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Maha Kumbh 2025 ends with 66 crore attendees

Sanjay Kumar Prayagraj, Feb 26: As the Maha Kumbh 2025 in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj concludes today, February 26, with the final holy dip



on Mahashivratri, the world's largest spiritual gathering is leaving behind more than just numbers, some faces like 'Monalisa' and IIT 'Baba' amid the overwhelming crowd of over 65 crore that made hit headlines and some tragic moments like stampedes. At the Kumbh fairs, devotees from different Hindu sects, or 'Akharas', take part in grand processions to perform the 'Shahi Snan' or royal bath in the

sacred rivers at the above-mentioned sites. The spectacle draws millions, not just for the ritual, but also for a chance to see thousands of ascetics, often dressed in saffron, who immerse themselves in the frigid waters. The Maha Kumbh 2025 Mela in Prayagraj commenced on January 13 and since then over 65 crore people have taken a dip at the Sangam, the confluence of rivers Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, according to the Uttar Pradesh government. The final figure of attendees is expected to be released by the UP government later. While a record-breaking 65 crore visitors attended the Maha Kumbh, individuals like garland seller 'Monalisa' who became an internet sensation for her striking appearance and the stampedes at the mela site and New Delhi Railway Station (NDLS) that killed over 45 people made the grand fair a whirlwind of devotion, drama, viral moments and unexpected events.

Amit Shah's big assurance to southern states on delimitation: 'Not one seat will be lost'

Simmi Kaur Babbar New Delhi, Feb 26: Union minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said that no southern state, including Tamil Nadu, will see a reduction in Parliamentary representation due to the delimitation exercise.

The delimitation exercise - originally scheduled for 2026 - redefines the number of representatives a state sends to the Lok Sabha based on population. Shah's assurance at a rally in Coimbatore comes a day after Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin called an all-party meeting in Chennai on March 5 to discuss the delimitation exercise, which he referred to "as a sword hanging over southern states". "I want to reassure the public of South India that Modi ji has kept your interest in mind to make sure that not even one seat is reduced pro rata," Amit Shah said. "Whatever increase is there, Southern states will get a fair share, there is no reason to doubt this." In Wednesday's speech, Amit Shah also denied CM MK Stalin's charge that the Narendra Modi-led government has been denying central funds to Tamil Nadu. "There is no truth in MK Stalin's statement. The Modi government has

given Rs5 lakh crore to Tamil Nadu in the last five years," Shah said, according to. "The chief minister often claims that the state has faced injustice at the



hands of the Centre. However, a comparison of funds disbursed under the UPA and NDA reveals that the real injustice happened during the UPA regime," he added. Amit Shah also asserted that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will form a government in Tamil Nadu in 2026. "Get ready

for the formation of a NDA government in Tamil Nadu. In 2026, we will establish a NDA administration. This new government will usher in a new era for Tamil Nadu. We will put an end to nepotism in the state. Corruption will be eradicated in Tamil Nadu..." Shah said. On February 25, Tamil Nadu chief minister MK Stalin said that the impending delimitation of Lok Sabha seats is a sword hanging over the southern states as he called an all-party meeting in Chennai on March 5 to discuss the politically contentious issue. "Tamil Nadu succeeded in population control through the family planning programme. Just because the population is less, there is a situation of the Lok Sabha seats being cut down (in TN). We stand to lose eight seats and as a result, we would be having only 31 MPs, and not 39," he said. A 2019 analysis by Milan Vaishnav and Jamie Hinton of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, projected that a delimitation exercise could see the overall strength of the Lok Sabha rising to 668, with Uttar Pradesh alone seeing its tally increase from the current 80 to 143 by 2026. In contrast, Tamil Nadu, which currently sends 39 representatives, could see the number rise to just 49.

Stalin calls meet on 'delimitation sword' over southern states

ST Correspondent New Delhi, Feb 26: The impending delimitation of Lok Sabha seats is a sword hanging over the southern states, Tamil Nadu chief minister MK Stalin said on Tuesday as he called an all-party meeting in Chennai on March 5 to discuss the politically contentious issue.

Stalin, who heads the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, also hit out at the Centre over the three-language policy in the National Education Policy, saying the Union government was sowing the seeds of another language war and that Tamil Nadu was ready for it. The CM said 40 registered political parties in the state will be invited for the all-party meeting. "Tamil Nadu succeeded in population control through the family planning pro-



gramme. Just because the population is less, there is a situation of the Lok Sabha seats being cut down (in TN). We stand to lose eight seats and as a result, we would be having only 31 MPs, and not 39," he added. "Our representation (in Parliament) will reduce, Tamil Nadu's voice is being stifled. This is a matter of Tamil Nadu's rights. All leaders and political parties should jointly speak across party lines on the issue," the CM added. Asked if the meeting will discuss the three-language policy, Stalin said that to raise the voice in Parliament on issues such as NEP, central funds and National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET), an adequate number of MPs was required. "Because, in the name of delimitation, a sword is hanging over southern states," he said. The delimitation exercise - originally scheduled for 2026 - redefines the number of representatives a state sends to the Lok Sabha on the basis of population, and given the relative failure of states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in controlling their population, it will mean that they end up with more seats in Parliament. A 2019 analysis by Milan Vaishnav and Jamie Hinton of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, projected that such an exercise could see the overall strength of the Lok Sabha rising to 668, with Uttar Pradesh alone seeing its tally increase from the current 80 to 143 by 2026. In contrast, Tamil Nadu, which currently sends 39 representatives, could see the number rise to just 49.

India's approach to Africa based on mutually-beneficial ties

New Delhi, Feb.26: India's approach towards Africa has been guided by a deep-rooted commitment to build mutually-beneficial partnerships, unlike "extractive" models of engagement, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Wednesday, amid China's relentless attempts to expand influence in the continent.

India and Japan, with their complementary strengths, are well-positioned to support Africa's development in a sustainable and inclusive manner, he said. The external affairs minister was delivering a lecture at the Japan-India-Africa Business Forum. "India's approach to Africa has always been guided by a deep-rooted commitment to building long-term, mutually-beneficial partnerships," he said. "Unlike extractive models of engagement, India believes in capacity-building, skill development and technology transfer, ensuring that African countries not only benefit from investments but also develop self-sustaining growth ecosystems," he added. India is Africa's fourth-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching nearly USD 100 billion and growing steadily, Jaishankar noted. India has also made significant commitment to Africa's connectivity and infrastructure development, with more than USD 12 billion in concessional credit and over 200 completed projects spread across the continent in areas such as railways, power generation, agriculture, and water supply, he said.

Shashi Tharoor downplays rift rumours with Congress

Navdeep Singh Sahni New Delhi, Feb 26: Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Wednesday downplayed the reported rift between him and the party, saying that he is yet to 'understand the controversy'.

Tharoor's remarks come as the Congress has called a meeting of party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and leader of opposition Rahul Gandhi with the leaders from Kerala on Friday. "You all heard the podcast, what was the controversy about? I still haven't understood the controversy...now that you have heard the whole podcast, can you tell me what your question is, I am happy to respond. It is a podcast, a 45-minute conversation about life and pursuits of Happiness, nothing there much about any political controversy," Tharoor told the media. He also pointed out that a meeting of the party has been called for Friday and confirmed his presence for the same. "A meeting of the party

has been called on Friday. I will be there with everyone else," he said. The development comes after Tharoor's recent



appearance in a podcast where he said he had other options if the Congress party didn't need his leadership. The rumours of a rift between Shashi Tharoor and the Congress started when the Thiruvananthapuram MP praised Kerala's

LDF government in an article. He had also praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US and his meeting with President Donald Trump.

Kerala Congress criticised Tharoor for his remarks on the CPI(M) led government. Tharoor reportedly met with Rahul Gandhi and asked him to specify his role in the Kerala Congress. He then made an appearance on a podcast and talked about his options if Congress doesn't need him anymore. "If the party wants to use that, I will be there for the party. If not, I have my own things to do. You should not think that I have no other option. I have my books, speeches, invitations from across the world to give a talk," Tharoor also gave his inputs on what the party needs to do to win next year's assembly elections in the state, saying that it needs to bring in voters who don't generally vote for the party.

Centre opposes lifetime disqualification of convicted lawmakers

Tejinder Kaur Babbar New Delhi, Feb 26: The Union government has opposed a plea seeking a lifetime ban on convicted lawmakers from contesting elections, asserting before the Supreme Court that there is "nothing inherently unconstitutional in limiting the effect of penalties by time" to ensure deterrence while avoiding "undue harshness".

Defending the existing legal provisions that limit the disqualification of convicted legislators to six years after completing their jail time, the Centre, in an affidavit submitted before the top court, argued that the impugned provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, are based on the principles of "proportionality and reasonability", and that Parliament, as the exclusive lawmaking authority, has the discretion to decide the period of disqualification or penalties for convicted lawmakers. "The disqualifications made under the impugned sections are limited by time as a matter of parli-

amentary policy, and it would not be appropriate to substitute the Petitioner's understanding of the issue and impose a lifetime ban," the affidavit, filed by the Union law ministry on Tuesday, said. Responding to a public interest litigation (PIL) by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay, the affidavit said: "The relief that the petitioner is seeking amounts to rewriting of the provision as it effectively seeks to read 'life-long' instead of 'six years' in all sub-sections of Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951." The affidavit was filed in response to a February 10 order by a Supreme Court bench, led by justice Dipankar Datta, which questioned the rationale behind restricting the disqualification period to six years, observing that there exists an "apparent conflict of interest" in allowing a lawbreaker to be a lawmaker. The court was hearing the PIL filed in 2016 by Upadhyay, challenging the constitutional validity of

Sections 8 and 9 of the Act and seeking a lifetime ban on convicted legislators. Section 8 disqualifies convicted legislators from contesting elections for six years



after completing their sentence. It applies to a range of listed offenses and any conviction carrying a sentence of two or more years. Section 9 bars individuals dismissed from government service for corruption or disloyalty to the state from contesting elections for five years from the

date of dismissal. Section 8 of the 1951 Act has been part of the law since its enactment. The Centre's affidavit emphasised that while the judiciary has the power to strike down unconstitutional legislation, courts cannot direct Parliament to frame or amend laws in a particular manner. "It is trite law that the Courts cannot direct Parliament to make a law or to legislate in a particular way," the affidavit stated, citing the Supreme Court's judgment in Madras Bar Association Vs Union of India (2021), which held that "the courts cannot direct the legislature to frame or enact a law in a particular manner". The Centre also relied on the State of Himachal Pradesh vs Satpal Saini (2017) ruling, which underscored that policymaking is the domain of the executive and legislature, and courts cannot interfere with policy decisions unless they violate constitutional principles. The affidavit further stressed that the issue of whether a lifetime ban should

7 BJP ministers sworn in as Nitish Kumar expands cabinet ahead of budget session

Naresh Malhotra Patna, Feb 26: Seven new Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders were sworn in as ministers in Nitish Kumar's government on Wednesday. Bihar governor Arif Mohammad Khan administered the oath of office to the new ministers at the Raj Bhawan, with Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar, deputy chief ministers, Vidhan Sabha speaker, Legislative Council chairman, and other dignitaries in attendance.

Nitish Kumar met BJP president JP Nadda on Tuesday and made the final decision on the cabinet expansion, just ahead of the Budget session starting Friday. Although at least one Janata Dal (United), JD(U) minister was expected to be included, all the seven new ministers are from the BJP. In the 243-member Bihar assembly, the maximum number of ministers allowed is 15% (36). The JD(U)'s quota of ministers in the cabinet was already full with 13 berths, while one minister was from Hindustani Awam Morcha HAM (Secular), HAMS, and an independent, a senior JD(U) leader explained. The Bihar cabinet, which can have a maximum of 36 ministers,

previously had 30. Following the resignation of Land and Revenue minister Dilip Jaiswal, seven positions were vacant. With this expansion, all vacancies have now been filled. The BJP con-



tinued its trend of giving space to both new and experienced faces while ensuring the right regional and caste balance in the run-up to the Assembly elections in Bihar expected later this year. Of the seven new faces, three are from the backward class, two from the extremely backward class and two from the upper caste. BJP's Sanjay Saraogi was the first to take the

oath in Maithili on Wednesday. He has represented the Darbhanga assembly seat since 2005, and this is the first time a Vaishya community leader has been inducted into the ministry. Sunil Kumar, belonging to the Kushwaha community, was second in line to take the oath. A four-term member of the legislative assembly (MLA) from Bihar Sharif, Kumar first won in 2005. He joined the BJP in 2013 after switching from JD(U) and won the 2015 and 2020 elections on the BJP ticket. Jibesh Kumar, from the Bhumihar caste, represented the Jale assembly seat in Darbhanga. He served two consecutive terms and was also a minister in the previous NDA government. Vijay Kumar Mandal, a veteran MLA, first won in 1995 on the BJP ticket. Belonging to the Kewat community, he won as an independent candidate from Araria in 2000, but later rejoined the BJP, winning twice from Sikti in 2015 and 2020. Raju Kumar Singh, from the Rajput community, won the 2020 election from the Sahebganj seat on the Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) ticket but later joined the BJP with two other MLAs, leaving VIP without any representation in the assembly.

Mamata Banerjee questions claim of 144-year gap for Maha Kumbh

Kolkata, Feb 26: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday doubled down on her criticism of Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath over the Maha Kumbh stampede, stating that if authorities don't plan properly, then common people suffer. Mamata Banerjee also questioned claims that this year's Maha Kumbh Mela is taking place after a gap of 144 years, urging experts to verify the accuracy of this assertion. "Gangasagar is an annual event but Maha Kumbh takes place every 12 years. The last Kumbh Mela happened in 2014. If I am wrong then please correct me. But that this Maha Kumbh is taking place in 144 years is incorrect," news agency PTI quoted Mamata Banerjee. "If I am arranging for a wedding ceremony, I must do it keeping in mind the number of guests. For religious congregations, we must also follow the same planning and arrangements," the chief minister added. The chief minister also referred to a fire at a private hospital in 2011 in Kolkata, in which over 100 lives were lost, saying that she was aware that if authorities didn't

plan properly, common people would suffer. "We remained awake the entire night till the post-mortems were completed. We issued death certificates, compensation and compensatory appointment letters that very night," she added. The West Bengal CM also addressed a previous dig at Yogi Adityanath, where she called the Maha Kumbh after the stampede a "Mrityu Kumbh", claiming that the UP government had suppressed the death toll in the incident. She said, "We have talked about the (lack of) planning (in Kumbh Mela) and that statement was distorted. I have never disrespected any religion in my life and would never do so." Also Read: Yogi Adityanath's jibe at Maha Kumbh critics: 'Pigs got dirt, vultures got dead bodies' "No matter what abuses Yogi Saheb flings at me, I will not get blisters. I respect him as a chief minister," Banerjee said as quoted by NDTV. The West Bengal CM also highlighted that her government spoke from experience as they too arranged the Gangasagar Mela. She said, "We do not sleep for four-five days at a stretch.

NEWS BOX

YSRCP councillors' defection boosts TDP's prospects in Parvathipuram

PARVATHIPURAM-MANYAM. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is poised to take control of Parvathipuram Municipalities as several YSRCP councillors have defected to the party.

With TDP-led councillors preparing to move a no-confidence motion against chairperson Bonu Gowriswari, political tensions in Parvathipuram have escalated ahead of summer. In the 2021 urban local body elections, YSRCP won 22 of the 30 wards in Parvathipuram Municipality. The then-opposition TDP secured five wards, while independent candidates won two, and the BJP claimed one. With a clear majority, YSRCP appointed Gowriswari, whose seat is reserved for Backward Class women, as chairperson. Kondapalli Rukhmini and Intipuri Gunesh were named vice-chairpersons. However, ahead of the 2024 general elections, 26th ward councillor Belagam Karuna, along with two independents, switched allegiance to TDP. Following YSRCP's poll debacle, another seven councillors joined TDP in the presence of Parvathipuram MLA Bonela Vijaya Chandra. This shift reduced YSRCP's strength to 15, while the TDP-led NDA alliance now holds 16, including the ex-officio vote of local MLA Vijaya Chandra. With this numerical advantage, TDP councillors are preparing to move a no-confidence motion against Gowriswari. If successful, the party will nominate a new chairperson after the ongoing Assembly session.

Minister Ponguru Narayana studies Kumbh arrangements for Godavari Pushkarams in 2027

VIJAYAWADA. Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MAUD) Minister Ponguru Narayana, along with municipal officials, completed their two-day study tour of the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh Mela, gathering key insights to aid preparations for the Godavari Pushkaram in Andhra Pradesh, scheduled for July 2027. On the first day, Kumbh Mela Officer Vijay Kiran Anand provided a detailed PowerPoint presentation



on the event's logistical and infrastructural arrangements.

The following day, the delegation conducted an on-site inspection, travelling by boat from Kumbh Mela Sector 2 to Triveni Sangam. The team visited the Prayagraj Municipal Corporation office and the command control centre overseeing Maha Kumbh sanitation.

Municipal Commissioner Chandramohan Garg explained how solid and liquid waste management is handled. The delegation observed how real-time instructions from the command ensured sanitation and crowd management.

Don't need mega projects to decongest Bengaluru: Experts

BENGALURU. Bengaluru does not need mega projects like the tunnel road, flyover or underpass to decongest it. Small projects with coordination from citizens, local communities and government agencies is the key, said Prof Ashish Verma, Sustainable Transportation Lab (STL), Department of Civil Engineering, IISc. He said a case study conducted in Malleswaram—understanding traffic problems and come out with solutions involving citizens, students and non-government bodies—helped improved mobility in the area. Such studies and projects should be done in all areas. Presently, cycle day is observed in some localities and cycle lanes are limited to CBD areas. This should be scaled up across the city. Urban infrastructure should be planned keeping public health in mind.

This comes a few days after Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru development minister DK Shivakumar said, "Even if Gods descend, they cannot fix the city. The situation is bad," while pitching for the tunnel road project.

Verma was speaking to at the sidelines of the meeting and panel discussion on Green Urban Mobility Innovation Living Lab, organised by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and IISc Sustainable Transport Lab on Tuesday. During the event the GIZ handed over its works to Department of Civil Engineering, IISc, for continuation.

