriots, it should not dump the system introduced by AAP in the health and education sectors. Even if it is an initiative of an Opposition party, it is a pro-people initiative and needs to be institutionalised. China has stolen a march on us because it made universal education its first priority. The productivity of its workforce improved by leaps and bounds because every man and woman was literate. We have a lot to catch up.

# Making room for the Baby



Don't let your kid's personal space be an afterthought. Here's how to get started: Recently, Bollywood's favourite promoter of nepotism got his babies home to a swanky and pristine-white nursery designed by friend Gauri Khan. A child's nursery is not just any other room; they are well thought out spaces for the child to call his/her own from the day he/she's born. While Karan Johar's nursery is right out of a catalogue, you don't have to break the bank to get your child's room ready. All you need is a well thought out concept. Just cribbing The crib is the centre point of a nursery. Interior designer Namrata Joshi says, "Be sure to get the right one. Don't go for fancy but functional - read, a good quality crib with

proper safety guidelines." Most cribs convert to toddler beds, that's why pick a piece that will last. Invest in plenty of crib sheets, and a crib skirt for extra drama. Think 100 per cent cotton, hypo-allergenic - and keep it gender neutral. For a change Babies come with dirty diapers. To put a positive spin to the poop drama, opt for a changing table. If you don't have enough space, Sandeep Kumar, founder of a Bengaluru-based interior eCommerce venture advises on changing pads that can be attached to the top of any dresser. Store more Babies mean more stuff. Up your storage game. Create your own storage solutions with clever hacks. Interior designer Ayushi

Kanodia advises on wall shelves and the use of bins and baskets to separate supplies. Use open bins for blankets, while shorter bins can be tucked away under the crib. Kumar advises on washable wall colours. "Use easy clean wall decals to give kids room to doodle and make the walls their own," he says. Nursery notes - Don't make it too sunny. Babies need their sleep and light curtains can work against them setting their circadian rhythms. - Baby-proof the room. Cover electrical outlets, tuck away cords, anchor furniture and secure rugs. - Don't use harsh lighting. Install dimmer lights. - Don't use rugs that can't be washed easily. Floor rugs are the biggest carriers of mites.



## Create your own Rock garden at home



Little comes close to being as peaceful as a rock garden. It exudes serenity and is a visual landscape, too. It's also not tough to make your own one at home. Here are tips on how to do so: 1) Choose the area: The foundation matters so choose a spot, maybe on your patio or terrace for the rock garden space. You will also need it to have depth (around one foot). 2) Arranging rocks, plants: The next step is to arrange the layout of the garden. You will need to get rocks in different sizes and shades. Large slabs of rock make for a staircase and flat, coloured stones can be used for the walkway. Place the flowers and plants around this. 3) Water effect: You can also create an artificially flowing fountain or water path through the garden. 4) Furniture: Use cane furniture around your rock garden. It looks good all year through.

## Get money savvy with these simple tips



Are you one of those who cannot manage your money? Be well informed and plan better for the future if you want to enjoy all that money you make. Here are some simple tips - 1. Gather knowledge: Start early in life to know what you can do with your money. Gather enough knowledge and read as much as you can before investing. 2. Look out for best investments: Once you know where all you can invest in, start doing it in a methodical manner. Do not invest in one particular scheme but try to divide your savings into making investments at various places. 3. Plan your life: Set up your priorities and goals in life. If you want to save for your retired life try to limit your expenses and curb all those indulgences.

## Use old bottles to add greenery to your home

Got a wall that's blank? This time, instead of hanging the usual photo frames on it, opt for some horizontal greenery via a plant bottle wall. Choose the herbs like thyme, rosemary and cilantro for this. To start, cut out the mid-section of the bottle and place the soil and plant inside. You can also have

a vertical design, where you cut the bottle in half and turn them upside down so that the water from the open neck of the bottle drips onto another bottle. It's nifty and aesthetic, too!

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# Legs chained, hands cuffed: Indian deportee on 2nd US flight recounts ordeal

**The US military C-17 aircraft, that landed in Amritsar late Saturday night, carried the second batch of illegal Indian immigrants as part of President Donald Trump's massive crackdown against undocumented aliens in America.**

**New Delhi.** An Indian deportee who was on board the second US military aircraft carrying illegal immigrants, claimed that "our legs were chained and hands cuffed" throughout the journey, just over a week after the first batch of deportees also made

similar complaints, triggering a massive uproar. Daljit Singh, a native of Kurala Kalan village in Punjab's Hoshiarpur district, was among the 116 illegal Indian immigrants on board the C-17 US military aircraft that landed in Amritsar at around 11.35 pm on Saturday following a 90-minute delay. The second batch of deportees comprised 65 people from Punjab, 33 from Haryana; eight from Gujarat; two each from Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan; and one each from Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.

According to sources, a majority of them are aged 18 to 30, news agency PTI reported. Speaking to reporters in Hoshiarpur, Singh also said that he had been taken to the US via the treacherous

"donkey" route -- an illegal and dangerous journey taken by migrants to enter America. Meanwhile, his wife claimed

Upon their arrival, the deportees had to immediately proceed for immigration and background checks, following which they were allowed to proceed to their homes in the early hours of Sunday. The Punjab and Haryana governments made special travel arrangements for the deportees hailing from the two states. Meanwhile, a third plane carrying 157 deportees is expected to land in Amritsar on Sunday. However, there was no immediate information on the arrival time. The first US flight carrying 104 deportees, including 13 children, landed in Amritsar on February 5, marking the first time that Indian illegal immigrants were sent back as part of President Donald Trump's massive crackdown against undocumented aliens that he launched on his first day in office on January 20.



that a travel agency deceived her husband, and instead of a flight to the US that he had promised, Singh was taken via the donkey route. She further alleged that a man from their village had introduced Singh to the travel agent.

## JDU leader accuses RJD MLA of assault, claims 'forced to drink urine'



**New Delhi.** A complaint has been filed against a RJD MLA in Bihar's Purnea district in connection with a kidnapping and assault incident. The case involves JDU's Baisi block vice president, Mohd Rehan Fazal, who has accused the RJD MLA Rukanuddin of abducting and assaulting him over a land dispute involving a Dalit woman.

The JDU leader alleged that he was taken to the MLA's residence, where he was brutally beaten with motorcycle rods and sticks. When he asked for water, he was allegedly forced to drink urine.

Speaking to India Today TV's sister site, Aaj Tak, Purnea Superintendent of Police (SP) indicated that an arrest warrant may be issued against the RJD MLA over the issue. The JDU leader sustained severe injuries and is currently undergoing treatment at Government Medical College and Hospital. A complaint has been filed against the MLA at Baisi police station.

Meanwhile, MLA Rukanuddin has dismissed the allegations, calling them politically motivated and baseless. He claimed that his side has also filed a complaint at the police station. Purnea SP confirmed that the investigation has found evidence supporting the allegations of abduction and assault. He said that a warrant will be issued against the MLA after due legal procedures.

## 7 Suspected Kuki National Army, 4 Meitei Militants Arrested In Manipur: Police

**New Delhi.** Eleven militants have been arrested in Manipur in the last two days, including seven suspected militants of the Kuki National Army (KNA), the police said on Sunday. The KNA is a signatory to the controversial suspension of operations (SoO) agreement. The suspected KNA militants were arrested from Old Khaokual area in Churachandpur on Friday, the police said. In another operation on Saturday at Huikap village in Imphal East district, four members of the Meitei militant group Kangleipak Communist Party (People's War Group), or KCP(PWG), including two women were arrested, the police said. They were found carrying two AK assault rifles, pistols, ammunition, incriminating documents and booklets, the police said.

Following the imposition of President's Rule with the house in suspended animation (assembly not dissolved), the security forces have been carrying out operations across the state to dismantle bunkers and disarm people from both sides who call themselves village volunteers.

The Kuki tribes are calling for the arrest of Arambai Tengol chief Korounganba Khuman, alleging he heads a radical Meitei outfit. The Meiteis have pointed back at hundreds of Kuki youths carrying assault rifles under numerous banners of 'volunteers', who the Meiteis say are infested with highly trained Kuki militants.

What is clear, however, is civilians from both sides cannot carry weapons like assault rifles under the name of volunteering, police sources said, adding the President's Rule will ensure all are disarmed. The frequency of arrests - at least those announced by the police on X (formerly Twitter) - has increased in recent weeks.

The Kuki tribes and the Meiteis have been fighting since May 2023 over a range of issues such as land rights and political representation. Some 24 Kuki-Zo militant groups come under two umbrella organisations for the purpose of negotiations - the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) led by the KNA, and the United People's Front (UPF) led by the Zomi Revolutionary Army. The KNO and the UPF representing all the others have signed the SoO agreement with the Centre and the Manipur government. Under this agreement, the militants are to stay at designated camps and their weapons kept in locked.

## CBI searches in Delhi, Haryana in cyber crime case; cash and jewellery recovered

**NEW DELHI.** In an ongoing investigation into a case of cyber crime, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Friday carried out searches at 11 locations in Delhi and Haryana and recovered a huge stash of cash and gold, officials said. During the searches, the CBI recovered Rs 1.08 crore in cash, USD 1,000 and 252 grams of gold. Nine locations in Delhi and two in Haryana's Hisar were searched by the CBI on Friday. This operation was a follow-up action the suspects, who in conspiracy among themselves and others, were engaged in illegal activities by impersonating government officials and committing

crypto fraud using computer resources and crypto devices, officials added. They were also found cheating people in



India and abroad by offering fake technical support consultations and dishonestly inducing them to transfer money in the form of cryptocurrency.

This money was then routed through multiple crypto wallets and converted into cash. The CBI has already filed chargesheet in the case against three accused under Sections 120B read with 420 and 384 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), along with Section 66D of the IT Act, 2000. During the searches, the CBI unearthed significant incriminating digital evidence and seized six laptops, eight mobile phones, and one iPad. The investigation also revealed the use of computer programs for making VoIP-based calls and accessing the darknet. Further investigation into the matter is underway.

## Coast Guard Ship Shoor in Abu Dhabi to boost India-UAE maritime partnership

**The ship is on a goodwill visit to Abu Dhabi from February 15 to 21, reinforcing the deep-rooted maritime partnership between India and the UAE.**

**New Delhi.** Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Shoor, an offshore patrol vessel, made a port call at Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Saturday, an official statement said. The ship is on a goodwill visit to Abu Dhabi from February 15 to 21, reinforcing the deep-rooted maritime partnership between India and the UAE, it added. This visit underscores the strategic importance of the Gulf region for India's maritime interests and aligns with India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) policy, which prioritises maritime security, regional stability, and economic prosperity. This visit strengthens the India-UAE bilateral ties by enhancing operational coordination and information sharing between the two agencies.

SAR), Maritime Pollution Response (MPR), and Maritime Law Enforcement (MLE). These interactions bolster regional maritime cooperation, improve interoperability, and enhance collective readiness to address emerging security challenges,



the government asserted. A key highlight of the visit is ICGS Shoor's participation in International Defence Exhibition (IDEX-2025) and Naval Defence Exhibition & Conference (NAVDEX-2025), the premier international defense exhibition at Port Zayed, Abu Dhabi.

IDEX / NAVDEX provides a platform for India to showcase its maritime capabilities, cutting-edge defense technologies, and commitment to fostering global partnerships for maritime security. India's presence at the event reinforces its role as a responsible maritime power dedicated to safeguarding the stability in the region. Additionally, 15 National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets onboard, as part of the Puneet Sagar Abhiyan, a flagship initiative aimed at raising awareness about marine pollution and advocating for cleaner oceans, will be undertaking outreach activities highlighting India's commitment to environmental sustainability and strengthening people-to-people ties between India and the UAE. Following its visit to Abu Dhabi, ICGS Shoor will visit Muscat in Oman, on February 25, further reinforcing India's maritime partnerships in the Gulf region, the defence ministry said.

## Railway staff clear haunting remains after night of chaos, loss at New Delhi Station

**Shoes, torn bags, scattered clothes, and abandoned food lay across platforms 14 and 15 -- serving as grim reminder of the chaos that unfolded just hours earlier.**

**NEW DELHI.** Hours after a stampede at the New Delhi Railway Station claimed at least 18 lives, railway staff worked through the night to clear the horrific remains of the tragic incident. Shoes, torn bags, scattered clothes, and abandoned food lay across platforms 14 and 15 -- serving as grim reminder of the chaos that unfolded just hours earlier.

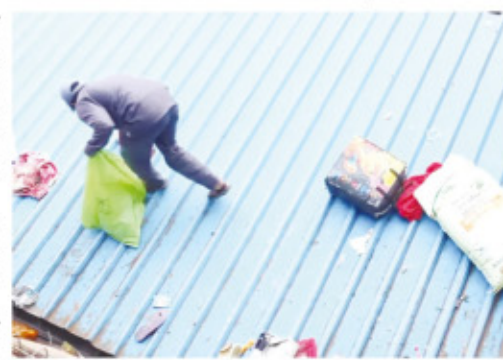
By Sunday morning, workers were seen sweeping away the debris, collecting personal belongings, to restore normalcy at the busy station, but the tragedy left scars that could not be so easily erased.

A railway staffer, who spent hours clearing the wreckage, described the scene as "one of the worst" he ever witnessed. "There were belongings everywhere -- slippers without their pairs, half-eaten food, and even a child's school bag. People had no time to pick up their things; they just ran for their lives," he said. The eerie sight of personal items scattered across the

platforms was a painful reminder of the lives lost and the ones disrupted. The stampede occurred around 9:55 pm on Saturday night when thousands of passengers, mostly Maha Kumbh pilgrims, crowded the station to board trains to Prayagraj.

The Prayagraj Express was stationed at platform 14, while the Swatantra Senani Express and Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Express were delayed, causing an overwhelming surge of people on platforms 12, 13, and 14. The situation worsened when a last-minute platform change was announced. Confused and panicked, the passengers rushed towards platform 16, where an escalator became a choking point.

Security personnel tried to intervene, but the crowd was too large to control. Some passengers attempted to climb railings to escape, while others were crushed



underfoot. Eighteen people -- 714 women and five children, including two under 10 -- lost their lives in the stampede, while more than a dozen others suffered injuries. As dawn broke, railway staff began the grim task of cleaning up. Videos shared by news agency PTI showed workers sweeping debris off the platform roof and clearing the tracks. Bags and clothing

were collected in piles, while officials searched for any remaining personal belongings. At the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash (LNJP) Hospital, grieving families gathered to identify their loved ones.