Also present on the occasion, Dr Prabhdeep Kaur, Professor and Chair, Isaac Centre for Public Health, IISc, said healthy choices should be made easy for people. Structural changes in the city infrastructure are needed for people to address their physical and dietary challenges.

Verma said it can be replicated in other Tier 2 and 3 cities of the state including Mysuru and Hubballi-Dharwad. Talks are on with other Indian cities- Pune, Indore, and north east India to take up projects.

Kochi startup turns plastic waste into modular furniture

Carbon & Whale tackles the plastic waste crisis by collaborating with students and nonprofits to collect, sort, and transform plastic into durable, sustainable products.

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. At Kochi-based startup Carbon & Whale, job titles come with a twist. The CEO is the chief eco officer, the COO is the chief zero officer and the CTO is the chief trash officer. They head the departments that aim to transform the state's plastic waste crisis into a story of sustainability.

Working with school and college students as well as non-profit organisations, they collect plastic waste, sort it and transform it into durable products. Think benches that don't rust and paver tiles stronger than concrete and plant pots that outlast the seasons. Many of these products now sit in metro stations and malls across Kerala and Bengaluru, thanks to partnerships with Kochi Metro, Kerala Tourism and the LuLu Group. "Our aim is to transform single-use plastic into durable modular furniture with a lifespan of 15 to 20 years. We hope to convert 10 lakh kilograms of plastic waste into modular furniture, working with local communities, volunteers and partners to create cleaner surroundings," says Siddharth A K, co-founder and CEO. For Siddharth, the journey began much before the startup took shape. Growing up in Delhi, he always wanted to return to his mother's house in Thiruvananthapuram.



What excited him about Kerala were the beaches. Summers in the state capital were all about sandy feet, salty air and beach cleanups with his mother. Even after her passing, Siddharth found comfort in returning to those shores, picking up discarded plastic. For him, it was never just about cleaning. It was about preserving something close to his heart. That personal journey grew into something much bigger in 2022. Along with Alvin George (COO) and Sooraj Varma (CTO), Siddharth founded Carbon & Whale. While the state generates about 450 tonnes of plastic every day much of it ends up choking its 590-km-long coastline. Siddharth and his team wanted to change that story.

The roots of Carbon & Whale lie in chance meetings. Siddharth spent years studying plastic's potential, visiting research centres and experimenting with materials. He poured his savings into the venture, selling personal belongings to keep the project alive. Alvin and Sooraj brought their expertise, engineering and academic research, to strengthen the mission. Together they spent two years perfecting products that balance utility with sustainability.

In the initial stages, Siddharth met Sooraj Verma, a professor at the Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology (Cipet)—an autonomous institution devoted to plastic engineering and allied industries. The duo began experimenting with the composition of furniture pieces to be manufactured using plastic waste. With early grants from the Kerala Startup Mission and the Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC), the company scaled quickly. Annual revenue jumped from Rs 67,000 to Rs 4 crore. Since its launch, the company has prevented 12,000kg of plastic from reaching landfills and oceans. Looking ahead, Carbon & Whale wants to expand internationally. It also plans to make dustbins and public toilets, all crafted from recycled plastic, in the coming years.

Edge for LDF in local body bypolls; UDF increases its tally from 9 to 12

State Congress state president K Sudhakaran has termed the results as one which builds confidence for the UDF.

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. With the local body elections in the state approaching, the results of the byelection held in 28 wards came as a relief to both the LDF and UDF, giving an edge to the ruling front. While the LDF could maintain the status quo of last time winning 17 seats in which two were elected unopposed, the UDF could increase its tally from nine to 12 seats.

Meanwhile, a candidate of the SDPI, a political offshoot of PFI, emerged as a surprise winner in Thiruvananthapuram seizing the sitting seat from the Congress. However, the election results came as a huge setback for the BJP which has been claiming to create magic in the next LSG election. The byelection was held to a ward in Thiruvananthapuram corporation, three municipality wards and 24 panchayat wards.

Of these, CPM won 12 seats. Two CPM candidates were elected unopposed in Kolikkunnu ward in



Madikai panchayat in Kasaragod and Kayyoor, Chimeni panchayat in Kasaragod raising the party's tally to 14. CPI won two seats and Kerala Congress (M) one.

Earlier, in the 17 seats to which elections were held, CPM had held 14 and CPI had three seats. In the UDF which has improved the total seats to 12,

Congress has won 10 while the Muslim League and Kerala Congress won one seat each. Earlier the UDF had nine seats with Congress winning six, League-1, Kerala Congress (Joseph)-2. The SDPI candidate won Pulippara ward in Pangode panchayat by defeating Congress candidate. The LDF could capture only two seats from the UDF. The LDF's win in Sreevaraham ward in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation came as a big boost to the ruling front. The Congress candidate was left behind in the third position. The LDF's winning margin against the BJP candidate was just 12 votes. The UDF seized six new seats this time. However, its loss in the by-election in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation and SDPI candidate winning in a ward in Pangode panchayat have come as a setback to the Congress. The Congress had opened a war room for the local body election preparations.

Three TN men victimised in Oman arrive on boat in Udipi, held

They were produced before court in Udipi on Monday and were remanded them in judicial custody.



UDUPI. Indian Coast Guard and Coastal Security Police (CSP) officers apprehended three men who had entered Indian waters illegally on an Omani fishing boat near St Mary's Island, about eight nautical miles off the Udipi coast.

The arrested have been identified

as James Franklin Moses (50), Robinston (50) and Derose Alphonso (38), all from Tamil Nadu. The trio has been booked under section 3 of Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 and under sections 10, 11 and 12 of Maritime Zone of Indian Act, 1981. During questioning, the

accused said they started from Duqm port in the eastern part of Oman on February 17 at 3 pm. They were apprehended near St Mary's Island off the Udipi coast on February 23 around 4.30 pm when a local fisherman alerted the CSP in Malpe.

Speaking to TNIE, Coastal Security Police SP Mithun H N ruled out terror angle and said preliminary probe showed that they were victimised by their employer in Oman and so they decided to take the risk of coming to Tamil Nadu on the boat as their passports were also held by the employer. With just a basic GPS device, they traversed about 3,000 km and reached near St Mary's Island via Karwar coast on February 23, he said. "We have found that they went to Oman legally through valid passports. They were victimised by their employer who didn't give them proper food and money," he said. They were produced before court in Udipi on Monday and were remanded them in judicial custody.

Woman found dead with intestines sticking out after rape, youth held

Police on Monday said the accused, 26-year-old Aju Naik, was a close friend of the victim's husband and his family.

ANGUL. Angul police has arrested a youth for the gruesome rape and murder of a 35-year-old woman whose body was found with her intestines sticking out at an under-construction anganwadi centre in Pallahara area on February 21. Police on Monday said the accused, 26-year-old Aju Naik, was a close friend of the victim's husband and his family. He committed the chilling crime in Nandinipali village, around five km from Pallahara town.

The victim, her husband and four children originally belonged to Nandinipali but lived in nearby Hariapur village where the couple grazed cattle and goats. On February 20, she had come to her native village to collect her quota of rice provided under the public distribution system (PDS). Police said in the evening, she went out with Aju, who was a family friend, in search of liquor. The accused was already drunk but the woman was unaware of it. When the duo reached the half-constructed anganwadi centre of the village, Aju pulled her inside and sexually assaulted her. When the woman threatened to tell her husband about the incident, the accused panicked. He picked up a brick and smashed her head with it. When the victim

fell down, he strangled her to death. After killing the woman, Aju repeatedly jumped on her body resulting in her intestines spilling out. The accused then left the spot, cleaned his body of the woman's blood and went home, said police. Pallahara IIC Pradeep Mohanta said



in the evening of February 21, police got information about the woman's mutilated body lying in the anganwadi centre. After seizing the body for postmortem, police launched an investigation with the help of scientific team and sniffer dog. The IIC said the accused had fled to Deogarh after committing the crime. He returned home on Saturday following which police nabbed him. Aju is a native of Pallahara town but was staying in his relative's house at Nandinipali for the last several years.

Class 10 girl delivers baby in Odisha school hostel

Stung by the grave lapses in surveillance and monitoring, the district administration on Tuesday disengaged the hostel matron while

MALKANGIRI (ODISHA). In a shocking incident, a Class-X student delivered a baby on the hostel rooftop of a ST & SC Development department-run residential girls' high school in Chittrakonda, some 30 km from the district headquarters town of Malkangiri, on Monday evening. How the 15-year-old girl's pregnancy went unnoticed for eight months has left many perplexed. Stung by the grave lapses in surveillance and monitoring, the district administration on Tuesday disengaged the hostel matron while the ANM was placed under suspension. It also recommended suspension of the school headmaster. The incident came to light after the minor girl, who had returned to her hostel at about 3 pm after appearing for her English paper in

the HSC Examination, was found absent during the evening prayer. School headmaster Ajit Kumar Madkani told this paper that he asked the matron and others to search for the inmate but in vain. After Chittrakonda police was informed, the school staff and police jointly scanned the campus and found the minor had delivered a baby girl near the tank on the rooftop of the hostel. The headmaster said the ANM and hostel matron were to be blamed for the lapses. District welfare officer A Srinivas Achary said the 15-year-old girl had developed a relationship with a 20-year-old youth from her village Disariguda in Chittrakonda block when she had come home during the vacations last year. Police



detained the youth who confessed to having a physical relationship with the minor girl. Preliminary investigation revealed the girl skipped the evening prayer roll call after she developed labour pain and later gave birth to the baby. She was eight months pregnant,

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Gurcharan Singh Babbar
Mob : 9654077232, 9971359517
Website : www.thesikhetimes.in
Email : sikhtimesindia@gmail.com

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Legal Advisors:

Advocate Mohd. Sajid
Advocate Dr. A.P. Singh
Advocate Manish Sharma
Advocate Pooja Bhaskar Sharma

News box

Gurgaon hit & run: Couple living in gurdwara with 3 children for 10 years

Gurgaon. Like every day, Satbir Singh went on a morning walk with his wife Adesh Kaur on Sunday. They were returning to the gurdwara in Sector 46 — where the couple has been living with their three children for around 10 years — when the hit-and-run incident took place leaving Adesh in a "critical condition". Satbir has appealed to the authorities to "initiate stringent legal action against the accused". "Because of the negligent driving of the accused, my three young children and I have to suffer," says Satbir, who plays tabla in the gurdwara kirtan team while his wife also works there. "Her condition is critical," Satbir, who hails from Bijnor in UP, says about Adesh after the couple was hit by a property dealer. "A car suddenly came from Jharsa and hit us at Sector 46 gate 2. I was not aware of what happened to me for some time. Locals shifted me and my wife to the hospital. Police should initiate stringent legal action against the accused," Satbir told TOI. Satbir and the gurdwara committee members said that Adesh's condition is very critical. "She underwent brain surgery, but there was no improvement. We were informed by the doctor treating her that multiple organs failed and she is surviving on ventilator," a committee member said. Representatives of the Gurudwara Gurusingh Sabha said they will provide all necessary support to the couple. "We were told that the accused took a U-turn after hitting the couple and fled towards Jharsa. Satbir and Adesh have three children: a 19-year-old daughter, a 17-year-old daughter studying in Class 12 and a 10-year-old son in school. Our gurdwara committee will extend all support," a representative said.

Low pressure, erratic supply: Missing pipe links to be plugged to tackle water crisis in Gurgaon

Gurgaon: The long-standing water crisis in Sector 57 may soon be eased as HSVP is preparing an estimate to lay missing pipelines connecting a pocket of Sector 52 to its designated boosting station, officials confirmed on Tuesday. Sector 57 faced severe water shortage due to low pressure and intermittent supply for years. Sector 52 has a 3,800 KLD underground water tank (UGT) and a boosting station for drinking water supply. However, one pocket of plots was never connected to this system due to a missing pipeline link. Instead of fixing this internally, authorities diverted water from the supply to the Sector 57 line, leading to loss and pressure drops, affecting both sectors. "The matter was discussed in the meeting, and HSVP officials informed that they are preparing the estimate for laying the pipeline. Once completed, it will help address the water supply issues in both areas," a senior GMDA official said. Residents, however, said similar assurances were made before, followed only by inaction. With a population of nearly 18,000, Sector 57 residents have been raising the issue with GMDA and MCG for years, but no concrete action has been taken. "Neither do we get enough pressure nor an uninterrupted supply. The authorities allowed this tapping from our dedicated line to the booster. But they are not ensuring that manpower is deployed to close the valve and allow water at our booster, so we also get the water. Where will we go? We have been running from pillar to post, but there has been no remedial measure. Neither are they giving us an additional connection nor stopping this diversion," said Roshan Lal Yadav, RWA president of Sector 57. "With summer approaching, we fear that the problems will only worsen. The civic authorities need to take swift action to complete the pipeline work before another season of water shortages begins," said another resident.

Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini pitches for 'triple-engine' governance in Manesar

Gurgaon. Campaigning for BJP candidates contesting civic polls, Haryana chief minister Nayab Singh Saini on Tuesday told voters in Manesar to choose "triple-engine" governance and promised that "no stone will be left unturned" for the town's development. The chief minister was referring to BJP-led govts in Centre and in Haryana. Manesar's 96,000 registered voters will elect councillors to 20 wards under MCM and a mayor on March 2. It is the first civic election to be held since MCM was formed in 2020. Saini, holding a rally in Manesar village, said his govt acts against criminals and warned that hooliganism won't be tolerated. "We have given full authority to the police, and if anyone threatens someone, police will respond in their language," the CM said, in a veiled reference to a rival candidate whose family members are accused of land grabbing and other illegal activities. Targeting Congress, Saini said the party "will be out at zero" in the coming civic polls. "You elect our candidate and leave the development of Manesar to me. There is no need to worry about Manesar's development," he added. Congress has not fielded any candidates for councillor positions in Manesar, but it nominated Neeraj Yadav for the mayor's post. Neeraj will be up against Sunder Lal Yadav, a former sarpanch from Sikanderpur village in Manesar. BJP's rally on Tuesday was also attended by state cabinet ministers Rao Narbir Singh and Arti Rao, apart from MLAs Mukesh Sharma and Bimla Chaudhary. BJP district president Kamal Yadav and all ward candidates were also present.

Green light for 400 acres to be added to Aravali zoo safari

Gurgaon. With the legal hurdle cleared, the forest department has sought consent of the civic body for inclusion of 400 acres of land in Manesar area in Bar Gujar village to ensure reinforcement of the continuous patch for the development of Aravali Zoo Safari project. The project — announced in April 2022 by former chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar — aims to develop a 10,000-acre zoo safari that will involve keeping wild animals in vast enclosures, among other activities. The municipal corporation's consent is crucial for the preparation of the detailed project report (DPR) for the Aravali Zoo Safari. Though this patch was initially incorporated in the plan, the proposal to include Bar Gujar's land was halted due to a pending court case in Punjab & Haryana high court. However, with the case now resolved, the path is clear for the park's expansion. This area is adjacent to the Gairatpur Bas and Sakatpur area, which is already part of the project. The land in question falls under



Section 4&5 of the Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA) 1900, which permits regulated non-forestry activities. "It was already in the proposed plan, but it

couldn't be incorporated because of a court case. Now that everything is resolved, we plan to add the area soon," divisional forest officer (Gurgaon) Raj

Kumar said. The letter by the forest department was dispatched on Monday. The DFO stressed the significance of this land for maintaining the continuity of the Aravalli hill range, which is vital for the park's ecosystem. The proposal encompasses khasra numbers 15 to 21, 192 to 211, 242, 244, 247, 281 to 285, 338 to 341, and 345, all of which are categorised under Aravali Plantations and Gair Mumkin Pahar. Modelled on UAE's Sharjah Park, the zoo safari has been earmarked as part of compensatory afforestation to be carried out for the loss of 26,000 acres of tropical forests in Great Nicobar Island. The project promises to be a substantial step towards sustainable development. Officials had told TOI earlier that the zoo safari in the Aravalis will only be developed in areas where forest density is less than 40%. The project would also need the Supreme Court's approval before work commences.

Hit-&-run crash in Gurgaon leaves woman out on morning walk in coma

Gurgaon. A 25-year-old property dealer was arrested on Tuesday for a hit-and-run that left a woman who was out for a routine morning walk with her husband in coma. Adesh Kaur suffered severe head injuries and is in the ICU of a private hospital. Husband Satbir Singh sustained injuries too, but minor ones and is out of danger. The hit-and-run happened in Sector 46. The property dealer, who was driving a Scorpio, told police that he was returning home from Chandigarh and had lost his focus on the road because he was sleepy. Police said Chirag



Thakran (25) borrowed the SUV from a friend identified as Kanhaiya Saini for a few days to go to Chandigarh. "On Sunday morning, he returned from Chandigarh after dropping his friends at their homes. On the way back home, the accident occurred. Chirag said he dozed off for a while when the Scorpio rammed the couple. He is from Jharsa," head constable Pooran Mal of Sector 50 police station said. The accident occurred at the gate number 2 of Sector 46 near Jharsa police post. Locals immediately

BJP rebels 'hampering poll campaigns', party suspends 56 for 6 years in Gurgaon

Gurgaon. Rebels are giving sleepless nights to official candidates in the civic polls. The rebels contesting as independents are emerging as central candidates in several wards of MCG, giving a tough challenge to official candidates of the parties. Voting for the civic poll is scheduled for March 2. Congress is contesting on its symbol for the first time, while BJP, which traditionally contests on its symbol, is finding itself in troubled waters due to a large number of rebels from its ranks. Concerned over the challenges from the rebels, BJP on Monday late night suspended as 56 party workers and office-bearers from the party for six years for contesting the municipal corporation election in MCG and MCM against the official candidates of the party. Out of the 36 wards in MCG, BJP is facing the problem of a rebel candidate in 23 wards. In some wards, more than one rebel candidate is contesting against the official candidate. In MCM, out of 20 wards, BJP is facing the problem of rebels in eight wards. In the last MCG election in

2017, BJP managed to win only 14 out of 35 wards, while rebels and independents won in 20 wards. Later, independents extended support to BJP. In this election, rebels could damage the prospects of official candidates. Most of the rebels have a strong ground-level connection, and they are stronger than the official candidate. BJP candidate from ward no. 15, Bharti Harsana, even filed a police complaint and raised the issue with the party against the rebel for obstructing her campaign. She alleged that the rebel candidate, using her influence, is denying her entry into certain societies of her ward. The prominent rebels include former mayor Vimal Yadav from ward no. 2, Ashwani Sharma, considered to be a close associate of Union minister Rao Inderjeet Singh from ward no. 13, former corporator Rama Rani Rathee from ward no. 23, former deputy mayor Parminder Kataria and Pramod Yadav from ward no. 14. The wards in which BJP is facing rebels include ward no. 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 28, 32, 24, 35, and 36 of MCG. In MCM, BJP is facing rebels in wards no. 1, 2, 6, 7, 12, 15,

and 16. The rebel independents who are strong in their wards include Rama Rani Rathee, a candidate from ward no. 23, which has areas like DLF 1. Rathee was a councillor from 2011 to 2017. After the death of her husband, RS Rathee, who was a councillor, Rama Rani won a bypoll to return as MCG councillor in 2021. Rathee has a strong connection in the area and her husband won as an independent in 2017. Rathee is focusing on issues like water scarcity, roads, sewerage, electricity and parks. "Water scarcity is acute all over the ward, particularly in the summer," said Rathee while talking about solutions like the creation of reservoirs, construction of underground water tanks, plugging leakages and ensuring equitable distribution of water. She said the irony is that, while on the one hand, there is severe water scarcity in the summer, there is flooding during the monsoon. "If artificial water bodies are created, they will augment the supply in the summer and store the runoff water, especially from the Aravali range during the monsoon. This will also control the flooding.