A father, searching desperately for his missing son, broke down upon seeing a familiar blue backpack among the items recovered from the station. "He was just 12. He was supposed to board the train with me," he sobbed. The government has announced Rs 10 lakh compensation for the families of the deceased. Expressing his condolences on X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Distressed by the stampede at New Delhi Railway Station. My thoughts are with all those who have lost their loved ones. I pray that the injured have a speedy recovery." Railway authorities have admitted that overcrowding was a major factor for the disaster.

## Major 'Make in India' boost: Su-30 brake parachute production goes local

**NEW DELHI.** In a major boost to India's defence self-reliance, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) transferred the technology of the Su-30 Brake Parachute system to the Ordnance Equipment Factory (OEF) in Uttar Pradesh's Hazratpur. The formal handover took place at Aero India 2025 in Bengaluru, where junior defence minister Sanjay Seth oversaw the transfer of the technology to OEF.

### MOVING AWAY FROM FOREIGN DEPENDENCE

The brake parachute, a critical safety component that helps the Su-30 fighter aircraft decelerate during landing, was previously imported from Russia, the original manufacturer of the Su-30 aircraft.

Until now, India had relied on Russian suppliers for these parachutes, making the aircraft's sustenance dependent on external sources. This technology transfer marks a major step toward self-reliance, reducing dependence on foreign manufacturers.

### ADVANCING INDIGENOUS DEFENCE CAPABILITIES

OEF Hazratpur, a key player in technical textile-based defence solutions, has been at the forefront of developing and manufacturing aerial delivery systems and brake parachutes for the Indian Air Force (IAF). With this latest achievement, the factory strengthens its role as a strategic defence manufacturing hub.

### BOOSTING 'MAKE IN INDIA' IN DEFENCE

The technology transfer aligns with India's "Make in India" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat" initiatives, ensuring that critical defence systems are manufactured domestically.

The move will not only enhance operational efficiency for the IAF but also create opportunities for domestic industries and skilled workforce development. Speaking at the event, general manager of OEF Hazratpur, Amit Singh, emphasised the factory's commitment to strengthening India's armed forces through indigenous manufacturing.

## Army seeks to enhance border monitoring with 1,000 surveillance helicopters

**New Delhi.** The Indian Army has requested information from potential vendors for the procurement of 1,000 surveillance helicopters and 50 heavy crawler rock drills to ensure vigilance with modernisation and self-reliance on military technology. The request for information (RFI) document was uploaded to the Indian Army's official website. This move by the Army highlights its focus on strengthening its operational readiness, particularly in high-altitude areas such as Ladakh, Siachen, and Arunachal Pradesh. The surveillance copters, capable of operating at 5,500 meters above sea level, will be equipped with day and night



cameras to provide real-time intelligence. Their deployment is expected to enhance border monitoring, reduce reliance on traditional foot patrols in hostile terrain, and enable faster responses to security threats.

Given the ongoing tensions along the LAC (Line of Actual Control) with China, this move suggests a strategic effort to strengthen India's reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities in remote border areas. Currently, the Indian Army relies on various surveillance systems, including Israeli Heron UAVs, searcher drones, Indian-developed SWITCH drones, and long-range surveillance cameras. The army has been focusing on enhancing endurance at critical operational altitudes with tough weather conditions. The new surveillance copters aim to address these challenges by providing an indigenous, high-altitude reconnaissance solution tailored to India's specific needs.





From splashing colours to going natural -- you can use your creativity to make your child's room a true fairyland.

Get your creative best for your

# Child's room



**Induce creativity:**

Your bundle of joy needs to be gently nudged into a world of imagination and wonder. Grab his or her interest in all things creative and stimulating by infusing an element of magic, fantasy and popular kids' literature into their rooms. Think of bedsheets and pillows with cartoon characters, wall motifs

that make them want to read fairytales and wall decals with famous animated movie figures.

**Splash colours:**

Most parents understand that a child's room must exude bright happiness in terms of the colour scheme. Yet many desist from undertaking the project of altering the way the room looks. This is because the traditional belief is that to spruce up the room, one has to invest in recolouring the walls. However, this isn't true. In fact, most contemporary designers believe that it's better to have the walls painted in a sober shade and splash vibrancy in other ways through upholstery, accessories, exuberant rugs, beanbags and lots of visually pleasing books.

**Go natural:**

Children love the outdoors and nature, and if you don't want them to end up as couch potatoes once they grow up a little, it will be

best to encourage this feeling of oneness with all things natural. Boost their love for the wild by cleverly infusing quirky elements into their abode. Wallpapers that represent forests or mountains and ceilings with stars that shine in the dark usually work well. Wooden furniture and flooring best complement such a theme.

**Create space:**

When designing an interior scheme for your baby's room, it's essential to keep in mind that he or she needs a lot of space. If you have one room for two children, a bunk bed is a great idea. Not only do children find it cool and fun, it also makes way for an activity area. Just spread a funky carpet, scatter a few toys here and there and the perfect playroom is ready. Your little princess can also lay her Barbie set here and delve into her beautiful world of fantasy.



Create a container

# Garden

in your home

**A container garden is a great way to utilise the space in your house and also add greenery. This is how you can do it...**



**Map the area where you want to make the garden**

Since this type of a garden can make your home look cluttered, always select one specific area in your house where you would like to have it. This can be a space, either in your living area, your balcony or a place in your dining room. Go for plants that can sustain for a long duration. Mostly built indoors, choose plants that can survive with minimum or no sunlight for days at end. However, you must remember to water them from time to time, so that they remain fresh.

**Go for bright blooms**

Instead of going in only for green plants, you can also opt for flowers in bright colours — marigolds, lilies, etc

are good options. They not only add to the beauty of the room, but also lend a calming effect. Make sure you choose flowering plants that are not seasonal.

**Do not opt for too many planters**

Build the garden in such a way that it does not overpower your room. Since you also have to maintain uniformity, having about three to four planters placed side by side will make the garden look complete. This will also lend a neat look to your room and the plants will have enough breathing space.

**Place them on faux grass**

To give the garden a more authentic look, you can have the planters placed on fake grass. If you are planning to do

this in your bedroom, make sure that you choose an area (possibly near the windows, so that your plants can get sunlight). You can alternatively also use pebbles for non-flowering plants that need less water to keep them clean.



# Designing homes the Feng Shui Way

When it comes to locating plots, buildings, orienting homes, placing decor and even planning gardens the first thing which would come to our mind is unhindered flow of energy and a feel good factor.

sectors is a step after getting to know the interpretation of the magnetic fields and compass directions. Presuming that one has got to know the axis of the plot and located the cardinal magnetic directions, it becomes a lot easier to design a home as per Feng Shui tenets.

**Some of the very generic rules in Feng Shui home design are:-**

**Main door:** The main door should be the largest door in the home and the door should not open into a kitchen area. Moreover the position of the main door is critical and would vary depending upon the direction and axis of the plot, however doors right on the cardinal directions are considered bad

positioning.

**Kitchen:** What we eat, where we eat and how we eat are all part of the science of health and vitality; hence kitchen location is vital to the overall harmony of the home. Kitchen as many elements which operate in tandem or could be conflicting like water, fire (stove /electricity), metal (utensils) etc. In addition locating the stove and sink is of great importance so having the water body away from the fire is quite important.