Rape convict jailed, his kin murders survivor's brother

Ghaziabad. This was a revenge plot planned in cold blood over two years and executed with blood-curdling brutality. A 25-year-old private contractor, whose brother was handed 20 years' rigorous imprisonment for raping a minor in 2023, allegedly murdered the survivor's brother in an act of revenge. The victim's body was found behind bushes in Madhuban Bapudham on Saturday with severe head injuries, reportedly caused by a stone. A part of the smashed head had even been mutilated by dogs before the body was

the rape of the murdered man's younger sister and subsequently handed the jail term. Harboring deep resentment against the girl's family for pursuing the case in court despite repeated threats, Sarfaraz allegedly plotted to kill her brother. Over the past few weeks, the accused struck a chord with the girl's brother and persuaded him to bury the past behind him. On Feb 22, Sarfaraz got him intoxicated and lured him to a forest area in Kamla Nehru Nagar. Sarfaraz picked up a stone he found near a garbage mound

employee — Shahrugh Khan — over a wage dispute. Shahrugh (25) had demanded that the minimum wage for workers under Sarfaraz be raised to Rs 400-500 a day instead of the Rs 200 that they were being paid. Following a similar modus operandi, Sarfaraz allegedly took Shahrugh to an isolated spot, got him drunk, and killed him with a stone. Sarfaraz was arrested the same month, but secured a bail in June 2024. His criminal record also includes an arrest in Aug 2022 for allegedly assaulting a 50-year-old

Noida to hire expert agency for land dues recovery

NOIDA. The Noida authority will rope in an expert agency to help it recover and manage its financial dues owed by the realty firms, officials said on Sunday. The move came as the authority realised that it struggles to recover its dues from the defaulter realtors. "The new agency to be finalised through tendering process will be tasked with key works including monitoring escrow accounts (temporary accounts holding funds or assets until certain conditions are met), reviewing insolvency cases under the National Company Law Tribunal, and assisting with internal coordination," said a Noida authority official, adding that the initiative aims to boost financial oversight, streamline the recovery of land dues, and enhance regulatory compliance among developers facing financial distress. Authority officials said that it allots land parcels on a lease basis for development under specified agreements. But many developers failed to adhere to the terms, delaying project execution and defaulting on land payments. "To contain this practice of defaults, the authority plans to introduce an escrow mechanism that will ensure timely settlement of dues when third-party rights are created through sale of units, apartments, or plotted developments. The appointed agency will assist in drafting and executing escrow agreements, regularly monitoring fund flows," the official cited

above added. These jointly operated escrow accounts will serve as a safeguard against the misuse of buyer funds, preventing developers from diverting resources to other projects instead of settling their financial obligations with the authority. The expert financial agency will also play a crucial role in monitoring firms undergoing insolvency proceedings. The authority requires real-time updates on cases being heard at the NCLT, particularly for firms that are at risk of insolvency but have not yet entered formal proceedings. By tracking these developments, the agency will enable the authority to make informed decisions and take pre-emptive measures where necessary. For firms already facing insolvency, the agency will assist in filing claims, coordinating with the Committee of Creditors

(CoC), and ensuring active participation in the resolution process. "To formalise the engagement, the Noida authority has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for consultancy services.

NAME CHANGE
It is for general information that I, SADAN LAL S/O IRA NAND R/O 12/10 A, Third Floor, Tikar Nagar, West Delhi, Delhi-110018, declare that name of my father has been wrongly written as HEERA NAND in my PAN Card No. ABEPL3823C. The actual name of my father is IRA NAND, which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE
I, ULAVAPPA Father of No-16117827K Rank-NK Name-IRAPPA MASTIHOLI Presently residing at VILL-HOLIHO-SUR, PO-HOLIHO-SUR, TEHSIL-BAILHONGAL, DIST-BELAGAVI, KARNATAKA-591118, have changed my name from ULAVAPPA to ULAVAPPA MASTIHOLI for all future purposes and in my son's service record my date of birth wrongly mentioned as 01/07/1964 instead of my correct date of birth as 01/01/1958 vide Affidavit dated 26/02/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, OMVEER SHARMA S/O BHUDEVI SHARMA residing at House No. C-31, Street No. 8/C, Ambedkar Vihar, Jhokipur, Gokal Puri, North East, Delhi-110094 have changed the name of my minor Son DEV SHARMA aged 2 years and he shall hereafter be known as AARUSH SHARMA.

NAME CHANGE
I, ULAVAPPA Mother of No-16117827K Rank-SUB, Name-NISHANTH KKS Presently residing at KARVEETIL HOUSE, PO-MANANTHAWADY, TEHSIL-MANANTHAWADY, DIST-WAYANAD, KERALA-670645, have changed my name from REJANI KR to KR REJANI for all future purposes and in my son's service record my date of birth wrongly mentioned as 01/07/1964 instead of my correct date of birth as 01/01/1962 vide Affidavit dated 26/02/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, V. DOLAMMA Mother of No. 2809799A Rank-HAV Name-DURYODHANA VURAJANA Presently residing at DOOR NO-3-67, VILL-MODUGAVALASA, ZAKHIRA CHARA MANDI, DIST-SRIKAKULAM, ANDHRA PRADESH-532201, have changed my name from V. DOLAMMA to URJANA DALAMMA for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 26/02/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as PRATHAM NIRWAL son of NIDHI residing at B-168, GALLI-4, GURU NANAK PURA, LAXMI NAGAR, DELHI-110092 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as PRATHAM CHATURVEDI.

NAME CHANGE
I, Mohd Rafi S/O Zareef Ahmed R/O H.No-1261, Gali No-14, 25 Futa Road New Mustafabad Rajiv Gandhi Nagar, Dayalpur, Dayalpur, North East Delhi, Delhi-110094 have changed the name of my minor son Mohd Kabir aged 11 years and he shall hereafter be known as Mond Rafil.

NAME CHANGE
It is for general information that I, SACHIN KUMAR AGARWAL S/O RAKESH KUMAR AGARWAL R/O 562, NATRAJ RANGSHALA WALI GALI KRISHNA NAGAR BULAND SHAHR UTTAR PRADESH-203001, declare that name of mine and my wife has been wrongly written as SACHIN AGARWAL and SHIVANI AGARWAL in my minor son namely PRYAM AGARWAL aged 17 years in his 10th class educational documents. The actual name of mine and my wife are SACHIN KUMAR AGARWAL and SHIVANI MITTAL respectively which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE
It is for general information that I, RUCHI D/O RAMSANEHI, W/O SOMESH KUMAR, R/O H.No. B-5394, Yamuna Vihar, North East Delhi, Delhi-110053, declare that my Ex-Husband UMESH expired on 25.01.2020. I have further remarried with SOMESH KUMAR S/O SHIV KUMAR, R/O H.No. B-5394, Yamuna Vihar, Delhi -110053, vide Marriage Certificate No. 9073000189530, Dated 15.05.2024. Henceforth the name of the Father of my minor Daughter AASHI aged 12 years and my minor Son AVIRAL KASHYAP aged 7 years may be known as SOMESH KUMAR in future for all purposes.

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is for general information that I, Tisha Barolia D/O: Vijay Barolia, R/O H-3, ARYA SAMAJ ROAD, UTTAM NAGAR, Uttam Nagar, PO: D.K Mohan Garden, DIST: West Delhi, Delhi - 110059, declare that name of mine and my father has been wrongly written as Tisha and Vijay Kumar in my 10th and 12th class educational documents. The actual name of mine and my father are TISHA BAROLIA and VIJAY BAROLIA, which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as Paras alias Rahul Chopra S/O Pawan Chopra, R/O 18/68 A, GEETA COLONY, VTC: Geeta Colony, PO: Gandhi Nagar Sub District: Gandhi Nagar, District: East Delhi, State: Delhi - 110031, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Rahul Chopra.

NAME CHANGE
I, SIVA PRIYA Daughter of JC-441361F Rank-SUB Name-M SIVAKUMAR Presently residing at VILL-CHINUR, PO-KETHANDAPATTI SUGAR MILL, TAL-NATRAMPALLI, DIST-TIRUPATTUR, TAMIL NADU-635815, have changed my name from SIVA PRIYA to SIVAPRIYA S for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 26/02/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NOTICE
Public at large is hereby informed that Sh. Virander Kumar is the Will holder of First Floor, Without Roof Rights, area measuring 100, sq. yds. Property no. 1238/86, out of land area measuring 200, sq. yds. situated at Gali no. 86, Shanti Nagar, Tri Nagar, Delhi-110035. Initially, Sale Deed Translate Urdu to English dated 30.08.1956 executed by Sh. Shivraj Singh in favour of Smt. Kishmish Devi in respect of Property no. 1238/86, out of land area measuring 200, sq. yds. (Doc No. 3460) Finally, Regd. Will dated 26.05.1984 executed by Smt. Kishmish Devi in favour of Sh. Virander Kumar in respect of Property no. 1238/86, out of land area measuring 200, sq. yds. Now Sh. Virander Kumar shall sell the said property to the intended purchaser who further intends to mortgage the said property with Bajaj Housing Finance Ltd. (BHFL) whosever, is having any objection to the said mortgage or anyone has claim or right or interest in the property shall contact the undersigned with the objection within 07 days failing which it shall be presumed that there stands no objections. NEW DELHI DATE: 15/1/2025

PRAGYA BHUSHAN ADVOCATE
Enr. No. D/72/01
Office: L-27, GF, Kailash Colony, New Delhi-48
Mob.: 9968006418

NAME CHANGE
I, KASTUREWVA Mother of No-16117827K Rank-NK Name-IRAPPA MASTIHOLI Presently residing at VILL-HOLIHO-SUR, PO-HOLIHO-SUR, TEHSIL-BAILHONGAL, DIST-BELAGAVI, KARNATAKA-591118, have changed my name from KASTUREWVA to KASTURI MASTIHOLI for all future purposes and in my son's service record my date of birth wrongly mentioned as 01/07/1971 instead of my correct date of birth as 01/01/1969 vide Affidavit dated 26/02/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NEWS BOX

'Injustice corrected': Supreme Court overturns Richard Glossip's death sentence in landmark ruling

WASHINGTON. The Supreme Court on Tuesday threw out the murder conviction and death penalty for Richard Glossip, an Oklahoma man who was found guilty in the killing of a motel owner but has steadfastly maintained his innocence and averted multiple attempts by the state to execute him.

Glossip's wife, Lea, called the decision "an answered prayer." Prosecutors' decision to allow a key witness to give testimony they knew to be false violated Glossip's constitutional right to a fair trial, the justices ruled in a case that produced a rare alliance of his lawyers and the state's Republican attorney general in support of a new day in court for Glossip. Glossip is entitled to a new trial," Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote for five justices. Thomas wrote that the majority had "cast aside" the interests of victim Barry Van Treese's family. The victim's relatives had told the high court that they wanted to see Glossip executed. A message left with Van Treese's brother, Ken Van Treese, was not immediately returned Tuesday.

Don Knight, Glossip's attorney, said the court was right to overturn the conviction because prosecutors hid critical evidence from the defense team. "Today was a victory for justice and fairness in our judicial system," Knight said in a statement. "Rich Glossip, who has maintained his innocence for 27 years, will now be given the chance to have the fair trial that he has always been denied." Glossip's wife wrote in a text to The Associated Press, "Rich and I opened the decision together on the phone this morning, knowing it would be a life-changing moment. To say that we are overcome with emotion is an understatement. We are deeply grateful. Today is truly an answered prayer." Glossip, who currently is housed at the maximum-security Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester, is expected to remain in prison, at least until the state decides whether to retry him, said Phil Bacharach, a spokesman for Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond.

Oklahoma County District Attorney Vicki Behenna, a Democrat, said Tuesday she plans to review the Supreme Court's opinion and then discuss with Drummond what will happen next. Behenna has previously said she would not consider the death penalty in the case. Drummond, who has said he does not believe Glossip is innocent, said in a statement he was "thankful we now have a fresh opportunity to see that justice is done."

'The fall changed her whole life': Jury awards \$7.25 million to woman injured on Harry Potter ride

LOS ANGELES. A federal jury has awarded \$7.25 million to a 74-year-old Arizona woman for a spine injury she suffered in a fall while exiting the Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey ride at Universal Studios Hollywood. Pamela Morrison was getting seated on the popular attraction with her grandson in September 2022 when she was asked to exit after her harness failed to secure properly. Morrison slipped and fell when stepping from a moving walkway onto solid ground, according to her lawsuit.

Her attorney, Taylor Kruse, argued that Morrison's fall — which caused a spinal compression fracture — was due to employees' failure to halt the moving walkway and allow the woman to exit safely. "It would have cost them four seconds to stop it, but instead they wanted to keep the ride moving no matter what, to make its quota of 1,800 riders per hour," Kruse said Tuesday.

Lawyers for Universal Studios Hollywood argued that Morrison was focused on her grandson and not on where she was stepping, so the fall was her fault.

After a three-day trial, the California jury deliberated for four hours on Feb. 14 before finding the theme park responsible for creating the dangerous conditions that led to Morrison's accident. She was awarded \$250,000 for future medical expenses, \$2 million for past pain and suffering, and \$5 million for future pain and suffering, Kruse said.

Iran denounces new US sanctions as 'sign of hostility'

TEHRAN. Iran on Wednesday condemned a new round of US sanctions as a "clear sign of hostility" after Washington blacklisted more than 30 people and vessels linked to its oil trade.

Washington announced the measures on Monday, targeting the head of the national oil company and others accused of brokering oil sales. It was the second wave of sanctions in less than a month since US President Donald Trump reinstated his "maximum pressure" policy on Tehran.

The sanctions were a "clear sign of the hostility of American policymakers towards the welfare, development, and happiness of the great people of Iran," said foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei. In a statement, he called the measures a "wrongful, unjustified, illegitimate act that violates the human rights of the Iranian people", and held Washington responsible. Since returning to the White House in January, Trump has called for dialogue with Iran, saying he wants it to be a "great and successful country." On Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi dismissed the possibility of direct negotiations with Washington on his country's nuclear programme under "pressure, threat or sanctions." During Trump's first term, which ended in 2021, Washington withdrew from the landmark 2015 deal that imposed curbs on Iran's nuclear programme in return for sanctions relief.

After the Trump administration reimposed sanctions in 2018, Tehran gradually rolled back its nuclear commitments. Iran held fresh nuclear talks on Monday with Britain, France and Germany following renewed engagement in November.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said Tuesday that another round of talks with the Europeans was expected within three weeks.

South Korea's birthrate rebounds after 8 years of decline

South Korea's birthrate rose in 2024 for the first time in nine years, driven by government policies, corporate incentives, and a post-pandemic marriage surge. However, experts say sustained growth requires further reforms to support freelancers, temporary workers, and broader societal shifts.

Seoul South Korea's birthrate, the lowest in the world, rose in 2024 for the first time in nine years, as more couples tied the knot after pandemic delays, and as policy efforts to incentivise companies and Koreans to embrace parenthood start to pay off. Nam Hyun-jin, 35, who had her second daughter last August, said she has seen a social shift, driven largely by the government's broadened policy support and more companies joining the efforts. The society as a whole is encouraging childbirth more than five years ago when we had our first child," Nam said. And, more importantly, "it's the company culture of encouraging

childbirth that is providing huge help," said Nam, whose employer - Booyoung - started to give out 100 million won (\$70,000) from last year to its employees for childbirth bonus. That shift in societal norms could prove pivotal in a country that over the past decade has seen its birthrate plummet to the lowest in the world, as women prioritised career advancement over marriage or parenthood due to the rising cost of housing and raising a child.

The stakes are high, as the demographic crisis has become the biggest risk to growth in Asia's fourth-largest economy and its social welfare system, with the country's population of 51 million on track to halve by the end of this century.

In 2024, however, the glum statistics on South Korea's fertility rate turned a corner. It rose to 0.75, still a global record-low, from 0.72 in 2023, after eight consecutive years of declines from 1.24 in 2015 despite billions of dollars spent by the country to try to reverse the trend. While the rise mostly reflected an increase from pandemic-disrupted marriages, other numbers suggest it could be more than just a COVID blip and that government

policies are having an effect. Quarterly data showed the number of second newborns, such as Nam's, jumped 12% in the second half of 2024, versus an 11% rise in first-born babies.