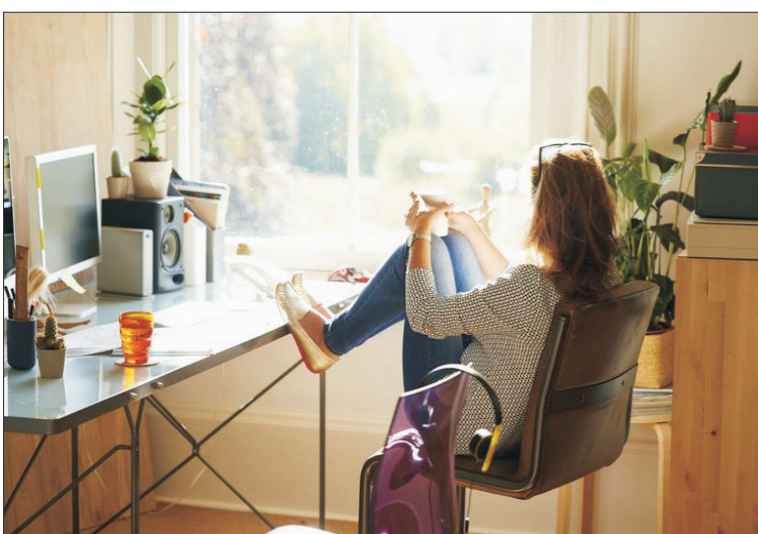
**Master bedroom:** This is one of the most important rooms in a home. It is said that deep

sleep is when we reunite with the source, hence if we sleep deeply we awaken refreshed ready for the new day. Quality of sleep is far more important than the length of time. Certain locations are more conducive to peaceful sleep than others. Using wooden bed/cot is preferred as wood is benign and warm as against metal beds, which are cold and oppressive, and metal is said to be associated with the planet Saturn.

**Living room:** This room is the sanctuary for relaxation. Feng Shui treatises says that the centre portion or the 'tai chi' of the house is not conducive for major activities as it receives least amount of cosmic energy, hence it is beneficial if a major portion of the living room occupies the central zone of the building. Remember to orient your sofas and heavy furniture's such that they occupy the south and west sectors of the room and avoid furniture or blockages at the northeast sector of the room which is the knowledge sector.

**Toilets:** In the earlier days the toilets were away from the main house and later they were made 'en-suite' or attached. Toilets should not be too close to kitchen as the food energy and toilet energies are incompatible.

Feng Shui reminds us of the basic relationship between earth, man and cosmos. By adapting these principles our lives, we can create a healthy environment with harmonious living and working environment.



This is quite possible when we plan our home keeping in mind some important tenets of Feng Shui in terms of decor, alignment and design.

The adaptation could extend beyond the framework of building design as it can be used to enhance the interiors, furnishing, decor and other aspects of the design elements in a space.

A simple approach to Feng Shui would be in terms of providing the right plot levels, set backs, proper layout and allocation of rooms. How do we go about this? The basic understanding to allocate rooms in the right



## US plane carrying second batch of 116 illegal immigrants lands in Amritsar

**NEW DELHI.** A US plane carrying 116 illegal Indian immigrants landed at the Amritsar International Airport late Saturday night, official sources said. A C-17 aircraft landed at the airport around 11.35 pm as against the expected time of 10 pm, sources said. This is the second batch of such Indians to be deported by the Donald Trump administration as part of its crackdown on illegal immigrants.

It was not immediately clear whether the deportees were in shackles, like the previous batch was.

The deportees will be allowed to head to their homes after completion of formalities including immigration, verification, and background checks.

Many from the first batch of illegal immigrants landed here on February 5, most of them, from Punjab, said they wanted to migrate to the US for a better life for their families, but were duped by their agents. Their dreams were shattered when they were caught on the US border and sent back in shackles. Earlier, there were reports that the plane would carry 119 immigrants, but as per an updated list of passengers, the number of deportees in the second batch was 116, sources said.

Of the fresh batch of deportees, 65 are from Punjab, 33 from Haryana, eight from Gujarat, two each from Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, and one each from Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. Most of them are aged 18 to 30, as per the sources. The families of some of the deportees reached the airport to receive them. A third plane carrying 157 deportees is expected to land on February 16, sources said.

On February 5, a US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal Indian immigrants landed at the Amritsar airport. Of them, 33 each were from Haryana and Gujarat, and 30 were from Punjab.

The family members of the second batch of illegal Indian immigrants deported seemed in a state of shock, with many of them saying that they raised money by pledging farm land and cattle to send them abroad for a bright future.

## Biz key to becoming developed, have given it priority: Mandaviya

**NEW DELHI.** Modi government has given priority to industry and trade as it realises business plays a key role in achieving the goal of India becoming a developed nation by 2047, said labour and employment minister Mansukh Mandaviya. The taxes they pay are used for funding welfare policies that benefit everyone, especially the poor, he said. Speaking at the ET Now Global Business Summit, Mandaviya said that since 2014 India has seen ambitious aims being set and a roadmap being devised to achieve that. "If you have a train to catch, you must reach the station in time and be on the platform in front of your coach to board it. If you are not there, the train will arrive on its scheduled time and leave without you. That is the memory I have of 1985 when I was in school and the then PM Rajiv Gandhi spoke an India of the 21st century. But there was no road map and we missed that bus then. Preparation is key. PM Modi ensured that and now we are on right track to achieving our goals," Mandaviya, who is also minister for sports and youth affairs said.

"Modi has given a chance to the youth - which is all they needed - with his visionary programmes including 'Make in India, Startup India' and focus of self reliance. A decade ago, India had four unicorns, now there are 118," he said.

## What will drive Stock Markets this week? Experts' comments

**New Delhi.** Stock markets are expected to be driven by global trends and FPI trading activity this week after the conclusion of the earnings season, analysts said.

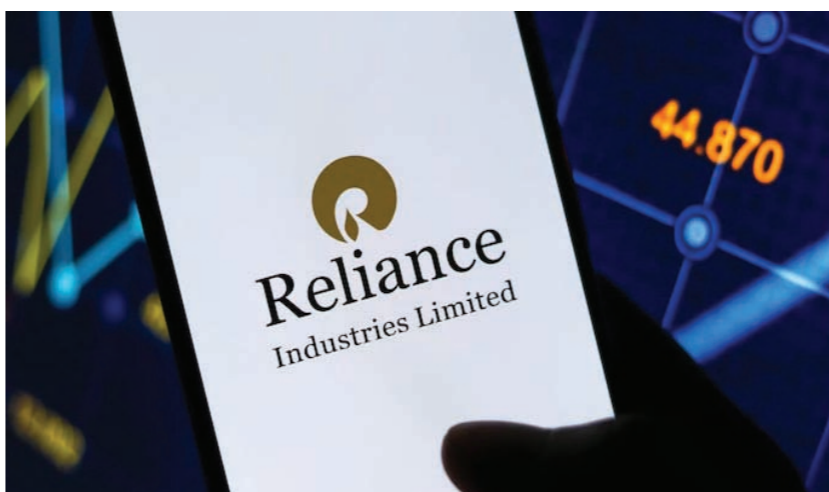
Unabated foreign fund outflows, lower-than-expected quarterly earnings and global trade war fears hit market sentiments last week, where the benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty extended their downward trend to the eighth day in a row on Friday. "With the conclusion of the Q3 earnings season, now focus will be on global developments amid a turbulent market environment on account of Donald Trump's trade policies," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said. Analyzing FPI/FII Flows and Currency Movements trend and movement of Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, will also be tracked by investors. "With the earnings season behind us, market focus will shift to trends in FII (Foreign Institutional Investors) flows and currency movements for further cues. Additionally, speculation regarding US tariffs and their impact on global trade will remain a key factor to watch," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The US FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) meeting minutes will also be in focus this week. Osho Krishan, Senior Analyst - Technical & Derivatives, Angel One Ltd, said, "In the absence of key domestic triggers, global developments are more likely to provide impetus in setting up our market tone." In the last eight trading days, the BSE benchmark tanked 2,644.6 points or 3.36 per cent, and the NSE Nifty slumped 810 points or 3.41 per cent. "Several factors contributed to the market downturn, with sentiment being particularly rattled by US President Donald Trump's announcement of reciprocal tariffs on US trading partners. Additionally, weak Q3 corporate earnings and sustained FII outflows further weighed on investor confidence," Puneet Singhania, Director at Master Trust Group, said.