INFLECTION POINT



"There is a high possibility of further rises (in fertility rate) in coming years, and we are right at the inflection point," You Hye-mi, presidential secretary for population policy, told Reuters. Last year, now-impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol proposed a new ministry devoted to tackling the "national demographic crisis", aiming for a broader approach from earlier years of less-effective cash-focused

support. Interviews conducted by Reuters over the past week with policymakers, industry experts, economists and Korean mothers credited the government's policy support - in three areas of work-family balance, childcare and housing - and a campaign to encourage business to incentivise employees on parenthood for the positive turn. The government plans to spend 19.7 trillion won (\$13.76 billion) in the three focus areas this year, up 22% from 2024. "Korea faces some of the world's most challenging demographics. The government didn't overstate the case when it declared a national demographic emergency in June," says Kathleen Oh, Morgan Stanley's chief Korea and Taiwan Economist. "The good news is that the sense of urgency appears real, with authorities moving toward structural reforms and away from short-term fixes." Policy changes over the last year include employees being paid 100% of their salary for a maximum of six months, if both parents take parental leave, compared with a maximum of three months earlier. Additionally, the maximum period was extended to 1-1/2 years, from 1 year, if both parents take leave.

Trump proposes fines, jail time for illegal immigrants who fail to register

Washington. Immigrants in the US illegally who fail to register with the federal government could face significant fines, potential imprisonment or both, according to a directive issued by the Department of Homeland Security on Tuesday.



"The Trump administration will enforce all our immigration laws. We will not pick and choose which laws we will enforce," a department spokesperson said. "We must know who is in our country for the safety and security of our homeland and all Americans." All immigrants over the age of 14 who were not fingerprinted or registered when applying for a US visa and who remain

in the US for 30 days or longer are required to register and be fingerprinted, according to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services website, where immigrants can register. Once an immigrant has registered and

been fingerprinted, the Department of Homeland Security will issue evidence of registration, which must be carried by immigrants over the age of 18 at all times, according to the website.

On his return to office last month, President Trump declared illegal immigration at the Mexico border a national emergency and directed the department to ensure that immigrants register with the federal government.

The administration has sought to shut down the previous Biden administration's CBP One entry programme, which had allowed hundreds of thousands of migrants to enter the US legally by scheduling an appointment on an app.

White House says Amy Gleason, not Elon Musk, is heading Trump's DOGE

Washington,UPDATED After weeks of refusing to answer the question, the White House on Tuesday revealed the identity of the Department of Government Efficiency's acting administrator, a little known former healthcare technology consultant named Amy Gleason.

The Trump administration has been repeatedly pressed to name the individual formally in charge of DOGE after saying in a court filing this month that billionaire Elon Musk, whom President Donald Trump has said is in charge, has no authority over the cost-cutting program. Musk's role is an issue in lawsuits challenging the legality of DOGE's moves including its access to sensitive government payment systems. Gleason, also a former official at the US Digital Service, served in the first Trump administration. After Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration, the Digital Service was renamed DOGE and is radically downsizing the federal government, including thousands of job cuts. A White House official said Gleason has acted as a liaison with other agencies. It wasn't immediately clear if Gleason was just named to the role or has held it for some time. Her LinkedIn

Bangladesh 'at risk' from infighting, warns army chief amid surge in crime

The South Asian nation has been struggling to stem a surge in violent crime, with the security forces arresting thousands this month, targeting gangs allegedly connected to the party of ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

without singling out any group by name. "Since stakeholders are busy accusing each other, miscreants find the situation favourable. They believe they can get away with anything," he said at an army memorial event. Bangladesh has been riven by a surge of crime, as well as protests this month when crowds smashed buildings connected to Hasina's family.



Dhaka. Bangladesh's army chief on Tuesday blamed infighting for deteriorating law and order, warning that the gains of the student-led revolution that toppled the government last August were at risk.

The South Asian nation has been struggling to stem a surge in violent crime, with the security forces arresting thousands this month targeting gangs allegedly connected to the party of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

"If you can't move beyond your differences and continue meddling and fighting among yourselves, the independence and integrity of the country will be at risk -- I warn you," said General Waker-Uz-Zaman,

Last week, rival student factions clashed at a university campus, a sign of serious discord between groups instrumental in driving the uprising against Hasina.

Security forces have arrested more than 8,600 people since it launched "Operation Devil Hunt" on February 8, which the government has accused of being Hasina loyalists and of wanting to "destabilise" the country. The anarchy we have witnessed is manufactured by us," Waker said.

TRAPPED IN THE SAME CYCLE Bangladesh has a long history of military coups. While it was Waker who took charge after Hasina fled by helicopter to India on August 5, he also urged the people to back Nobel Prize-winning microfinance pioneer Muhammad Yunus. Yunus, 84, vows to institute far-reaching democratic reforms and hold general elections in late 2025 or in early 2026, and Waker has sworn in the interim government. "At the beginning, I said it would take 18 months to hold an election," Waker said. "We are on that path. Professor Yunus is doing his best to keep us united. Let's help him." Key student protest leader Nahid Islam resigned on Tuesday from the government cabinet, where he headed the telecom ministry, ahead of the expected launch of a new political party on Friday. Yunus has said he inherited a "completely broken-down" system of public administration and justice that needs a comprehensive overhaul to prevent a future return to autocracy. Waker said security forces accused of a raft of allegations "of enforced disappearances, murder, and torture must be investigated". "Punishment must be ensured," he said. "Otherwise, we will be trapped in the same cycle."



profile says she has worked as a senior adviser since last month. Gleason did not immediately reply to a message sent via the site. A former USDS staffer told Reuters that Gleason returned to the agency ahead of Trump's inauguration as part of an effort to smooth the transition. The executive order establishing DOGE said the administrator reports to White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles.

Gleason's LinkedIn profile also shows she has worked as an independent consultant and product officer at a healthcare venture capital firm and a rural healthcare organization. In a court filing earlier this month, the White House said Musk was a White House employee and senior adviser to the president. The administration has said Musk is an unpaid "special government employee," which means his role is temporary.

Russian news website claims 95,000 troops killed in Ukraine, Kremlin silent

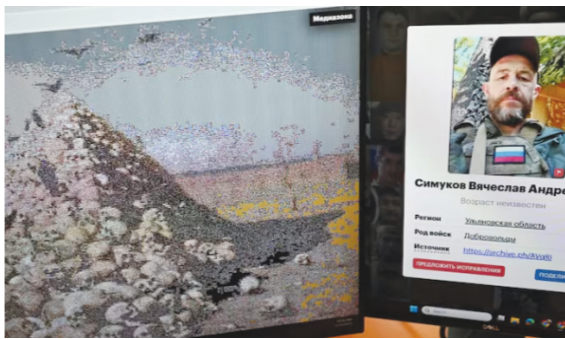
Mediazona published on Monday, the third anniversary of the offensive, an infographic with images and official reports of the deaths of soldiers from various sources, including social media, news reports and obituaries.

Moscow,UPDATED The Kremlin declined to comment Tuesday after Russian independent news site Mediazona in collaboration with the BBC Russian Service published details of over 95,000 Russian soldiers killed fighting Ukraine, based on open-access data.

Mediazona published on Monday, the third anniversary of the offensive, an infographic with images and official reports of the deaths of soldiers from various sources, including social media, news reports and obituaries. It was presented as a graphic of

thousands of photos of soldiers forming an image of a famous 1871 painting by Russian artist Vasily Vereshchagin called "The Apotheosis of War", depicting a huge pile of skulls. Each entry includes accessible information on the soldier, including age and date of death, region and unit and photograph in some cases.

The online list at 200.zona.media currently stands at 95,300. Mediazona and the BBC have been updating the list since the offensive began. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told AFP on Tuesday he was not aware of the publication and neither confirmed nor denied the toll. "I don't know if it's true or not," he said, calling information on death tolls "the exclusive prerogative" of the defence ministry. Russia rarely gives casualty figures for the conflict. The Defence Ministry said in September 2022 that 5,937



soldiers had been killed in combat. At the end of 2024, then-US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke of 700,000 Russian soldiers who were killed or wounded. Mediazona was founded by Russian opposition activist Pyotr Verzilov, who helped form the Pussy Riot punk group and has fought on the side of Ukraine. The site has been declared a "foreign agent" by Russia and Verzilov has been put on a list of extremists and

convicted in absentia for allegedly distributing false information about the army. The platform puts the Russian death total so far this year at 393, while it lists 26,102 death reports for 2024. But it says the real number of Russian deaths in the offensive must be much higher, since not all deaths are reported publicly.

In conjunction with the independent news site Meduza, it estimated this week that 165,000 Russians had been killed, based on its own list and an official register of inheritance proceedings. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky told US broadcaster NBC this month that more than 46,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed and around 380,000 wounded, while other estimates have been much higher. Independent Ukrainian war correspondent Yuri Butusov said in December that his army sources estimated 70,000 dead and 35,000 missing.

NEWS BOX

Tight security for Maha Shivaratri in Prakasam district

ONGOLE. Prakasam Police has tightened security at major pilgrim sites, including Bhairavakona, Tripurantakam, Madanuru, and coastal beaches, ahead of Maha Shivaratri celebrations on Wednesday. District Superintendent of Police AR Damodar directed officials to prevent untoward incidents and ensure crowd control. During a virtual meeting on Tuesday, he instructed officers to enhance security at Shiva temples, holy ghats, and



beaches where devotees take holy dips. Police have set up barricades, queue lines, and deployed marine units for safety. Security is heightened along the Markapur-Dornala-Srisaillam route due to heavy pilgrim traffic. Officials were tasked with traffic management and placing banners with safety instructions. Authorities are monitoring theft-prone areas and tracking known offenders. The public is urged to report suspicious activity via Dial-100 or Dial-112. Missing children and elderly persons will receive immediate police response.

Jolt to YSRCP in Ongole as 20 corporators join JSP

ONGOLE. In a significant political setback for the YSRCP in Ongole, 20 corporators, including Deputy Mayor-2 V Madhav Rao and three co-option members, along with JSP leader Balineni Srinivasa Reddy's son, Balineni Praneeeth Reddy, joined the Jana Sena on Tuesday.

They were formally inducted into the party in the presence of JSP president and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan and Minister Nadendra Manohar at the party office in Mangalagiri. With this development, the YSRCP lost its control over the Ongole Municipal Corporation (OMC), allowing the TDP-JSP alliance to take charge. Pawan Kalyan welcomed the newcomers, strengthening the alliance's position in the corporation.

As a result, the YSRCP's representation in OMC has dwindled to just four members, while the TDP's strength has increased to 25 and JSP's to 21. In the previous municipal elections, the YSRCP secured 41 of the 50 seats, while the TDP won six and the Jana Sena one. Two independent corporators later joined the YSRCP. Now, Ongole Municipal Corporation, the only municipal body in the district, is under TDP-JSP leadership.

This marks the second major blow to the YSRCP in OMC, following the defection of Mayor G Sujatha, Deputy Mayor Vemuri Suryanarayana (Bujji), and 17 other corporators to the TDP a few months ago. All 20 corporators who switched sides, including Deputy Mayor-2 V. Madhav Rao, are known to be strong supporters of former minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy. No YSRCP leaders were available for comment on the latest political shift in Ongole.

Onus of proving commercial purpose rests with service provider, not consumer: DCDRC

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. Persons buying goods or services for commercial purposes are not covered under the Consumer Protection Act. In many cases, this provision helps service providers reject compensation claims raised by customers for deficiency in service.

In a landmark order, the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (DCDRC) has ruled that the onus of proving the 'commercial purpose' rests with the service provider and not the consumer.

The order came on an appeal petition filed by Kozhikode-based Southern Diesels against an order by the Kasaragod District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (DCDRC). The DCDRC had found deficiency in service on the part of Southern Diesels in the after-sale service of a generator it sold to a Kasaragod native. The district commission asked the firm to refund the price of the generator after deducting 25% for depreciation, Rs 50,000 as compensation and Rs 5,000 as costs.

The Kasaragod native had purchased a Mahindra Power Generator for Rs 3.1 lakh. He said the firm did not provide proper service during the warranty period. The firm, however, contended that the complainant would not fall under the purview of 'consumer' as provided under Section 2(1)(d) of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, as the generator set was purchased for the business purpose of the complainant. The commission bench comprising its president Justice B Sudheendra Kumar and member Radhakrishnan K R rejected this argument.

"Apart from contending that the generator set was purchased for commercial purpose, no material was produced by the opposite party to prove the said contention.

'He is soft-spoken, but reticent in recent years': Residents' assessment of Afan's character

People living in the vicinity of his house vouch for his goodness.

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. A full day after serial murders claimed five lives, the residents of Perumala are still at sea regarding the motive behind the 23-year-old accused's dastardly acts. They simply cannot fathom what could possibly have gone wrong with Afan—who always wore a faint smile but preferred to keep himself at an arm's length from others — to unleash such painful deaths on people close to him.

The queries regarding Afan's conduct and behaviour are met with befuddling responses:

Why should he give them such a painful death? Many now say he was under the influence of drugs, but we haven't heard of him taking drugs. Did he really take drugs? Did the family's objection to his romantic relationship lead him to commit the crime? Why would one kill that many people if he could settle the dues by selling off the house? Is he himself a victim of a violent mind? More questions than answers.

And the cops too seem clueless about the motive behind the murders that have made people discuss overnight an array of topics, ranging from financial woes post the Covid-19 period to MDMA and the impact of a



violent genre of films. Equally puzzling is the local residents' assessment of Afan's character.

Those living in the vicinity of his house vouch for his goodness. "He always carried an air of poise wherever he went. He was protective of his family, especially his younger brother Ahsan. He would take his mother to the bank and for shopping and we've never heard him misbehaving with his mother or other family members," said Suhra Salim, a block panchayat member, who lives in the neighbourhood.

The neighbours were aware that the family had

some financial issues but they still feel that the debt was not that enormous, which they could not repay. "There were issues as Shemi, his mother, used to sell eggs to make money. She once told me that the money her husband sent from abroad was barely enough to pay bank loans. She had joined some chit funds and was hoping to use the chit amount to alleviate their financial woes. She never said that things were out of control," a neighbour said. Another person, who has known Afan for years, said he had become reticent in recent years. "His mother was very protective and didn't allow him to mingle with people much. He wasn't too outgoing either, and was more into cars and bikes, which is the case with most people of his age," another neighbour said. A youngster in the neighbourhood said they have not heard about Afan taking drugs. "We haven't heard from his other friends about him taking drugs. He was active at night and used to go out, but we never found him in an intoxicated state. Maybe on a few occasions he had drinks, but not drugs," the youth said. Afan had joined a bachelor's degree course at a private college near Nedumangadu, but did not pass the course, sources said.

Under 'digital arrest', Berhampur varsity V-C loses Rs 14 lakh

BERHAMPUR. Using the 'digital arrest' trick, cyber criminals posed as Enforcement Directorate (ED) officers and duped vice-chancellor (V-C) of Berhampur university Prof Geetanjali Dash to the tune of Rs 14 lakh.

Basing on her complaint, Berhampur Cyber Police registered a case and a probe has been launched.

Prof Dash informed the police that an unknown caller identified himself as an ED officer and put her under 'digital arrest' for four days. Then he demanded Rs 14 lakh for her release.

Police said the cyber criminals told the V-C that her Aadhaar number was found linked with a case of financial irregularities which was being monitored by the Supreme Court. The fraudster called up her on different occasions



and coerced her to pay Rs 14 lakh. Berhampur SP Saravana Vivek M said, as per the complaint lodged with Cyber police station, Prof Dash received a phone call from an unknown number on February 12. The caller identified himself as an ED officer and

charged her with involvement in a case. The fraud apparently told the V-C that an account has been opened in her name at Canara Bank and crores of rupees deposited in her name. By intimidating Prof Dash, the fraudster, kept her under 'digital arrest' during evening hours.

Prof Dash who ended up paying the amount through a cheque, however, grew suspicious when the fraudster did not respond her call later. The caller's mobile phone was found to be switched off afterwards, the Berhampur SP said. Prof Dash could not be contacted for her comment.

After she lodged the complaint on Monday evening, a case under sections 318(4), 319(2), 336(2), 336(3), 340(2), 308(2), 351(2) BNS, 66(C)/66(D) of IT Act has been registered and investigation is underway.

Constable takes a nap on duty, Karnataka HC quashes suspension order

BENGALURU. The High Court of Karnataka has quashed the order of Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC) suspending a constable for sleeping while on duty. The corporation initiated action after a video of the constable sleeping while on duty went viral on social media.

"The petitioner is entitled to all consequential benefits, including continuity of service and salary for the period he was placed under suspension," said Justice M Nagaprasanna while allowing a petition filed by Chandrashekar, KST constable, KKRTC, Kukanoor Depot, Koppal Division, questioning the order suspending him from service on July 1, 2024.

"No fault can be found with the petitioner sleeping during duty hours in this case. If the petitioner had slept while on duty, when his duty was restricted to a single shift, it would undoubtedly become misconduct. In this case, the petitioner is made to overwork in two shifts of 16 hours for 60 days without a break. Therefore, the action of KKRTC placing the petitioner under suspension for the folly of the respondent is undoubtedly an action which suffers from want of bonafide, the order is thus rendered unsustainable and is to be obliterated," the court observed. The petitioner has been working as KST constable in Koppal Division since 2016. Due to a shortage of staff in KKRTC, the petitioner was transferred to the corporation. On April 23, 2024, a vigilance report was submitted, alleging that the petitioner was found sleeping while on duty around 5.45 am. Based on the video clip, officials of the corporation sought an explanation from the constable.



Bhimamandali will be made popular across India: Union minister Pradhan

The area boasts intricate carvings of deer, elephants, animal footprints, honeycomb patterns, and remnants of grinding activities, offering a glimpse into early human settlements.

SAMBALPUR. In a significant boost to ecotourism in Western Odisha, the Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary unveiled 'Trek to Bhimamandali', the new adventure tourism package on Tuesday.