# Mcap of 8 of top-10 valued firms tumbles Rs 2 trn; Reliance biggest laggard

**Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty extended their downward trend to the eighth day in a row on Friday. In the past eight trading days, the BSE benchmark has tumbled 2,644.6 points as its efforts to expand presence in the southern Indian spice market**

**NEW DELHI.** The combined market valuation of eight of the 10 most valued domestic firms eroded by Rs 2 trillion last week, with Reliance Industries taking the biggest hit in line with a bearish trend in the broader stock market. Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty extended their downward trend to the eighth day in a



row on Friday. In the past eight trading days, the BSE benchmark has tumbled 2,644.6 points or 3.36 per cent, and the Nifty slumped 810 points or 3.41 per cent. While Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India,

Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finance and ITC faced a combined erosion of Rs 2,03,952.65 crore in their valuation, Bharti Airtel and ICICI Bank emerged as the gainers. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Reliance Industries tanked Rs 67,526.54 crore to Rs 16,46,822.12

crore. The valuation of TCS tumbled Rs 34,950.72 crore to Rs 14,22,903.37 crore. HDFC Bank's mcap eroded by Rs 28,382.23 crore to Rs 12,96,708.35 crore and that of ITC plunged Rs 25,429.75 crore to Rs 5,13,699.85 crore. The mcap of Infosys dropped Rs 19,287.32 crore to Rs 7,70,786.76 crore and that of State Bank of India declined Rs 13,431.55 crore to Rs 6,44,357.57 crore. The market valuation of Hindustan Unilever diminished by Rs 10,714.14 crore to Rs 5,44,647 crore and that of Bajaj Finance dipped Rs 4,230.4 crore to Rs 5,20,082.42 crore. However, the mcap of Bharti Airtel jumped Rs 22,426.2 crore to Rs 9,78,631.54 crore and that of ICICI Bank climbed Rs 1,182.57 crore to Rs 8,88,815.13 crore. In the top-10 chart, Reliance Industries retained the title of the most valued firm followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finance and ITC.

## What led to stampede at New Delhi Railway Station which killed 18

**New Delhi** At least 18 people were killed over a dozen injured in a stampede that broke out late Saturday night at the New Delhi Railway Station. While the Railways has constituted a high-level committee to probe the incident, initial reports and eyewitness accounts revealed what led to the stampede. According to Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyay, chief public relations officer of Northern Railway, the incident happened on platform 14 and 15. A crowd of passengers was waiting there to board trains for Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj. "When this tragic incident took place yesterday, Magadh Express going towards Patna was standing on platform number 14 of New Delhi Railway Station, and Uttar Sampark Kranti going towards Jammu was standing on platform number 15. During this, a passenger coming towards platforms 14-15 slipped and fell on the stairs, and many passengers standing behind him were hit, and this tragic incident took place," Upadhyay said. "This is being investigated by a high-level committee. No train was cancelled,

nor was there any change in platform... The incident is being investigated, so let the committee submit their report and findings," he added.



### Sudden surge in sale of tickets

In an official statement, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Railway KPS Malhotra said platform number 14 was already very crowded when the Prayagraj Express train was waiting there for its departure. The officer said Swatantra Senani Express and Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Express were delayed and the passengers of these trains were also present on platform numbers 12, 13 and 14. "As per CMI, every hour 1,500 general tickets were sold by

railways due to which the station got overcrowded and became uncontrollable. There was a stampede at platform 14 and near escalator near platform 16," the DCP said.

### What did eyewitnesses say?

A porter (coolie) at the New Delhi Railway Station, who has worked there since 1981, said he had never seen a crowd this big before. "Prayagraj Special was supposed to leave from platform number 12, but it was shifted to platform number 16. When the crowd waiting at platform 12 and the crowd waiting outside tried to reach platform 16, people started colliding and fell on the escalator and stairs. Several coolies gathered there to stop the crowd," news agency ANI quoted him as saying. "We took at least 15 bodies and loaded them in an ambulance. There were only shoes and clothes on the platform. When the crowd waiting at platform 12 and the crowd from outside tried to reach platform 16, people started colliding and fell on the escalator and stairs. We called police, fire tenders, and 3-4 ambulances reached there, and

## Trends, FII trading activity to drive mkt trends this week: Analysts

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## BITs should be negotiated separately from FTAs, keep nations' interests in mind: FM Sitharaman

**NEW DELHI.** The Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) should be handled separately and negotiated standalone from the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) by specialists with expertise in elements of policymaking such as taxation, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday. Sitharaman also underlined that before taking up international arbitration, enough time should be given to the contesting parties to go through the available local remedies because that is important for the host country. Moving forward, the framework of investment treaties should capture national interests in relation to regulatory powers, strengthened guidance for arbitrators in resolving disputes, keeping in mind nations' interests and

circumstances as well, she said. "Issues related to the BIT are so unique to the sovereign that we think BIT should be negotiated standalone rather than make it as a part of FTA agreement. We think that BIT and its ramifications are so important for the sovereignty of the country, it is important for us to have a standalone BIT, with specialists who deal with taxation laws and elements of policies which are inherent to policy making to be handled separately with due expertise," the Minister said while speaking at the inauguration of the PG Certificate Course on International Commercial & Investment Treaty Arbitration in Delhi. Commenting on the time period for local remedies, Sitharaman said that it becomes a contentious issue while negotiating the

BIT as some nations wouldn't even want to give more than six months. "That is an issue on which BIT becomes contentious where they wouldn't even want us to give more than six months, sometimes one year, if they are kind, for local remedies. Within one year, for an Indian investor, or for an Indian claimant, to seek the court here within India and then say I have exhausted all the available legal options, and I have to now go for an international arbitration, is next to impossible. And even this becomes an arguing, contesting, and negotiating point when you are sitting at the BIT table," she said. She further said that nations are becoming weary of international arbitrations and are moving away from the established models of arbitration.

# New India Cooperative Bank's Ex-GM arrested for 'misappropriation' of Rs 122 crore

**MUMBAI.** The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Mumbai Police arrested Hitesh Praveenchand Mehta, a former General Manager and Head of Accounts at the now-defunct New India Cooperative Bank, late on Saturday evening. Mehta has been accused of embezzling a staggering Rs 122 crore from the bank's treasury between 2020 and 2025, spanning across two key branches. Mehta will be presented before a court on Sunday for judicial custody. The arrest came after an FIR was filed by the Dadar Police earlier that day. The case was later transferred to the EOW, which raided Mehta's residence and seized certain documents. Mehta was taken into custody after being summoned to record his statement before the EOW at the Crawford Market office in south Mumbai, in connection with the case against him and others.

Based on a complaint filed by the bank's now-sacked CEO, Devarshi Ghosh, a case was registered at the Dadar Police Station. The case was subsequently transferred to the EOW for further investigation. The EOW has discovered that the misappropriation of funds began soon after the onset of the pandemic.