The initiative was announced by Union Education minister Dharmendra Pradhan during a meeting at Bhimamandali in Naktideul where he also unfurled plans for a tourism circuit connecting Debrigarh, Bhimamandali, and Hirakud Dam. Pradhan trekked to the pre-historic site and said it bears the splendid history of the region which is rare in the world. The site will be popularised across the nation, he said and held discussions with Archaeological Survey of India officials. Bhimamandali, which is located around 100 km from Sambalpur, recently got the tourist destination tag along with Sambalpur's Deo Jharan waterfall. The prehistoric site features

ancient rock engravings and paintings believed to be around 30,000 years old. The area boasts intricate carvings of deer, elephants, animal footprints,



honeycomb patterns, and remnants of grinding activities, offering a glimpse into early human settlements. Speaking about the initiative, Hiranu Wildlife Division's DFO Anshu Pragnyan Das said, "Trek to Bhimamandali package is expected to draw more adventurers and history

enthusiasts, strengthening the rural economy through ecotourism."

The one-day new trek package costs \$6,000, inclusive of food and tea. The trek will begin from Debrigarh, cover Hirakud Dam, Bhimamandali, Samaleswari Temple and Sambalpur Zoo, before concluding at Debrigarh, Das said. "Tourists can book their slots online at www.ecotourismodisha.com or opt for spot booking at Debrigarh Zero Point or the Ecotourism Cell at the DFO office in Hirakud Wildlife Division," the DFO said.

Meanwhile, Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary continues to attract visitors, with over 70,000 footfalls recorded last year, half of whom were from Odisha.

The sanctuary offers a range of ecotourism experiences, including wildlife safaris, cruises to Cattle Island, an Island Café in the middle of Hirakud reservoir, visits to Govindpur Birds Village and Barabakhra, and hiking expeditions.

BJP to protest against metro fare hike, BBMP polls, tunnel road in Karnataka

BJP President BY Vijayendra said all BJP leaders and legislators will meet CM Siddaramaiah on Friday to urge him to release more grants for the city's development.

BENGALURU. The BJP will soon hit the streets across the city to corner the Congress-led state government over various issues. Party leaders and workers will stage protests in every Assembly constituency in the city urging the government to roll back the Metro fare hike, conduct the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) elections, drop the Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill and set right issues related to the e-khata, said state BJP president BY Vijayendra.

MLCs and MPs from Bengaluru to discuss the course of action, Vijayendra said. "The recent hike in Metro fares should be rolled back. There is a lot of discussion around e-khata. It has caused inconvenience to a lot of people. Under the pretext of Greater Bengaluru Bill, the Congress-led state government is planning to postpone the BBMP elections. The bill has to be dropped and elections to the BBMP must be held immediately." The government has failed to fill potholes in the city, but is planning on taking up big-ticket

projects like the tunnel road project, he said, adding that the project is unscientific and it should be dropped. "Instead of discussing and taking measures to reduce the traffic congestion in the city, such as by adding additional coaches to Metro trains, the government is looking at tunnel roads," he said. Vijayendra said all BJP legislators and leaders will meet Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who is also the finance minister, on Friday and urge him to release more grants for the development of the city.



This war is no longer about Ukraine

THREE years and counting — this is what we might have possibly said of Russia's conflict with Ukraine. But today, we may need to count no more. If this sounds too good to be true, it is. The big story on the third anniversary of the war is not the untold death and destruction, not the imminent collapse of the Ukrainian forces and not the rupture of Europe's relations with Russia. It is the arrival onto the diplomatic stage of the President of the United States, Donald Trump, with his determination to bring the war to an immediate end. President Trump is set to succeed, not because he says so but because the adversary is saying so. Russia is ready for closure. For India, and for most of the world, there could not be better news. India, for a very good reason, has been on the side of peace and has always wanted the conflict to end on the negotiating table. Not everyone is happy. The Munich Security Conference has been a celebration of the trans-Atlantic alliance. Its 2025 edition could well have been its funeral ceremony. The blunt admonition of Europe by US Vice-President JD Vance was the forerunner to even more dramatic events that followed. The US and Russia met face to face soon thereafter and in a historic breakthrough have set the ball rolling for an early summit meeting between their Presidents, and resetting the relationship. Ukraine will only be one piece of this reset.

Few would have imagined this turn of events. If Russia's invasion in 2022 was a geopolitical shock, the manner in which the war is being steered to an end is no less disruptive. Trump's diplomatic blitzkrieg has not happened in a vacuum. Apart from domestic causes within the US, it has come against the backdrop of a growing sense of frustration, despair and fatigue in Europe over the war. Europe's political institutions and its economy have not measured up to the challenge. The war has taken a heavy toll on the European project. Today, Europe is seething, bitter, divided and feeling let down. Trump has succeeded in convincing US voters that Europeans have become free riders. Europe is thus faced with its biggest crisis since the end of the Cold War.

Ukraine, and specifically President Zelenskyy, has been accused by Trump and Elon Musk of not only not avoiding the war, but of even causing it. The tables have been turned. Yesterday's allies are today's detractors. Ukraine's existence as a functional state is under question. It is on the brink of defeat with 20 per cent of its territory under Russian occupation and 60 per cent of its energy infrastructure damaged. On the Russian side, 30,000-35,000 troops are estimated to have been killed every month. According to British Defence Ministry sources, the war has led to 700,000 Russian casualties, the loss of 19,000 pieces of equipment and 9,000 tanks and APCs (armoured personnel carriers), giving it the epithet of a 'meat grinder'. In this war of attrition, Russia has won on the battlefield but at a high human cost and reputational damage. Even if not evident in the immediate term, sweeping sanctions have squeezed its economic choices.

The debate has shifted away from the minutiae of the terms of a settlement over Ukraine to the global chessboard. How far will the new version of US-Russia detente go? What will be its terms? And what impact will it have on the global order as we know it? A grand bargain is in the offing, reminiscent of the Ronald Reagan-Gorbachev moment. A new post-1991 architecture will be created to accommodate Russia's security interests in Europe, but with a deeply divided Europe. US and European approaches to Russia are set to diverge, and even within Europe, there are sharp differences. If Russia wants to build on the new opportunity that President Trump is offering it, and address European fears, it will have to make compromises and give concessions. Signals coming so far indicate that this is indeed the likely trajectory. The US is going it alone. Europe is watching and is a straggler, left to its own devices.

Spare a thought for the unwept migrant

Shackling people does seem to come a bit too easily to the nation that boasts of the Statue of Liberty.

PUNJAB — the land of the five rivers; the Greeks referred to it as Pentapotamia (which means the same). The region was associated in ancient times with the Indus Valley civilisation, the Rigveda and the Mahabharata. Alexander fought Porus on the banks of the Jhelum, Babur fought Ibrahim Lodhi, the Anglo-Sikh wars were fought here — there have been very few examples of a land so continuously invaded, ravaged and pillaged as Punjab has been down the centuries. We will start from 1947 onwards i.e. from what was supposed to be the dawn of a glorious period. The dawn was one of sheer joy and sunshine in India, except in the states of Punjab and Bengal. The Partition that took place was largely a partition of Punjab and Bengal. An imaginary line drawn by the British and accepted by the Congress leadership, Gandhi and Jinnah tore Punjab asunder. It was an amputation of the body and soul of Punjab. It left in its wake a tsunami of murder, rape and mayhem. It was a bloodbath like no other and led to probably the biggest forced migration in history. This enormous disruption was perhaps one of the main underlying causes for the first wave of migration that began to the Western world in the early 1950s. Initially, it was only a trickle and mainly to the UK, followed by Canada. The contribution of this region to the two World Wars was immense, and the returning men brought back stories and experiences from Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Humans have always looked for better pastures, and when the opportunities at home were dismal, they looked outwards. Back home, the Punjabi spirit gradually prevailed and with the help of good leadership and administration, we picked up the pieces and overcame the horrors of the Partition and settled down to a near-normal life. For a few decades, it seemed that we were on the path of prosperity and peace. This proved to be a mirage, and the usual fault lines began to appear in the political and administrative setup. An already truncated Punjab witnessed demands of further division that finally succeeded. The Akalis wanted a Sikh-dominated state, the hill folk demanded their own refuge, as did the people of Haryana. A combined Punjab was split into three states and a UT. Chandigarh, the modern capital being developed as a replacement for Lahore, was also



lost. There were five divisions of the Punjab province before the Partition — Jullundur (now Jalandhar), Lahore, Delhi, Multan and Rawalpindi. This was lauded as a great achievement, but it actually heralded the decline of Punjab as the faltering economy and decadent leadership led to chaos. The mountains and their forest and water resources went to HP, the proximity of the national capital with its dynamism and the lands along the Yamuna to Haryana. Perhaps the region should be renamed 'tiny ab' as it no longer represents 'Punjab'. The three states are laggards in most development indexes. In a democracy, votes count, and in Parliament a state with 80 seats does have a louder voice and presence as opposed to one with 10 or 13. Gradually, the radicalisation of the youth took place, and a new militant leadership came up with new slogans under the cover of religion related to a violent movement. Behind it was the hand and mind of politicians of all hues; things built up and violence increased, the forces of the state increased. All this led to the disaster of Operation Blue Star and the assassination of Indira Gandhi, which was followed by the slaughter of Sikhs throughout India. This was allowed to go on for days till the bloodlust was partially quenched. The next decade was a lost one, with killings of innocents occurring daily. Our neighbour to the northwest took full advantage of the situation and launched a proxy war in the garb of militant and terrorist action. Punjab paid the price. Pakistan had lost major wars in 1948, 1965 and 1971; it was looking for revenge and we gave it on a platter (it was Punjab again that bore the brunt of the war in 1965 as most of the action was confined to on

this front). Things were never the same again in Punjab and it came under President's rule for almost a decade until elections were held. Despite popular demands, there was no financial package or special development programme for Punjab to compensate for decades of trauma for no fault of the people. It should be remembered that unlike the southern, western and eastern coastal areas, Punjab is a landlocked state, its only trade opened to the northwest and Central Asia. This avenue also closed and all pleas to open up have gone unheard. Events of the 1980s led to the second wave of migration, and this time it was big. The needle moved and pointed to Western shores for relief and employment.

The third wave is an ongoing one as the youth look for better pastures for education and livelihood. I call it the third wave because it now comprises the youth who have inherited an indebted (Punjab has a debt of around Rs 4 lakh crore) state devoid of opportunities or the education to create them. The Internet has brought awareness, and awareness has awakened desire. The youth aspire for the life and comforts of the Western world. Alas, they do not get it here or the tools and environment to create it here. People migrate from all over Punjab, legally or illegally. The nexus of politicians, police and travel agents operates openly; humongous amounts of money are paid. Land is sold, loans are taken and relatives mobilised to get the required amount. Coaching centres came up to teach English and again money was extracted. All this action happened openly and was common knowledge in villages, towns and in the corridors of power. However, no action was initiated to stem this plunder of Punjab. Now, the great purge has begun, led by the US. They have started by deporting illegal immigrants in a manner so humiliating that no self-respecting nation can take it lying down. Migrants are brought in shackles in military aircraft with their hands and feet in chains and without turbans. Shackling people does seem to come a bit too easily to the nation that boasts of the Statue of Liberty. Whatever happened to "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." (American Declaration of Independence)?

Quick retreat

Address lawyers' concerns over draft Bill

WIDESPREAD protests by lawyers and objections by the Bar Council of India have prompted the Central Government to withdraw the draft Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2025. The draft Bill was put in the public domain on February 13 for comments and feedback, but a severe backlash has brought the exercise to an abrupt end. It is back to the drawing board for the government, which has decided to review and revise the proposed legislation in consultation with various stakeholders. Perhaps the most contentious provision pertains to the 'prohibition' of strikes. The participation of advocates and Bar associations in strikes or boycotts that disrupt court proceedings will be regarded as professional misconduct, subject to disciplinary action. Symbolic or one-day protests are permitted, only if they do not interfere with court operations. Staging a peaceful protest is a democratic right of every Indian citizen, and imposing curbs on lawyers can only be



counter-productive. However, the onus is on Bar bodies to ensure that such strikes are not held on flimsy grounds. Another provision seeks to expand the definition of a 'legal practitioner', bringing under its ambit law

graduates doing legal work in any private or public organisation, including domestic as well as foreign law firms and corporate entities. This is an attempt to take the legal practice beyond the court-oriented framework, factoring in contemporary realities of the profession. There is a need to allay the concerns of lawyers, who are fearing that their pre-eminent position will be undermined by this reform.

It is laudable that the government is keen to make the legal profession fair, transparent and accessible to all. But this process should be conducted slowly and judiciously. The withdrawal of the draft Bill is itself an admission that it has flaws. In a refreshing change, the Centre has taken corrective action without any delay, something it had not done in the case of the three farm laws, which were repealed only after an agitation that lasted a whole year.

Outrage, obscenity and our selective morality

It is almost Faustian how everyone is happy to defend free speech in the Allahbadia case, but is still putting on record how offended they are by his remarks.

I LIKE humour, though I could never quite take to the phenomenon of 'stand-up comedy'. Whenever I chanced to watch stand-up comedians, I often felt the humour didn't land well. Comedy is a tough act to pull off, comic timing is supposed to be the key, though that appears to have been replaced by a generous use of expletives to generate audience reaction. I am aware of the popularity of the genre and I believe in "In joco veritas — In jest, there is truth." Since my knowledge in this form of truth-telling is rather limited, I must admit I had no idea of who Ranveer Allahbadia was, except when I first saw his name in the news. I assumed him to be a poet. His utterances were far from poetic, though he seems to have taken the liberty of 'poetic licence' very seriously. I was told that Allahbadia also goes by the name of 'Beer Biceps' and is a popular podcaster who has gained political heft of the right hue. He manages to get people in high places on his shows, including Narendra Modi. But now that Allahbadia is running for cover, the regime he pandered to doesn't have his back. His joke (I still haven't got the joke!) on a YouTube show, India's Got Latent, about parents and sexual intercourse has 'offended' many Indians, who have liberally got FIRs registered in several states under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, the Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Indecent Representation of Women Prohibition Act, 1986. (Incidentally, another comic, Kanan Gill, reportedly made the same 'joke' a decade ago and no one paid any attention). Following threats and charges, Allahbadia approached the SC for relief, which was granted to him, though his freedom of speech was restricted and he was made to surrender his passport. It is now that the plot thickens. The Supreme Court inadvertently, or with clear intentions, stoked a dangerous fire when Justice

Surya Kant told the Additional Solicitor General: "We would like you (government) to do something, if the government is willing to do something, we are happy. Otherwise, we are not going to leave this vacuum and barren area the way it is being misused by so-called YouTube channels and YouTubers."

The government didn't waste time and has already announced the strengthening of its grip over OTT platforms that had in some ways succumbed to censorship. The government has now asked OTT platforms to adhere to an age-based classification of content, ensure self-regulation and follow the Code of Ethics prescribed in the IT Rules 2021. This is only a prelude and the parliamentary panel has asked the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to submit a note on the efficacy of the existing laws and suggest amendments to bring online platforms under legal scrutiny. Over the last few years, many journalists have taken to such platforms to produce news related content, much to the ire of the current regime. YouTubers like Ashish Chanchlani, Jaspreet Singh and Apoorva Makhija have been served notices by the Assam police. It is not surprising, given that the CM of the BJP-ruled state has been proactive in grabbing attention that gives him some national space and allows him to play to the gallery.

Once free speech is restricted, it will set a dangerous precedent. Whether it is Allahbadia or Umar Khalid, everyone should have their right to free speech. It is almost Faustian how everyone in this matter is happy to defend free speech, but is still putting on record how offended they are by his remarks. The controversy has singled out not just the contours of free speech but has also invaded another space. "The words you have chosen, parents will be ashamed, sisters will be ashamed. The entire society will feel ashamed. The pervert mind. These are the levels of

depravity you and your henchmen have gone," said Justice Kant. He not only led the government to twist its censorship knife on freedom of expression but his observations on obscenity also take us back to colonial India. Colonial India continues to survive through laws on sedition, obscenity, blasphemy, etc.



It is telling how Saadat Hasan Manto's comment on cases of obscenity against him still rings relevant: "If you find my stories intolerably obscene, it is because the society you live in is obscene."

Manto had frequent run-ins with the law over his writings. The colonial state tried to punish and silence him in line with the emergency legislation of the period. His friend Ismat Chughtai was also summoned under the same charges for her story Lihaaf. The court could not quite define 'obscene', though an attempt was made. As a magistrate in Lahore put it: "The test of obscenity in all cases is

whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscene is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences." Obscenity is not explicitly defined under the criminal law or the IT Act 2000. The erotic art of Khajuraho and Konark may appear obscene to some, but we have lived through centuries with erotica in public view.

I have not understood why the depiction or mere mention of sex offends the average Indian even though there is only an occasional outrage over routine sexual assault. Or, why hate speech is not considered obscene. Justice Krishna Iyer attempted to articulate this grey zone in Raj Kapoor & Others vs State (1979), where the court quashed criminal proceedings against the makers of the film, Satyam Shivam Sundaram. He observed: "The relation between reality and relativity must haunt the Court's evaluation of obscenity, expressed in society's pervasive humanity, not law's penal perspective. Social scientists and spiritual scientists will broadly agree that man lives not alone by mystic, squints, ascetic chants and austere abnegation but by luscious love of beauty, sensuous joy of companionship and moderate non-denial of normal demands of the flesh." While the jury on obscenity will continue to seek refuge under legalese, free speech is slowly but steadily being chained and gagged.

As an aside, Allahbadia may have truly assumed the role of 'disruptor of the year' (an award he won last year) for shifting the focus from the Maha Kumbh, where lives have been lost and there is an alert for toxic water. He may have done the PM a favour by distracting the bad press on Kumbh, but will the joke now be on free speech?



Sure you have waited for long to go for that vacation and enjoy a little tanning session. But then when you come back home you realise that the little tan sessions went too ahead leaving you with tanned hands, face and practically the whole you. So here are certain home remedies which will help you to get rid of

Homemade Face packs for tan removal

1. Cucumber, Rose Water and Lemon Juice:

While lemon acts as natural bleach, cucumber and rose water acts as cooling agents. In a small bowl take a table spoon each of cucumber juice, lemon juice and rose water and mix in well. Apply the mix with cotton on tanned areas and keep it for about 10 minutes. Then wash it off with cold water. Apply this pack every day after you get back home from the sun.

2. Gram flour and turmeric mix:

Mix two tablespoons of gram flour with a pinch of turmeric, a tablespoon of milk and a table spoon of crushed orange peel in a bowl with cold rose water. Apply the mix on clean face and let it dry for about 15-20 minutes. Once the pack dries, slowly remove the pack by scrubbing gently in clockwise and anti-clockwise direction; the

exfoliation effect will help in removing the tan.

3. Oat Meal and Butter Milk:

While butter milk is an excellent source for soothing skin and healing blisters and oatmeal is a great natural scrub. In a bowl mix two tablespoon of oatmeal with three-four tablespoons of butter milk and apply on tanned areas. Gently massage in circular motion; let it stay for 15-20 minutes and cleanse with water.

4. Milk and strawberry:

Not only is this combination a healthy one, it also helps in improving skin complexion and reduction of dark spots, freckles and even pigmentation. Take four-five crushed strawberries and mix it with two tablespoons of milk cream and apply it on face. Let it stay for about 20-30 minutes. Rinse it with fresh water.

The many benefits of raw coconut oil

If you are struggling with dry skin and hair, a jar of coconut oil could be your best friend. Its light texture, moisturizing properties and easy availability make it one of the best remedies to dry skin.



Coconut oil is also an effective makeup remover. Regularly using coconut oil on your body not only helps lighten the skin, but also helps rid scars and dark patches. Massage it onto your skin after a bath every day and you can do without a body cream. Its also an excellent hair tonic. A massage with warm coconut oil brings back lost shine and makes hair soft and manageable. It also helps reduce protein loss, which makes your hair healthy and attractive. Trying to grow your hair? Then use coconut oil regularly. This oil is also good for loosing weight, maintaining cholesterol level, boosting the immune system, aiding in proper digestion and regulating metabolism. There is a misconception that coconut oil is not good for the heart because it contains large quantities of saturated fats. But this is far from the truth. Coconut oil contains about 50% lauric acid, which actively prevents various problems that affect the heart, such as high cholesterol levels and high blood pressure.



How to ensure good hair growth

To make your hair stronger and thicker, here's what you need to do.

Oil your hair twice a week

Oiling your hair twice a week will strengthen your hair roots and also make it shinier. Use coconut or almond oil or you can mix both and apply it to your hair. Keep it on for a good 30 minutes before washing it off with a shampoo that suits your hair type.

Apply henna once a month

Though a home remedy, but applying henna on your hair will not only condition it but will also make your hair stronger from within. Do not keep the henna for too long, if you do not want the colour.

Go in for hair strengthening treatments once every fortnight

There are several treatments that are done to treat hair loss. It also strengthens your hair in turn. Since these treatments are chemical-based ones, you should ideally get it done only once every fortnight.

Our feet possess over 25,0000 sweat glands which produce up to a half-cup of sweat daily! Sweaty feet or hyperhidrosis is one of the most common, annoying conditions of the feet. Besides causing socially embarrassing problems like smelly feet, they also lead to fungal infections. Sweaty feet can also result in Athletes Foot, which is a common condition. Here are some tips to combat sweaty feet..

All in the family

Sweating beyond certain limits may also be due to hereditary reasons. If you are facing the problem of sweaty feet, find out whether your parents have this problem too. There are certain medications



available in the market that can control natural perspiration. Always consult your doctor before taking these medicines.

Wash feet daily

Make it part of your daily routine to wash your feet thoroughly. It may sound silly to have to point it out but many people step into the shower and happily clean the upper part of their body but tend to neglect their feet. Wash your feet at least once a day, but preferably twice a day. Use a good antibacterial soap. Really dry your feet carefully and completely, especially, in between your toes. Don't let microorganisms get started growing in the nice, damp places between those toes!

Powder well

Powdering your feet frequently is helpful as the powder absorbs the excessive sweat. So, after bathing and drying your feet, choose to use an antiperspirant foot spray, or a

Tips to keep your feet Summer-fit

foot powder. Put on the antiperspirant first, and then the foot powder, after the spray is dry. You can choose a commercial foot powder

Diet matters

Take proper precautions with food and drinks. Drinks that have alcohol and caffeine and spicy foods greatly increase sweating. So,

Medication

There are good quality lotions, medications and powders available in the market that are good to get rid of sweaty feet. Certain medical foot bath treatments are good antiperspirants, excellent for sweaty feet.

Unusual lip shades for the summer

Experimentation is the name of the game this summer and the trend has trickled to lip colours as well.

This summer has seen pink as the most wearable colour, but if it isn't your colour, then there are a few more unusual colours for you to choose from. Here, we list a few.

Peach: The juicy shade is summer-perfect as it gives a beachy, laid-back vibe that will get you on the vacation mood, pronto. Add kajal to your eyes and you are beach-ready instantly.

Tangerine: It is one of those colours that was just made for summers. If you like peach, but want to heighten the drama a bit, then tangerine is the shade you want to pick.

Orange: It's a fun colour to sport, especially in the heat. The fun and peppy shade has a coolness that helps you grab eye-ball instantly. Fire engine red: Red hot lips are a perfect choice for summer parties. Instead of wearing a darker brick colour this time of the year go for a bright red shade. **Lilac:** This shade of purple may seem a little out-of-the-box at first, but don't be scared. The pale lilac colour transitions easily from a fun day at the beach to a happening night out in the city. That's not all, this gorgeous lip colour will brighten up your complexion, making you glow.



Rs 28K crore in 2015-16 to Rs 65K crore in 2021-22: DTC's debt doubled

Despite this massive financial injection, the Corporation continued to operate at a loss, raising concerns over mismanagement and inefficiencies.



NEW DELHI. The Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) has seen its liabilities more than double between 2015-16 and 2021-22 under the AAP government, according to a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report accessed by this newspaper. The report reveals that DTC's total

liability—comprising equity capital, electric bus subsidies, and government loan interest—jumped from Rs 28,263 crore in 2015-16 to Rs 65,274.31 crore in 2021-22. Despite this massive financial injection, the Corporation continued to operate at a loss, raising concerns over mismanagement and inefficiencies. As of March 2022, DTC managed a fleet of

3,762 buses across 36 depots, ferrying 15.62 lakh passengers daily. However, the audit flagged a declining fleet strength, with the number of buses shrinking from 4,344 in 2015-16 to 3,937 by March 2023. While the Corporation procured 300 electric buses between 2021 and 2023, the process was delayed, and a penalty of Rs 29.86 crore for late delivery

was never imposed on operators. "During the period 2015-23, fleet of the Corporation reduced from 4,344 (2015-16) to 3,937 buses (2022-23). The Corporation could procure only 300 Electric buses (EBs) during 2021-22 and 2022-23 despite availability of funds from GNCTD. There was delay in addition of EBs in the fleet for which penalty amounting to Rs 29.86 crore for delayed delivery was not imposed on the operators," an excerpt from the report read.

The number of low floor "overaged buses" in the Corporation during 2015-22 increased from 0.13 per cent (five buses) to 17.44 per cent (656 buses) which further increased to 44.96 per cent (1,770 buses) as of March 2023 of its total fleet. DTC lacked a Business Plan or Perspective Plan to guide its operations. No Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed with the Delhi government to set financial and operational benchmarks, making it difficult to contain losses.

Supreme Court to state on Bhopal gas leak waste disposal: Prove there's no danger

NEW DELHI. The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked authorities to inform it about the precautions taken for the disposal of 337 metric tonnes of hazardous waste of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy in Madhya Pradesh's Pithampur. The court asked the state counsel to examine if there is any substance in apprehension raised by the petitioner about the process being hazardous, and if there is, then, what steps the state is taking. "We are not going to stop it unless the apprehension is found to be well-founded," the bench observed.

The bench said the authorities should go through the petition and find out whether the concern raised by the petitioner was with or without substance. It said if there was any substance in the concern raised, it should be specified what steps were being taken by the authorities. "Tell us that you have taken all the precautions," the bench observed.

The petitioner has challenged High Court's order which was passed in a PIL against non removal of toxic waste from Union Carbide Factory site

A request for urgent listing of the plea was made citing the high court's subsequent order directing the State to conduct a first trial run to dispose of 10 metric tonnes of the waste material on February 27.

A bench led by Justice BR Gavai agreed to hear the matter on February 27 as the first matter. The petitioner flagged safety hazards in the plan to incinerate toxic waste, stating that 337 metric tonnes of waste were being transported to the Pithampur incinerator site allegedly without proper safety and rehabilitation measures. The petition argued that the incinerator site is close to a large population, and safety measures and trial runs recommended by MoEF not done. Further, 126 crores were sanctioned by the Center for safety measures and trial under CPCB monitoring in 2023, but nothing was done on the ground.

PM Modi Extends Maha Shivratri Wishes, Calls For 'Viksit Bharat'

New Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday extended warm greetings to the nation on the auspicious occasion of Maha Shivratri, expressing his wishes for happiness, prosperity, and a stronger resolve toward building a 'Viksit Bharat.' Sharing a video on X, PM Modi wrote, "I wish all my countrymen a very happy Mahashivratri, a festival dedicated to Lord Shiva. May this divine occasion bring happiness, prosperity, and good health to all of you and also strengthen the resolve for a Viksit Bharat. Har Har Mahadev!" Union Home Minister Amit Shah also conveyed his Maha Shivratri greetings, emphasising the festival's deep spiritual and introspective significance.

"Heartiest greetings to all countrymen on the holy festival of Mahashivratri. This festival of the union of Shiva and Shakti is a great festival of spirituality, introspection, and faith. I pray to Devadhive Mahadev for the welfare of all," he posted on X. BJP National President and Union Minister JP Nadda also extended his best wishes, writing on X, "Hearty congratulations and best wishes to all the countrymen on the holy festival of Maha Shivratri. I pray to the God of Gods, Mahadev, that this great festival brings happiness, prosperity, and health in everyone's life. May the blessings of Baba Bholenath remain on everyone." People across the country are celebrating Maha Shivratri with great devotion and enthusiasm, visiting temples dedicated to Lord Shiva and offering prayers.

Maha Shivratri is widely believed to mark the divine marriage of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati.

However, scholars argue that there is no mention of this event in ancient scriptures, including the Shiva Purana. The Shiva Purana states that the Shivling first manifested on the fourteenth day of the Shukla Paksha in the month of Falgun, known as Chaturdashi Tithi. On this day, Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma worshipped the Shivling, establishing it as a sacred occasion called Shivratri.

Army guns down Pakistani intruder, foils infiltration bid in Punjab's Pathankot



NEW DELHI. Alert Border Security Force (BSF) troops successfully foiled an infiltration attempt along the International Border (IB) in Pathankot, Punjab, during the early hours of February 26.

According to officials, BSF personnel stationed at the BOP Tashpatan border area observed suspicious movement across the IB. An unidentified intruder was spotted attempting to cross into Indian territory. Despite being challenged by the alert troops, the intruder continued advancing, ignoring repeated warnings. Sensing a potential threat, BSF troops took action and neutralised the infiltrator.

Authorities are working to ascertain the identity and motive of the intruder. Meanwhile, BSF has confirmed that a strong protest will be lodged with the Pakistan Rangers over the attempted infiltration.

BJP leader's 'Oscar' remark for Air India. But it is not for what you think

NEW DELHI. BJP national spokesperson Jaiveer Shergill has become the latest politician to blast Air India over its services after Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, asserting that it deserved an "Oscar for the worst airline". In a hard-hitting post on X, Shergill shared his recent flight experience with the airline, listing a host of shortcomings - from broken seats to customer service. The BJP leader said while flying Air India was not a pleasant experience, it "broke all records" today. Venting his frustration, Shergill said, "If there was an Oscar equivalent for worst airline, Air India would win hands down in every category: Broken seats, worst staff, pathetic on-



ground support staff, give two-hoots attitude to customer service."

After Shergill shared his ordeal on X, Air India apologised for the "inconvenience".

SHIVRAJ CHOUHAN SLAMS AIR INDIA

Shergill's outburst comes days after Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan slammed Air India for allotting him a "broken and sunken" seat during his recent flight (AI436) from Bhopal to New Delhi. Chouhan said such an unpleasant experience amounted to "cheating" the passengers despite being charged the full fare. "I was allotted seat number 8C. When I reached my seat and sat down, I found that it was broken and sunk. Sitting was uncomfortable," Chouhan said in a long post on X. The former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister said when he confronted the airline staff, they told that the management had been apprised of the condition of the seat.

"When I asked the flight attendants, they told me that the management had been informed earlier about the condition of the seat and its ticket should not be sold," he further said.

As Chouhan's post went viral, Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu spoke to the minister and assured him of action. The aviation regulator, DGCA, has been asked to enquire into the matter.

What judges said on refusing demands for a death sentence to Sajjan Kumar

NEW DELHI. A Delhi court on Tuesday awarded life imprisonment to former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar in a murder case related to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. The court noted that his old age and illness weighed in favour of a lesser sentence instead of the death penalty. Kumar was convicted of the murder of Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh on November 1, 1984. Jaswant Singh's wife had sought the death penalty for Kumar, who is now 79.

WHAT SPECIAL JUDGE KAVERI BAWEJA'S VERDICT SAID

"The 'satisfactory' conduct of the convict as per the report of the jail authorities, the ailments from which he is reportedly suffering, the fact that the convict has roots in the society and the



possibility of his reformation and rehabilitation are material considerations which, in my opinion, tilt the scales in favour of sentence for life imprisonment instead of death penalty." Nothing "adverse was reported about Kumar's behaviour" and his conduct was "satisfactory", according to a jail report.

The case in question was part of the continuity of the incident for which Kumar was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Delhi High Court in December 2018. "Though the killings of two innocent persons in the present case is no less an offence. However, the above noted circumstances, in my opinion, do not make this a 'rarest of rare case' warranting the imposition of death penalty," the court said. The judge also took note of the psychiatric and psychological evaluation report of the convict, which revealed that he was undergoing treatment in the Departments of Medicine, Urology, and Neurology at Safdarjung Hospital and was prescribed antidepressants and sleep medication.

MCD session turns stormy as BJP, AAP spar over proposals

NEW DELHI. A session of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) House descended into turmoil on Tuesday as councillors from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) engaged in heated confrontations over two key proposals—a house tax waiver and the regularisation of 12,000 contractual municipal workers.

Chaos erupted soon after the session began, with councillors shouting slogans, waving banners, and accusing each other of misconduct.

The disorder intensified when AAP attempted to introduce the proposals, but the deputy commissioner was absent. AAP members insisted that the session continue under the additional commissioner, a move fiercely opposed by BJP councillors. This led to a shouting match, with AAP members chanting slogans such as "Gundaagardi nahin chalegi" and "Jai Bhim," while BJP councillors countered with "Arvind Kejriwal, Sharm Karo" and "Mayor, Sharm Karo." At the heart of the dispute were two proposals with



significant financial implications. The house tax waiver scheme would allow homeowners who clear their 2024-25 dues to have all previous unpaid taxes written off. Additionally, properties between 100 and 500 square yards would receive a 50% tax reduction, while properties under 100 square yards would be completely exempt. The second proposal sought to regularise 12,000 municipal workers who had long been demanding permanent status.

Despite the disruptions, MCD Mayor Mahesh Kumar Khichi later declared in a press conference that both proposals had been passed. He asserted that with

over 70 AAP councillors present, the quorum was met, ensuring the session's legitimacy. Khichi accused the BJP of deliberately creating chaos to disrupt the proceedings, claiming that the session had started on time but was derailed by opposition members.

However, BJP leaders strongly contested the mayor's claims, arguing that the proposals were not passed through the correct legal process.

Leader of Opposition Raja Iqbal Singh dismissed Khichi's statement as misleading and insisted that proper procedures were not followed. Later in the evening, Singh wrote to MCD Commissioner Ashwani Kumar, demanding that the session be declared "invalid and abandoned." Singh alleged that AAP councillors had manipulated the process by convening the session ten minutes early, rushing through the agenda, and adjourning within minutes. He argued that under the Delhi Municipal Corporation (DMC) Act, 1952, the presence of the commissioner or an authorized official is mandatory, yet none were in attendance.

Critically ill: 60 per cent hospitals run without ICUs, blood banks

Out of 27 hospitals reviewed, 14 did not have ICU services, 16 lacked blood banks, and 12 did not have ambulances.

NEW DELHI. A new report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has painted a grim picture of Delhi's public healthcare system under the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government. The findings, which are yet to be officially tabled in the Delhi Assembly, expose serious shortcomings in critical and emergency services at government hospitals, contradicting AAP's claims of a healthcare revolution over the past decade.

According to the CAG report, more than half of Delhi government-run hospitals do not have ICU facilities, and nearly 60 per cent lack blood banks. Several hospitals also fall short of essential services, including ambulances and mortuary facilities. Out of 27 hospitals reviewed, 14 did not have ICU services, 16 lacked blood banks, and 12 did not have ambulances. Shockingly, eight hospitals were found to be operating without a proper oxygen supply, while 15 had no mortuary services.

At sole Delhi government-run trauma facility, Sushruta Trauma Centre, the report found no



permanent arrangement for specialist doctors and senior residents to provide 24-hour emergency services. Additionally, the Centralised Accident and Trauma Services (CATS) ambulance fleet was found to be running without necessary medical equipment. The report also highlighted severe shortages of essential medicines in government hospitals. Due to failures in procurement by the Central Procurement Agency (CPA), hospitals were forced to buy between 33 per cent to 47 per cent of essential drugs directly from vendors.

Super-specialty hospitals in the capital were also severely understaffed, leading to underutilization of critical healthcare facilities.

At Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital (RGSSH), major facilities like modular operation theaters, transplant ICUs, and general hospital beds remained non-functional due to a lack of staff. Similarly, Janakpuri Super Speciality Hospital (JSSH) struggled to run its emergency services, blood bank, and intensive care units. Non-utilisation of clinical infrastructure at both super speciality centers happened due to an alarming shortage of staffs which include upto 74 per cent vacancy of doctors, upto 96 per cent shortage of Nursing Staff, and upto 62 per cent shortage of paramedic staff. The report further exposed the dire state of hospital wards, where overcrowding forced multiple patients to share a single bed or lie on the floor. In nine hospitals, bed occupancy rates ranged from 101 per cent to 189 per cent, while in seven others, it was between 109 per cent and 169 per cent.