The embezzled funds include Rs 112 crore, which was kept in the safe at the Prabhadevi branch, and Rs 10 crore from the Goregaon branch. In his complaint, Ghosh alleged that Mehta withdrew Rs 122 crore from the treasury of the Dadar and Goregaon branches. Mehta was responsible for overseeing these branches during his tenure. The fraud allegedly occurred between 2020 and 2025, as Mehta was expected to retire in 2026. Mehta is being represented by lawyer Chandrakant Ambani, who claims that his client is being framed. On Friday, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) sacked the board of the cooperative bank and placed it under an administrator for the next year. The RBI also banned the bank from lending and collecting deposits while allowing depositors to withdraw money for the next six months, effective Thursday. As part of the action, the RBI appointed Shreekanth, a former Chief General Manager at the State Bank of India, as the administrator to manage the bank's affairs. A two-member advisory committee, consisting of Ravindra Sapra (a former general manager at SBI) and chartered accountant Abhijeet Deshmukh,

will assist the administrator in carrying out his duties. The RBI's intervention followed concerns about poor governance practices observed at the bank. As of March 2024, New India Cooperative



Bank had approximately 1,30,000 depositors with an outstanding balance of Rs 2,436 crore. This was an increase from Rs 2,406 crore the previous year, despite the bank reporting losses for the past two fiscal years. In FY24, its losses rose to Rs 33 crore, compared to Rs 22.8 crore in the previous year. The bank's advances decreased to Rs 1,175 crore from Rs 1,330 crore during this period. Despite the six-month withdrawal ban, the RBI assured depositors that their money, up to Rs 5

lakh, is insured by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC). As much as 90% of the bank's depositors are eligible for this guarantee, as their deposits are under Rs 5 lakh. New India Cooperative Bank operates 30 branches, with a deposit base of Rs 2,436 crore from around 1,30,000 customers as of March 2024. The bank reported losses of Rs 22.78 crore in 2023-24 and Rs 30.74 crore in 2022-23. This marks the first major action against a cooperative bank in Maharashtra since the collapse of the Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank in September 2019 due to large-scale fraudulent loans. Following that scam, the RBI instructed an NBFC run by the Centrum Group to take over PMC, which was later renamed Unity Small Finance Bank. At the time of its collapse, PMC had over Rs 11,600 crore in liabilities after it was found that the bank had engaged in fraudulent lending practices. Around 70% of PMC's Rs 8,380 crore loan book was tied up with one real estate firm, HDIL, which also went bankrupt. Despite the six-month withdrawal ban, the RBI assured depositors that their money.

NEWS BOX

**WPL 2025: Niki Prasad is here to stay after fairytale debut for Delhi Capitals**

New Delhi. Delhi Capitals took a bold call in their very first match of WPL 2025 against the mighty Mumbai Indians, led by Harmanpreet Kaur. The call to include Sarah Bryce wasn't surprising given the Scottish wicketkeeper's past records, but the decision to include a young Niki Prasad was a gamble given that she hadn't played a lot in top level cricket. But Niki didn't let her team down. In fact, she punched above her weight to show why DC was right in picking her up in the auction and showing faith in her to be a part of the playing XI. With 54 runs needed off five overs and the required rate threatening to go out of reach, it needed Niki to pull off something spectacular. The pressure was right on her.

The call to include her over Nandini Kashyap, who has had a scintillating run in domestic cricket, could well have backfired. But Niki stood tall for DC, showing far more maturity than expected from a teenager. The ever-so-crucial 35-run knock off 33 balls fetched her the Player of the Match award as she walked to the presentation ceremony with her head held high.

**Niki Prasad is up and running**

Batting at 16 off 20 with the required rate climbing, she didn't panic. Instead, she kept milking the runs while Bryce took the attack to Saika Ishaque to give DC some breather. With 10 runs needed off the last over, the match could have gone either way. With Niki not having a specialist batter to guide her at the other end, she would have felt the heat, but she held her nerves to help DC beat the 2023 champions by two wickets at the Kotambi Stadium in Vadodara.

Back in December 2024, Niki Prasad was just another name in the Indian cricket fraternity. After leading India U19 to victory in the World Cup, Niki became someday and received a hero's welcome on her return to India. She was also greeted with hugs when she joined the DC camp, draped in the Indian tri-colour and beaming with pride. After her heroics against MI, she's definitely become more than somebody. Niki has shown that she's not here to make up the numbers; rather, she's here to take the next big step in her career. With DC chasing 165, the dangerous Shafali Verma raced off to 43 off 18, giving her team the much-needed platform.

But from being at 60/0 in 5.5 overs, the Capitals lost four wickets in no time, finding themselves in trouble at 76/4 in the ninth over. From there on, Niki joined hands with Alice Capsey and the rest of her partners to make sure that the Capitals had the last laugh.

**Champions Trophy 2025: Bumrah-less India aiming to end 12-year ODI title drought**

New Delhi. After hammering the old kings of white-ball cricket (England) in their home, India will have their task cut out as they begin their campaign in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 against Bangladesh on February 20. The Rohit Sharma-led side will enter another ICC event as favourites, as they aim to end their 12-year drought for an ODI title. The Indian team has been on a roller-coaster ride since October 2023 as they had arguably their best ODI World Cup which culminated in a heart-wrenching defeat in the final. The Men in Blue also finally ended 11-year drought of an ICC title by winning the T20 World Cup 2024 but lost their first ODI series against Sri Lanka since 1997 just over a month later. Things further went downhill for the Rohit Sharma-led side as New Zealand inflicted on them, their first-ever 0-3 whitewash in a Test series on home soil. The Asian Giants also failed to complete a hat-trick of Test series wins, down under losing 1-3 against Australia and failed to qualify for the final of the World Test Championship (WTC) for the first time.

Just when Indian cricket looked in tatters, Rohit Sharma and his men have made a big statement just ahead of the Champions Trophy by whitewashing England. India's thumping win is a big warning to their opponents that 'they can count them out at their own peril' as the Men in Blue seem determined to hunt for an ODI crown. A lot has changed in the Indian cricket setup since the last ICC event, as Gautam Gambhir was handed over the responsibility to be the head coach of the side after Rahul Dravid's contract came to an end.

Known for his never-say-die attitude and unflinching fighting spirit, Gambhir's tenure as head coach has been far from what was expected of him when he took over the reins. With his decisions being widely questioned after India's recent Test debacle, the Champions Trophy also presents an opportunity for Gambhir to prove a point that he's indeed the right man to coach the Indian team.

India's squad for ICC Champions Trophy 2025

Rohit Sharma (Captain), Shubman Gill (Vice-captain), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (WK), Rishabh Pant (WK), Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohd. Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ravindra Jadeja, Varun Chakaravarty.

**Why Champions Trophy 2025 could be the end of England's Bazball**

England have been living with the Bazball mantra for a few years now, but the results have stopped to come for the side in white-ball cricket. Will a lack of consistency, poor form and results lead to end of the approach after the Champions Trophy?

New Delhi. When Bazball came into Test cricket, it was like a breath of fresh air. No one realised the impact it would have on the game and how England would turn out under Brendon McCullum as the Test team coach. There were some thrilling performances as England decided that they only want to win Tests and not go for draws. They were ready to die by the sword, if necessary, but decided to stick to their mantra. This prompted the England and Wales Cricket Board to hand McCullum the keys to the

white-ball teams as well. England's teams in the shortest formats of the game were in a tough situation as they had a disastrous ODI World Cup. The team finished 7th and sneaked in to seal Champions Trophy qualification. The T20 World Cup 2024 was a bit better, but it wasn't enough in the end as England failed to defend another World title.

This meant Matthew Mott was let go, and the reins were handed to McCullum. But the start to his tenure has been disastrous. A 1-4 loss in T20Is and a 0-3 whitewash to India sees the 2019 ODI World Cup champions head into the Champions Trophy in the worst form possible.

This has prompted pundits to lash out at the players, with some calling out their spirit to play for the national side. Slowly, but surely, the questions are raised about England's aggressive approach. Steve Harmison, while talking

to talkSPORT, suggested that the team isn't batting smartly and the Bazball approach may not be working out in Tests and ODIs after repeated failures. "The Brendon McCullum



mantra is all about being positive and aggressive, but at some point, the players need to realise that Brendon McCullum isn't batting for them," Harmison said on talkSPORT.

"We keep making the same mistakes," Harmison added. "This isn't about personnel; it's about decision-making. You're not playing against tinpot

bowlers now. These are some of the best in the world, and you can't just run down the pitch and hope for the best."

"We're not batting smart enough," he continued. "Some of these dismissals today were just reckless. You've got to earn the right to play expansively." So what's the issue with Bazball at the moment and why could the whole thing collapse in Pakistan?

**Poor form of senior stars**

Jos Buttler and Joe Root are 2 of the stars in this England squad. Both are game changers on their day and now have a senior role to play in this side. However, the form of both men is a major concern heading into the Champions Trophy. Since the ODI World Cup, Buttler has played 6 matches and has scored 153 runs, while Root's comeback to the format in India saw him get just 112 runs. This is not what England would want heading into a major ICC event as the seniors are expected to be the ones to lead the Bazball approach from the front foot.

**First Viswanathan Anand, now Botez sisters take D Gukesh 'hostage' in funny post**

New Delhi. Popular Canadian chess players and online streaming duo, Alexandra and Andrea Botez, once again caught the attention of fans with their signature humour. The sisters shared a picture with Indian world champion D Gukesh on their social media handle, jokingly suggesting that his expression resembled that of someone taken "hostage" by them. The lighthearted post quickly became a talking point among chess enthusiasts, who joined in on the fun with witty comments. The meeting between the Botez sisters and Gukesh took place in Hamburg, Germany, where the young Indian Grandmaster was competing in the Freestyle Chess Grand Slam. Their playful caption was reminiscent of a previous post featuring another Indian chess legend, Viswanathan Anand, in a similarly staged "hostage" situation. That earlier post had gone viral,

making this latest picture with Gukesh an instant hit amongst fans. Gukesh, who considers Anand one of his

Gukesh needed to be "rescued" from the Botez sisters. A Tough Run for Gukesh



idols, has frequently been seen with the five-time world champion, making the comparison between the two posts even more amusing. The post was flooded with reactions, with some fans jokingly asking if

While the post brought some lighthearted fun, Gukesh's recent performances on the chessboard have been challenging. The Indian Grandmaster finished eighth in the Freestyle Chess Grand Slam, failing to secure a single win. His tournament campaign ended with a loss to Iranian-French Grandmaster Alireza Firouzja in the seventh-place playoff. Prior to the event in Hamburg, Gukesh also faced a setback at the Tata Steel Masters in the Netherlands, where he was defeated by fellow Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa. Despite the recent struggles, Gukesh remains one of the brightest young talents in chess, and fans are eager to see him bounce back in future competitions.

**Omar Marmoush's hat-trick doesn't surprise Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola**

New Delhi. Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola said he wasn't surprised by Omar Marmoush's hat-trick against Newcastle United in the Premier League on Saturday, February 15 and believed it was only a matter of time before the Egyptian forward hit the ground running for his new team. Marmoush made the big-money move from Eintracht Frankfurt during the January transfer window.

Against Orient (City's 2-1 FA Cup win last Saturday), had three clear chances, could not score. So we knew sooner or later, the

adapts quickly," said Guardiola. "When (the team doesn't) play good, you need time. It's a guy who likes to attack space to help to create. But when we play in the way we played today, everyone is better."



After a subtle start to his City career, the Egyptian forward burst into life during the game against Newcastle as he scored a 14-minute hat-trick in the first half to help City win the match 4-0. Speaking to the reporters after the game, as quoted by Reuters, Guardiola said he had the confidence that Marmoush would show his talent on the field. The City boss also said he hopes Marmoush will handle the compliments coming his way after the performance on Saturday.

"We knew it," said Guardiola. "So in Germany, in Frankfurt, he makes a good number. dynamic in the group was good, and the performance was good, he could show what he is." "Hopefully he can handle the compliments." When asked how Marmoush was able to score a hat-trick, Guardiola said that when the team plays well, everyone is able to get into form. "Listen, it's simple, the answer. When you play good, everyone

**Guardiola on Haaland injury** There was a slight concern for the City fans when Erling Haaland went down holding his knee late in the game. However, Guardiola brushed aside fears of a long-term issue saying that Haaland got up and was smiling. The City boss said he hasn't had a word with his striker or the doctors yet and is hoping for some good news. "When he was down everyone was scared, but he got up and he walked smiling like always," Guardiola said. "I didn't speak with him. I didn't speak with the doctors. But if the doctors didn't come with bad news, hopefully he'll be fine." City will now get ready for the second leg of their UEFA Champions League Round of 16 playoff tie against Real Madrid.

**India eye historic Champions Trophy record with wins over Pakistan, Bangladesh**

New Delhi. India are on the brink of a historic milestone as they head into the highly anticipated Champions Trophy under the leadership of Rohit Sharma. Just two victories away from extending their existing record, India have the opportunity to further establish themselves as the most successful team in the tournament's history in terms of wins. The Men in Blue will kick off their campaign against Bangladesh on February 20 at the Dubai International Stadium, followed by a high-stakes clash against co-hosts and arch-rivals Pakistan on February 22 at the same venue. With 18 wins already under their belt, securing two more would take India to an unprecedented 20 victories in Champions Trophy history—an achievement unmatched by any other team.

India's red-hot form ahead of Champions Trophy India enter the tournament with renewed confidence after whitewashing England in the recently concluded ODI series. Just when

strength ahead of the Champions Trophy. Their emphatic performances serve as a warning to competitors that dismissing them would be a mistake, as they remain determined to reclaim an ODI crown that has eluded them for 12 years.



**Bumrah's absence a major concern for India** However, India will have to navigate the tournament without their pace spearhead, Jasprit Bumrah, who has been ruled out due to a lower back injury. Bumrah's recent heroics, particularly his instrumental role in India's T20 World Cup triumph, earned him the Player of the Tournament award. His absence will be a significant challenge, but India remain resolute in their quest for Champions Trophy glory.

critics doubted the team's ODI credentials, Rohit Sharma and his squad made a resounding statement, reaffirming their

# Keerthy Suresh

Slays In White Gown In Dreamy Christian Wedding With Antony Thattil



Love is in the air and Keerthy Suresh is basking in all its glory! The actress had tied the knot with businessman Antony Thattil in a fairytale Christian wedding on December 12. Today, the actress took to her official Instagram account to share some unseen pictures from her Christian wedding, and the internet can't get enough of her breathtaking bridal look. Dressed in a pristine white gown, Keerthy looked every bit the glowing bride. With soft curls framing her face and a delicate veil, she was a true vision of grace and beauty. Antony, on the other hand, looked dapper as ever in his classic wedding suit. We are also swooning over the dreamy decor.