What's your summer Beauty Remedy?

For most working professionals, heading to a salon once every week is next to impossible. At such a time, most women rely on homemade treatments that are not only inexpensive, but also make it easy to care for your skin and hair while sitting at home.

We share with you some easy-to-do ones -

To get rid of tan

Instead of booking yourself for a fruit facial at your local salon, apply a spoon of yoghurt mixed with either honey or lemon squeezed into it to improve your complexion. You should try this therapy at least thrice in a week so that the tan reduces faster.

Treating eyebags

Most women fail to recognise that eyebags or lines under the eyes can be easily treated at home by performing a few facial exercises combined with the application of sandalwood and rose water paste, instead of going in for non-invasive eye treatments.

Removal of dead skin cells

Instead of applying a scrub on your face and body every two to three weeks, you can make a thick paste of rice and milk and apply it on your body once every week. This course mixture will remove the dead skin cells from your face and body and will make it shine.

Treating hair fall

Most women experience hair fall during summer. This is because apart from washing your hair on a daily basis, you are also prone to excessive sweating on your scalp. To make sure that you don't lose out more hair, apply a paste of reetha and coconut oil on your scalp twice in a week. You can wash your hair with buttermilk to ensure that your hair stays luscious and shiny while also reducing hair fall.

Dark patches on the skin

Apart from tanning, another problem which is quite persistent during the warmer months is dark patches on the sun due to exposure to the harmful rays of the sun. To ensure that your skin stays smooth, soft and without blemishes, you can unboiled cold milk along with a paste of almonds and apply this mixture on the patches to reduce the discolouration.



6 face packs to get rid of Suntan

- **It is natural that our skin would get tanned when exposed to this scorching heat.**
- **Apart from applying sunscreen lotion you can also try out these face packs to help remove the tan.**



It's blazing hot in Chennai. Despite the heat we have to step out for work and for other activities. It is natural that our skin would get tanned when exposed to this scorching heat. Apart from applying sunscreen lotion you can also try out these face packs to help remove the tan. City-based skin care expert Vasundhara Ravi gives us six homemade face packs that will keep your skin looking fresh this summer.

Barley pack

Grind 30 grams of barley with 20 grams of khus khus. Mix this powder with five drops of lemon juice and a few drops of rose water to make a smooth paste. Apply this paste on the exposed areas. Leave the pack on for half-an-hour and wash your face with cold water.

Dal pack

Take two tablespoon of tuvar dal, two tsp green

gram dal, two tsp cucumber seeds, two tsp channa dal. Grind all these into a fine powder. Add two pinches of kasturi manjal and two tsp cucumber juice to this powder and make a paste. Apply this on the tanned areas. Leave it for half-an hour and wash it.

Fruit pack

Soak 10 grams of dry raisins and two dates in 50 ml tea decoction for two hours. Then grind this into a smooth paste. Add a tsp of papaya pulp, apply the mix on face, neck and other exposed areas. Rinse after 10 minutes.

Orange pack

Dry orange peel (mandarin orange) and powder it. Take a tsp of this powder and add one tsp curd, a tsp Multani mitti, and one tsp sandal paste. Add a little water and mix it into a fine paste. Apply the paste on the tanned areas and leave it on for 20 minutes. Wash off with water.

Aloe vera pack

Mix two tsp of aloe vera pulp, three tsp tomato juice, one tsp Multani mitti and one tsp sandal paste. Apply on tanned areas. Leave on for 15 minutes, pat on cold milk. Leave on for five minutes and then wash off with water.

Potato pack

Mix one tsp potato juice (grate and squeeze), one tsp tomato pulp and two tsp green gram flour. Apply this mixture all over the tanned areas. Leave it on for 20 minutes and wash.

Are skin woes dampening your summer spirit?

Fret not, here's addressing a host of skin-related queries so that you can make the most of that gorgeous summer shift dress.

Sweltering weather is synonymous with rising hems and plunging necklines. So don't let problem-ridden skin come in the way of daring summer dressing. "Eat for beauty," advises nutritionist and food consultant, Naini Setalvad. Paying a little attention to the changing needs of your body this summer can go a long way.

What are the diet essentials for the summer months?

Setalvad recommends a heavy breakfast, a light lunch and a medium dinner. "Fried food, red meat and dry fruits (except raisins) should be avoided. Eggs are heat producing and should be kept to a minimum; fish is a good option. Light grains like rice and wheat are okay for the diet but millets should be avoided," she states. "Yoghurt cools down the digestive system. So try to include raitas in your meals or use yoghurt as a salad dressing," she adds. Dr. Apratim Goel, dermatologist, says that antioxidants helps to counter the damage caused by over exposure to the sun. "Raw tomatoes are an excellent source of antioxidants. The bottom line for great summer skin, however, is maximum hydration," she explains.

What does one drink in summer for optimum hydration?

Setalvad strongly recommends raw mango drinks (popularly known as aam panna in most parts of India). Avoid alcohol and sugary fluids like sherbets and aerated drinks. Salted lemon water, buttermilk, jal jeera and caffeine-free herbal infusions like peppermint or coriander drinks are ideal.

Does a predominantly fruit and vegetable diet ensure great skin?

Not all veggies are ideal for summer. Pumpkins, snake gourds, cucumbers, tomatoes and lettuce are good for light summer meals. Setalvad suggests incorporating slices of raw mango into

Go skintastic this Summer!

salads or snacks. "Mango pickle is an excellent option since it helps to replenish the essential salts lost due to perspiration," she explains. Melons and mangoes are well known 'summer fruits'. However, the innocuous mango is often thought to be responsible for pimples. "Don't blend mangoes with milk or sugar," warns Setalvad. Mango is alkaline while milk is acidic, resulting in a disrupted pH. This

emulsion of your regular moisturiser by mixing it with a little water and applying this to the face and neck. She suggests a natural remedy to rejuvenate tired, summer skin. "Pack grated cucumber in a piece of muslin cloth and place this on the face for 20 minutes," she suggests. Fungal infections proliferate in summer due to dampness induced by excessive perspiration. Using a light anti-fungal dusting powder can help nix rashes and infections.

How does one choose the right sunscreen?

The stunningly bold Honda Amaze is here

Honda Recommended By Colombia 'Sunscreen' is a golden word in summer. But it is a fact that it doesn't agree with all skin types. In such cases, make the most of physical protection in the form of broad-rimmed hats, sunglasses, full-sleeved cotton clothing, etc. "If sunscreen is too greasy for you, use aloe vera and calamine. This is especially good for acne-prone skin," says Dr Goel. He explains that over-the-counter sunscreens are of two kinds chemical and physical. "The chemical ones need to be applied 20 minutes prior to sun exposure whereas the physical ones (that contain titanium or zinc oxides and benzones) act instantly," she says.

Handy tips

- As inviting as they are, avoid pack aged facial wipes as most of them contain alcohol that could eventually harm your skin.

- Mineral water sprays are a good alternative when there is no provision for a face wash.

- Use a cold compress after long periods of sun exposure. It helps to instantly cool down the skin. Applying tomato juice or buttermilk relieves minor sunburn.



causes indigestion and skin break outs when the body tries to eliminate the accumulated toxins. Setalvad also suggests sprinkling dry ginger powder on mango in order to reduce the risk of flatulence.

What is the basic skin care regimen that one should follow during summer?

Your skin needs moisturising even in summer. Dr Goel recommends making

Tesla shares tumble nearly 9%, market value dips below \$1 trillion. Here's why

New Delhi. Tesla shares tumbled in overnight trading session, dropping below \$1 trillion for the first time since November 2024. The electric vehicle (EV) giant's stock fell 8.39%, closing at \$302.80. With this, the company's market capitalisation now stands at \$948 billion, its lowest since November.

WHAT TRIGGERED TESLA'S STOCK DECLINE?

The decline followed data from the European Automobile Manufacturers Association, which reported Tesla's sales in Europe fell 45% in January. In contrast, overall EV sales in the region rose 37%. This sharp drop has added to concerns about Tesla's weakening global demand, especially after a dip in deliveries last year.

Investors are pressuring CEO Elon Musk to introduce lower-priced models and advance autonomous vehicle plans. Some investors are also uneasy about Musk's growing political involvement. "He's a very hands-on operator, and if you're spending that much time in an office in the White House, how much time are you spending running all of your other companies, including the one that's publicly traded?" Art Hogan, chief market strategist at B. Riley Wealth, told news agency Reuters. Additionally, concerns over excessive investment in artificial intelligence (AI) have weighed on Tesla, as well as on Microsoft and Meta, ahead of Nvidia's earnings report.

Tesla's stock currently trades at 112 times expected earnings, well above its five-year average of 93, as per LSEG data. In comparison, Ford trades at eight times earnings and GM at seven. Despite Tuesday's drop, Tesla shares remain up over 51% over the past 12 months but have declined 20% year-to-date.

Infosys employees get 5-8% salary hikes, lower than before: Report

New Delhi Infosys has rolled out salary hikes for its employees, but the increases are lower than in previous years, according to a report by The Economic Times (ET).

The IT firm sent salary revision letters to employees, offering hikes between 5% and 8% for most, depending on their performance rating.

A small number of high-performing employees received a double-digit increase, as per sources mentioned in the report. The company classified employees into three performance categories: "met expectations," "commendable performance," and "outstanding performance." Employees in the "met expectations" category received a 5-7% raise, while those rated as "commendable" got 7-10%. "Outstanding" performers, who make up a small group, were given increments ranging from 10% to 20%. Employees who were rated as "needs improvement" did not receive any salary increase.

The salary revisions applied to employees at Job Level 5 (up to team leaders) and Job Level 6 (managers below vice presidents). Those at JL5 will see their salary hikes take effect from January 1, while for JL6 employees, the revised salaries will be effective from April 1.

Indiatoday.in has not been able to verify the salary hike news. The latest salary increments are reportedly 5-10% lower across all performance bands compared to the last pay revision in November 2023. The company's performance bonus (variable pay) has also seen a similar reduction, reflecting the current industry slowdown. Infosys has around 3.23 lakh employees, and the latest salary hike is based on the appraisal period from September 2023 to October 2024. Employees received their performance ratings in December.

Failed to deposit TDS Tax officials may be knocking soon

New Delhi. The income tax department is planning a nationwide regulatory action on individuals and businesses that have failed to deduct and deposit taxes collected at source (TDS/TCS), reported The Economic Times (ET). According to sources cited in the report, around 40,000 taxpayers are under scrutiny for potential defaults in tax deductions for the financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has designed a 16-point plan to track and identify cases of TDS non-compliance. In addition to this, the department's data analytics team has prepared a detailed list of taxpayers suspected of failing to deposit TDS. A senior official, speaking to The Economic Times, said, "We have data from the analytics team, and we will reach out to such taxpayers, initially through intimation, in case they have missed out on depositing tax." The official also mentioned that the focus will be on repeat offenders and cases where there is a huge difference between tax deducted and the advance tax paid. Authorities will scrutinise cases where companies frequently change or correct deductee details, as well as businesses using sick units or subsidiaries with negative profit margins in their financial audits. The CBDT has directed tax officers to closely examine cases where large disallowances have been reported under Section 40(a)(ia) of the Income Tax Act. This section disallows deductions in cases where TDS has not been deducted or deposited with the government. Another key area of concern for tax officials is the repeated revision of TDS returns, especially when such revisions lead to a sharp reduction in the default amount. Authorities suspect that some businesses may be altering their filings to lower their tax liabilities artificially. To address this, the tax department has asked field officers to use data analytics to detect patterns and irregularities in TDS payments. Officials mentioned in the report have assured that, like previous enforcement drives, this crackdown will be non-intrusive.

Tata Motors shares down 44% from 52-week high. Should you buy the dip

Tata Motors shares: In the previous trading session, the stock closed lower 1.2% lower at Rs 660.30. So far this year, it's lost over 11%. In six months, it's down 40%. Over a year, it's fallen 30%.

New Delhi. Tata Motors has been going through a rough patch on Dalal Street as its stock has emerged as the worst performer on the Nifty50. In the previous trading session, the stock closed lower 1.2% lower at Rs 660.30. So far this year, it's lost over 11%. In six months, it's down 40%. Over a year, it's fallen 30%. Moreover, the carmaker's stock price has plunged 44% from its 52-

week high of Rs 1,179. The fall comes as JLR demand weakens in key markets like China, the UK, and the EU. On top of that, US import tariffs on European cars have only made things worse. Investors have been spooked by these factors, causing a sharp sell-off. Global brokerage firm CLSA pointed out that JLR is trading at just 1.2x FY27 estimated EV/EBITDA, way below its historical 2.5x multiple. CLSA believes the market has already factored in a 10% volume drop and EBIT margin slipping under 8%.

But CLSA sees the sell-off as excessive and says this could be a good time to enter for long-term investors. Meanwhile, BNP Paribas isn't too bullish in the short term. They have an 'Outperform' rating with a Rs 935 target but admit there aren't many positive triggers right now. Tata Motors is in a consolidation phase, and they expect it to remain weak through 2025.

Analysts warn of multiple risks—JLR

demand issues, intense competition in India's PV and EV markets, weak M&HCV sales, and margin pressures from high warranty and emission compliance costs. Tesla's recent attempt to enter the Indian market has also raised



concerns for local carmakers. However, Nomura analysts indicated that Tesla's pricing—expected to be above Rs 40 lakh—keeps it from directly competing with Tata's EV lineup. While Tesla might attract some buyers, Indian EV players should still dominate the mass market.

SHOULD YOU BUY THE DIP?

Despite all the negatives, some see hope. CLSA has upgraded Tata Motors to 'High Conviction Outperform' with a Rs 930 target, suggesting a 40% upside. JLR's long-term plan to reposition itself as a modern luxury brand could pay off, with the Range Rover EV launch in FY26 expected to boost sales. CLSA also highlighted Tata Motors' improving FCF. JLR's free cash flow is projected to hit GBP 1.7 billion by FY27, up from sub-GBP 1 billion levels now. Plus, the company aims to be net cash positive by FY26, a big turnaround from past crises when JLR was drowning in GBP 3-4 billion net debt. While Tata Motors' steep correction has left investors shaken, many believe the worst is priced in. For long-term investors, this might be a good entry point. The short term could remain choppy due to macro headwinds, but with targets of Rs 930 (CLSA) and Rs 935 (BNP Paribas), the stock could see strong upside if JLR recovers and India's demand picks up.

Capgemini CEO on ideal workweek: Not 90, not 70, not even 50 hours

New Delhi Work-life balance has been a major topic of discussion in corporate India, especially since industry leaders like Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy and Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Chairman S N Subrahmanyan have advocated for longer working hours. While the debate seemed to favour extended workweeks, Capgemini India's CEO, Ashwin Yardi, has introduced a different perspective, one that supports a more balanced approach. Speaking at the Nasscom Technology and Leadership Forum (NTLF) on Tuesday, Yardi said he believes the ideal workweek should be 47.5.

This is much lower than the 70-hour and 90-hour weeks suggested by other business leaders in recent months. "Forty-seven and a half hours. We have about nine hours a day and five days a week," said Yardi when questioned about his view on the ideal

number of work hours. He also took a stand against sending work emails on weekends, saying that unless an issue can be resolved immediately, there is no need to escalate it over the weekend. "My guiding principle for the last four years is don't send an e-mail on a weekend even if it is an escalation unless you know you can solve it on a weekend," he added. While some leaders advocate longer working hours, Yardi mentioned the need to consider the expectations of younger employees.

He acknowledged that he sometimes works on weekends but avoids sending emails to employees, as it only adds unnecessary pressure when the work cannot be completed before Monday. His view differs from that of industry veterans like Narayana Murthy, who suggested a 70-hour workweek, and L&T's Subrahmanyan, who advocated for 90-hour weeks.

Both had said that India needs longer working hours to boost economic growth. At the same event, Nasscom Chairperson Sindhu Gangadharan, who also leads SAP India, said that outcomes should matter more than the number of hours worked. Marico CEO Saugata Gupta agreed, saying that the focus should be on results rather than time spent at work.

However, he admitted to sending emails at odd hours, including 11 pm, suggesting that different leaders follow different working styles. Yardi also spoke about how Capgemini is adapting to the changing expectations of younger employees. He said the company has introduced quarterly promotion cycles to allow faster career growth, six-week employee surveys to understand concerns and expectations, and structured career paths to help employees plan their professional journey.

Defence stocks like BEL, HAL are in a slump. Is it an opportunity to buy



New Delhi. Defence stocks have taken a beating over the past few months and have undergone sharp corrections. For instance, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) have seen their share prices fall 12-21% this year alone. In the past six months, shares of HAL are down nearly 32%, while BEL stock has tumbled nearly 17%. Moreover, the Nifty Defence Index has dropped 12% in a month and 23% in six months in comparison with Nifty 50's

1.1% and 10% dips. Basically, these stocks have taken a much bigger hit than the broader market. However, the sharp decline has garnered positive views from brokerages on defence stocks and here are 3 reasons why they are bullish: VALUATIONS HAVE CORRECTED

Stocks like HAL and BEL have fallen anywhere between 25-50% from their peaks in 2024. This suggests that such stocks have lost their astronomical valuations. Global brokerage JPMorgan says this correction has

removed the excess hype, making them more attractive again. They prefer BEL to HAL but have "overweight" ratings on both. Price targets? Rs 343 for BEL (33% upside), Rs 4,958 for HAL (49% upside).

BUSINESS REMAINS SOLID

Shares of defence firms may have tumbled, but their business remains strong. Elara Securities said in a note that HAL's order book could touch Rs 2.5-2.6 lakh crore by FY26, up from Rs 1.3 lakh crore in Dec 2024. BEL is also expecting a big Rs 25,000 crore missile order, plus more deals in FY26. Therefore, business isn't slowing down, making it a good opportunity to invest in the stock.

ANALYSTS REMAIN BULLISH

Even after the drop, analysts remain bullish about defence stocks. In the case of BEL, 24 out of 27 analysts have a 'buy' rating on the stock. And in the case of HAL, 15 out of 16 analysts are bullish. Elara Securities is bullish on defence companies after Aero India 2025, citing more budgetary allocation and government push for indigenisation.