Keerthy Suresh tied the knot with her long-time boyfriend Antony Thattil in two dreamy wedding ceremonies on December 12, 2024. They first exchanged vows as per Tamil Brahmin traditions and then sealed their union with a Christian wedding. Since then, the actress has been sharing glimpses from her fun-filled wedding bash.

Antony Thattil, a Dubai-based businessman, hails from Kochi and is known for owning a chain of luxury resorts in his hometown. He also has business ventures in Chennai, Keerthy Suresh's hometown, with a couple of companies registered there. Unlike his actress-wife, Antony prefers to stay away from the limelight and maintains a low-key presence, rarely making public appearances with Keerthy.

Keerthy Suresh and Antony Thattil's love story goes way back—15 years, to be exact! The couple first met as teenagers and have been together ever since. Their romance reportedly began around 2008-09, when Keerthy was still in school and Antony was about to start his undergraduate studies. Despite their long relationship, the duo has kept things private. Wishing the beautiful couple a lifetime of happiness and love!



## Raha Arrives With Dadi Neetu Kapoor For Randhir Kapoor's Birthday, Aadar Jain's Wife-To-Be Alekha Advani Joins



Randhir Kapoor is celebrating his 78th birthday today, and earlier, his daughter Kareena Kapoor Khan was seen arriving for the celebration. Apart from Bebo, her besties Malaika Arora and Amrita Arora also joined the celebrations, and were clicked by the paparazzi. While Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor haven't arrived so far, the paps spotted the couple's daughter Raha Kapoor arriving for the bash with her 'dadi' Neetu Kapoor. Videos shared by the paparazzi show Neetu Kapoor stepping out of the car, while Raha Kapoor is seen in the arms of her nanny. The little one looks too adorable in a beautiful white frock, with her hair tied back in a half ponytail. She donned tiny white sneakers, and was seen looking curiously at the paparazzi. Meanwhile, Neetu Kapoor followed behind, and looked stunning in a white tee layered with a beige blazer and denim jeans. Check out the video below!

Also spotted arriving at the bash was Aadar Jain's wife-to-be Alekha Advani. She wore a white collared sleeveless top with ripped denim jeans, and was seen carrying a few gifts. Malaika donned a black blazer with fuchsia pink pants, while Karisma donned a white oversized shirt with baggy denims.

Earlier today, Kareena Kapoor Khan was also clicked by the paparazzi. While she happily posed for the pictures, she warned the photographers not to click her children Taimur or Jeh's photos. She said, "Mera photos leke aap log please chale jao. Bachchon ka bola tha... (You can take my pictures and leave please. I had told you about the kids' photos...)". The paparazzi agreed, and said that they will not click the kids' photos. Post that, Kareena smiled and posed for photos. Before leaving, the actress once again reminded the photographers about protecting her kids' privacy.

Hailing from the illustrious Kapoor family, Randhir Kapoor is the son of legendary actor-filmmaker Raj Kapoor, grandson of the pioneering Prithviraj Kapoor and the elder brother of the late Rishi Kapoor.

## To 'Darling Princess' Samisha, A Birthday Love Note From Mom Shilpa Shetty



Shilpa Shetty and Raj Kundra welcomed their daughter Samisha in February 2020. The dotting parents often share glimpses of their little one on social media and are frequently spotted with her in the city. Recently, they celebrated Samisha's birthday. To mark the occasion, Shilpa posted a touching video compilation, capturing precious moments of Samisha from her toddler years to now.

The video captures a heartwarming transition from a toddler Samisha running into her mother's arms to her now-grown-up self, cherishing moments with her family. In the caption, Shilpa expressed her love, writing, "My darling princess Samisha, You bring us so much joy! Thank you for choosing me—I feel so blessed to be your mommy in this lifetime. Happy birthday and a high five to the coolest, smartest, kindest, and funniest 5-year-old I know! Stay happy, blessed, and healthy always... Love you, my jaan!"

Shilpa Shetty shares a strong bond with her daughter, Samisha. Some time back, the actress posted a



heartwarming video of them practising yoga together. The clip begins with Shilpa balancing on one leg with folded hands, guiding her little one through the asana. Samisha effortlessly follows her mother's instructions, earning a big round of applause. The duo then moves on to performing Surya Namaskar.

On National Daughter's Day, Shilpa Shetty shared a heartfelt message for her daughter, Samisha. The actress posted a touching video of Samisha sketching, where the little one adorably wrote, "I love you, Mom." In the clip, Shilpa playfully asks, "Who is the best girl?" to which Samisha confidently gestures to herself. Alongside the video, Shilpa penned a sweet caption, "Happy Daughters Day, my baby, my darling Samisha, thank you for choosing me." Shilpa and her husband, Raj Kundra, also share a son, Viaan, who was born in 2012.

Shilpa Shetty was last seen in Rohit Shetty's action thriller series Indian Police Force, where she portrayed the role of Tara Shetty alongside Sidharth Malhotra and Vivek Oberoi. Up next, she is set to appear in the Kannada film KD - The Devil, starring Dhruva Sarja and Sanjay Dutt.



# Bharti Singh

Backs Samay Raina After Ranveer Allahbadia's Controversial Comment: 'Woh Show Hi Aisa Hai'

Bharti Singh has come out in support of Samay Raina amid the controversy surrounding Ranveer Allahbadia's comment on India's Got Latent. Recently, Bharti was snapped by the paparazzi in Mumbai when she shared her views on the ongoing row and stated that Samay is a good guy who is loved by many. Interestingly, Bharti also appeared on Samay's hit show previously with her husband, Haarsh Limbachiya. "Woh show hi aisa hai, but zaroori nahi ki aap show mein jaake wahi bolo jo show ki requirement hai. Aapki marzi—bolo ya na bolo. Samay thodi kehta hai, 'Arey, muh kholo, bolo!' Samay bohot accha ladka hai aur talented bhi hai. Gen-Z ka passand hai woh. Khud jaoge toh uske fan ho jaoge. Itna accha hai," Bharti said, as quoted by Indian Express.

"Agar uski language jo use karta hai woh pasand nahi hai, toh millions hai aur hum hi hai, jo Samay Raina lagate hai aur dekhte hain," the comedian added. Bharti Singh is not the first celebrity who has come out in support of Samay Raina. Previously, Poonam Pandey also asked everyone to forgive Ranveer Allahbadia. "Been reading so much about @BeerBicepsGuy..Bas Karo yaar,

Galti ho Gayi Usse...Bacche Ki Jaan Loge? Maaf kardo yaar," she wrote on her X handle. Before this, Rakhi Sawant also took to her social media handle and shared that even though Ranveer was wrong, he should be forgiven. "Forgive him yaar. It's okay happen, sometimes forgive him.

I know he did wrong, but forgive him," she wrote. For the unversed, Samay Raina and Ranveer Allahbadia have been facing immense backlash over the latter's recent comments on India's Got Latent. Allahbadia,



also known as BeerBiceps, during a recent episode of the show, allegedly asked a contestant an inappropriate question involving body parts and proposed an indecent act in exchange for Rs 2 crore. The outrage peaked when he posed a controversial question: "Would you watch your parents have sex every day for the rest of your life or join once to stop it forever?" The comment left many shocked and disappointed. In no time, the video went viral on social media with many, including politicians and film personalities, condemning Allahbadia's comment.