New India Co-op Bank vault had 12 times its capacity on paper: Report

New Delhi New India Cooperative Bank's Prabhadevi branch in Mumbai had the capacity to store Rs 10 crore in its vault. However, on the day of an inspection by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the bank's records showed that Rs 122.028 crore was supposedly in the safe, according to Mumbai Police officials investigating a fraud case, reported news agency PTI. The Mumbai Police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) is probing an alleged Rs 122-crore embezzlement at the bank and has arrested three people so far, including two former senior executives of the lender.

The RBI inspection team visited the corporate office branch of the bank at Prabhadevi on February 11, where they discovered that Rs 122 crore in cash was missing from the vault, an official said. The bank's balance sheet for the Prabhadevi and Goregaon branches showed a total of Rs 133.41 crore being stored in safes at both locations. On the day of the RBI inspection, the Prabhadevi branch's records specifically stated that it had Rs 122.028 crore in its vault. However, upon investigation, the EOW found that the Prabhadevi vault could hold only Rs 10 crore, and only Rs 60 lakh was actually present.

At the Goregaon branch, the vault, which also had a capacity of Rs 10 crore, contained Rs 10.53 crore on the day of the inspection. This raised further questions about the bank's financial records and whether auditors had overlooked the missing cash. The EOW is now investigating why the auditing firms responsible for checking the bank's financial records did not report any irregularities. Several chartered accountancy firms were responsible for auditing the balance sheets, daily reports, and cash books. It was their duty to verify the actual cash present in the safes, an official said. As part of the probe, the EOW has summoned representatives from half a dozen firms that audited the bank at different times between 2019 and 2024. These firms were involved in statutory, concurrent, or internal audits during the period when the alleged fraud took place. The initial audit of the bank was done by M/s Sanjay Rane Associates. A partner in the firm, Abhijeet Deshmukh, has been questioned by the EOW for the last four days. Another partner, Sanjay Rane, has also been summoned for questioning. "If needed, the EOW will seek a forensic audit of the bank's financial records to find out how Rs 122 crore was misappropriated," an official said as quoted by PTI. The bank's former CEO, Abhimanyu Bhoan, is among the three people arrested in the case. According to investigators, Bhoan had signed all audit reports and balance sheets of the bank and was aware of the actual cash stored in the vaults.

RBI eases lending rules for small borrowers and NBFCs. Here's what it means

The RBI has also put on hold its earlier proposals to increase the capital that banks must set aside for new project loans and the liquidity they need to maintain for digital deposits.

New Delhi. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has eased the stricter loan rules for small borrowers and non-bank lenders at a time when the economy is showing signs of slowing down. The RBI has also put on hold its earlier proposals to increase the capital that banks must set aside for new project loans and the liquidity they need to maintain for digital



deposits. The RBI has reduced the risk weight requirement for banks on consumer microfinance loans by 25 percentage points to 100%. Risk weights determine how much capital banks need to keep aside for every loan they issue. In 2023, the RBI had raised these requirements by 25 percentage points to 125% for retail loans. This was done due to concerns about a rapid rise in small personal loans. However, while some categories, such as housing loans, were excluded from these higher capital requirements at that time, microfinance

loans were not. Now, with the latest decision, the capital requirement for banks on microfinance loans has been brought back to its earlier level. The RBI did not give a specific reason for why it decided to roll back this measure.

RELIEF FOR NON-BANK LENDERS

In another announcement on Tuesday, the RBI stated that it was restoring the risk weights applicable to banks' lending to non-bank financial companies (NBFCs). The risk weight will now be based on the credit rating of the NBFCs.

Previously, in November 2023, the RBI had

raised the risk weight on bank loans to NBFCs by 25 percentage points if the external credit rating of the NBFCs required banks to set aside less than 100% in risk capital. With the latest change, the capital requirement for these loans will return to the earlier system, which depends on the creditworthiness of the borrower. These measures provide relief to banks, NBFCs, and small borrowers, as they lower the capital requirements for loans. This means banks will have more flexibility in lending to microfinance borrowers and NBFCs, which in turn can make borrowing easier for individuals and businesses. The timing of these changes is significant, as they come after a leadership change at the RBI, with Sanjay Malhotra taking charge as governor. The adjustments also follow concerns over slowing economic growth, which has led the central bank to take a more flexible approach in certain areas of banking regulation.

With these changes, banks and NBFCs are likely to have more liquidity available for lending, potentially boosting credit flow to small businesses and individual borrowers in the coming months.

NEWS BOX

Jos Buttler takes a dig at India for only playing in Dubai: It's a unique tournament

New Delhi. England captain Jos Buttler has taken a sly dig at India's advantage in the ongoing ICC Champions Trophy 2025, who're playing all of their matches at the same venue in the tournament. After denying to travel to the host country, Pakistan, India are playing all of their matches at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai, where the pitches are heavily favouring their spin-heavy attack. Recently, Buttler was asked about India's advantage in playing at one venue and the England captain called it a 'unique tournament' where one team is playing its matches outside of the official host country. He also said that he isn't worried too much about it and is only thinking about the game against Afghanistan. "Not really, I think it's a unique tournament already, isn't it, with being hosted here with one team playing in a different place but that's not something I'm sort of worried too much about at the moment. I've got my focus on preparing well tonight and our game tomorrow," said Buttler in the pre-match press conference ahead of the Afghanistan game.

In two matches played so far, Indian spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel have picked up three wickets each, while Ravindra Jadeja



has claimed one scalp. Speedster Mohammad Shami is the leading wicket-taker with five wickets, followed by Harshit Rana (4 wickets) and Hardik Pandya (2 wickets). The Men in Blue have already qualified for the semi-finals of the tournament following clinical victories against Bangladesh and Pakistan by six wickets. They will face New Zealand in the third and final group fixture on March 2. India will play their semi-final on March 4 in Dubai and will also play the final of the competition in Dubai, provided they qualify for the same.

Meanwhile, England will face Afghanistan in a must-win encounter after losing their first match against Australia. The Hashmatullah Shahidi-led side stunned them with a defeat during the ODI World Cup 2023 and will hope for the same in the upcoming fixture as well.

Lakshya Sen's age fraud case explained: Here's what we know about controversy

New Delhi. Lakshya Sen has found himself at the centre of a court case accusing the badminton star of age fraud. Lakshya, who has been one of India's finest badminton players in recent times, along with his brother Chirag, parents and coach U. Vimal Kumar found themselves at the centre of the controversy.

The case, which dates back to 2022, quickly caught fire in recent days with the Karnataka High Court dismissing the petition from the badminton star and ordering further probe and investigation into the matter. Thankfully for Lakshya, the Supreme Court of India stepped in and ordered a stay on the order from the Karnataka High Court, meaning that no further investigation will be done into the matter. With a lot of details involved in the case, we have a look at some of the key points of the controversy.

What is the case all about?

A criminal case was registered against Lakshya, his brother Chirag Sen, their father Dharendra K. Sen, mother Nirmala D. Sen,



and coach U. Vimal Kumar for allegedly fabricating the birth certificates of the Sen brothers. It was alleged that the ages of Lakshya and Chirag were lowered by 2 and a half years to allow them to compete in junior tournaments.

Who filed the complaint against Lakshya?

The case against Lakshya was based on a private complaint filed by Nagaraja M.G., and this led to an FIR being registered in December 2022 following a directive from the metropolitan magistrate.

What was the evidence presented?

Nagaraja submitted the documents which he obtained through the Right To Information (RTI) act, which also included an inquiry report by the Ministry of Youth Affairs, which apparently found evidence of Lakshya's father committing forgery.

What was Lakshya Sen's petition?

In response to the allegations, Lakshya, along with his family and coach, claimed that the allegations were baseless and the case built on personal grievances rather than factual evidence.

AFG vs ENG: England, Afghanistan in deep water in race for semi-final

← Afghanistan will face England on February 26

← There is a slight chance of rain on Wednesday

← Afghanistan are placed at the bottom of the table in Group B

New Delhi. England and Afghanistan have found themselves in a rabbit hole ahead of their Group B clash in the Champions Trophy on Wednesday, February 26. On Tuesday, Rawalpindi witnessed its first washout of the tournament, with not a single ball bowled in the match between Steve Smith's Australia and Temba Bavuma's South Africa.

With the Aussies and Proteas now at three points each, they remain favourites to advance to the semi-finals from Group B. Following Wednesday's abandoned clash, England and Afghanistan find themselves in deep trouble, as the loser will crash out of the tournament. However, if rain prevents play,

both teams will still have a slim chance of qualifying for the semi-finals.

Champions Trophy: Full Coverage | Points Table

Lahore's weather on Wednesday isn't overly bad, but there is a slight chance of rain, with persistent cloud cover keeping the groundstaff on their toes. There's even a scenario where all four teams could end up with three points each at the end of the group stage. Can Afghanistan Repeat Their 2023 Heroics?

Hashmatullah Shahidi's Afghanistan entered the Champions Trophy as dark horses. After defeating the Proteas last year in a bilateral series in Sharjah, they were expected to perform strongly at Karachi's National Stadium. However, a 107-run loss left them at the bottom of the table with a net run rate of -2.140. Despite this setback, Afghanistan still has a decent chance to turn things around. Shahidi's men can draw inspiration from their stunning 69-run victory over England in the 2023 World Cup at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi. Back then, Rahmanullah Gurbaz smashed 80 runs, while Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Rashid Khan



picked up three wickets each.

During the ODI World Cup, Afghanistan defeated England after recovering from back-to-back losses to Bangladesh and India. Skipper Shahidi believes his team can repeat that feat against the Three Lions but acknowledges that England won't be an easy opponent. "I think we all know that England is one of the best teams, so it's a tough challenge for us. But we are ready for any challenge, and we worked hard to reach this level. We will take confidence from what happened in the 2023 World Cup, but at the same time, tomorrow is a new day, and we will try our best to beat them again," Shahidi

said in the pre-match press conference.

England Under Pressure

England, meanwhile, have struggled in recent matches. After a 0-3 series loss to India on Indian soil, Jos Buttler's men suffered a five-wicket defeat to Australia at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. Ben Duckett registered the highest individual score in Champions Trophy history with a stunning 145, guiding England to 315 for eight. However, Josh Inglis' unbeaten 120 off 86

balls—featuring eight fours and six sixes—powered Australia to the highest successful run chase in ICC ODI tournament history. England's pace trio of Mark Wood, Jofra Archer, and Brydon Carse conceded runs at an alarming rate. To make matters worse, Carse has been ruled out due to a recurring left toe issue, with Rehan Ahmed replacing him in the squad. Having lost four consecutive matches, England are in poor form, giving Afghanistan a real opportunity to capitalise. Shahidi's men have never reached the semi-finals of an ICC ODI event, but this is their chance to make history.

England greats accuse ICC of favouritism: India playing in Dubai 'undeniable advantage'

← Nasser and Atherton believe India benefits from playing all matches in Dubai

← They highlighted India's travel-free advantage over other teams

← Pakistan travelled to Dubai for India clash, suffered six-wicket loss

New Delhi. Former England cricketers Nasser Hussain and Michael Atherton believe that India holds a significant advantage in the ongoing Champions Trophy due to playing all their matches at a single venue in Dubai. Unlike other teams that must travel between Pakistan and Dubai, India has the luxury of consistency in conditions, a factor both Hussain and Atherton feel gives them an upper hand in the competition.

India's fixed venue resulted from the tournament's hybrid model, introduced after India refused to travel to Pakistan, the original sole host. The International Cricket

Council (ICC) responded by restructuring the schedule, ensuring all of India's games were played in Dubai. Speaking to Sky Sports, Hussain and Atherton highlighted how this eliminates the fatigue and logistical challenges that other teams face



while adjusting to different pitches and climates. "About the advantage India have in playing in Dubai, only in Dubai, which seems to me to be a hard-to-quantify advantage but an undeniable advantage...They are playing at just one venue. They do not have to travel between venues or, you know, between countries as a lot of other teams have to do," Atherton

said. "It is an advantage. For the best team in the tournament to have that advantage...I saw a tweet the other day: Pakistan - host nation, India - home advantage. That sort of sums it up, really...They are [India] in one place. They are in one hotel. There is no travel. They are in one dressing room. They know the pitch. They picked for that pitch. When they selected, they were very smart. Even in India's highly anticipated clash against arch-rivals Pakistan on February 23, the co-hosts had to fly to Dubai for the game, which they lost by six wickets. Hussain and Atherton pointed out that India's ability to build their team strategy solely based on Dubai's conditions has been a crucial advantage, allowing them to prepare without any travel-related disruptions.

India has already secured their place in the semi-finals after dominant victories over Bangladesh and Pakistan. Their final group-stage match against New Zealand on March 2 will decide their positioning, but their seamless run so far has only strengthened claims that playing in a single venue has worked in their favour.

Pakistan Cricket Board beefs up ground security after pitch invasion in Rawalpindi

New Delhi. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has said that it's working on reinforcing the security at all the venues of the ongoing Champions Trophy 2025 after a fan invaded the pitch in Rawalpindi. A fan breached the security during Match 6 of the tournament between New Zealand and Bangladesh at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium as he came running onto the field to hug Rachin Ravindra. The fan went up close to the New Zealand batter and hugged him before the security personnel came onto the pitch and took him away. Following the incident, the PCB stressed upon ensuring the safety of players and match officials and stated that it has decided to reinforce their security around the field of play at all venues. "The PCB has taken serious note of the security breach that occurred yesterday when a spectator entered the field of play. Ensuring the safety of players and officials remains our top priority. As a responsible



organisation, we have engaged with local security agencies, who have committed to increasing security personnel around the field of play at all venues and strengthening access control measures," said the PCB in a media release. Furthermore, the PCB also revealed that the fan who invaded the pitch was arrested and presented before a court, and has been banned from entering any cricket venues in Pakistan.

"The individual involved was arrested and

presented before a court of law today (Tuesday). In addition, he has been permanently banned from entering all cricket venues in Pakistan. To prevent such incidents in the future, the PCB is working closely with security agencies and venue authorities to review and reinforce security protocols," they added.

India, New Zealand qualify for semi-finals

It was the first such incident of a security breach during the ongoing Champions Trophy 2025. Meanwhile, the tournament has confirmed its first two semi-finalists following New Zealand's clinical five-wicket win over Bangladesh courtesy of a match-winning century by Rachin Ravindra. Following their win, New Zealand for the semi-final from Group A along with India, who've also won both of their matches so far.

Champions Trophy: Dysfunctional Pakistan need counselling, not surgery

← Pakistan have been knocked out of the Champions Trophy

← The team seems to be playing an outdated template of cricket

← Pakistan needs to stop hack jobs in the name of surgery

New Delhi. Our performance is at its lowest. Improving the team's performance is our biggest challenge," said Mohsin Naqvi after Pakistan lost their group-stage match against India in the T20 World Cup 2024. The Pakistan Cricket Board chairman had bold words reserved for the side right after the marquee clash. Naqvi said that he would do major surgery on the cricketing ecosystem of the country and get the side back on pace in international cricket. Eight months later, after those bold remarks, Pakistan has once again

lost to India in yet another ICC tournament. What's worse is that, at least in 2024, Pakistan at least looked competitive, but in 2025, there wasn't a speck of fire in the Mohammad Rizwan-led side.

The notable difference between the two matches? This time, Mohsin Naqvi kept quiet. Champions Trophy: Full Coverage | Points Table Pakistan's recent loss against India once again puts the focus on their team and the cricket board, who have refused to change with the pace of the game. In T20Is, Pakistan plays run-a-ball cricket, like they should in ODIs. In ODIs, they bat like a Test side, at a time when 330-350 runs have become par in the 50-over game. And in Tests, oh yes, let's talk about Tests. In Tests, Pakistan decided to make rank-turners after overseas sides kept hammering them in red-ball cricket. The decision spectacularly backfired against Bangladesh (0-2) and West Indies (1-1), who beat them at home on



tracks that turned from Day 1. HIRING AND FIRING ATTITUDE ADVERTISEMENT

Since the ODI World Cup 2023, which essentially started the downfall of Pakistan cricket, they have changed coaches thrice. After Mickey Arthur's exit, Mohammed

was due to be involved with The Hundred at the beginning of the competition so it's great to finally be able to make it to Wales," Smith said. New Zealand's left-arm speedster Trent Boult has also secured a contract, joining Birmingham Phoenix, further boosting their pace attack. The men's competition saw several other high-profile signings, with Marcus Stoinis heading to Trent Rockets and Kane Williamson joining London Spirit, adding both experience and stability to their respective sides. The Hundred's women's competition also saw major signings, with Australian legend Meg Lanning set to don the Oval Invincibles jersey. South African batting powerhouse and skipper Laura Wolvaardt will be turning out for Southern Brave Women, while New Zealand all-rounder Amelia Kerr has been snapped up by Manchester Originals Women, ensuring the tournament is packed with top-tier international talent. While The Hundred continues to attract global superstars, Stokes' absence is notable, especially considering his leadership role in English cricket.





Parineeti Chopra

Makes Netflix Debut With Thriller Series, Starts Shooting

Parineeti Chopra starts filming her Netflix debut, a thriller series in Shimla, produced by Siddharth P Malhotra and directed by Rensil D'Silva, featuring Tahir Raj Bhasin, Anup Soni, and Jennifer Winget.

Bollywood's favourite girl-next-door, Parineeti Chopra, is all set to bring her charm to the world of streaming. The actress has officially begun shooting for her Netflix debut, and guess what? It's not a rom-com but a thriller series. Netflix has now announced its upcoming compelling Mystery Thriller set amidst the picturesque hills of Shimla. Produced by the acclaimed Siddharth P Malhotra, director of Maharaj and Sapna Malhotra of Alchemy Productions and written and directed by the visionary writer Rensil D'Silva of Rang De Basanti and Ungli fame, the currently untitled series promises a gripping blend of intrigue and suspense. The series boasts an ensemble cast including Tahir Raj Bhasin, Anup Soni, Jennifer Winget, Chaitannya Choudhry, Harleen Sethi, and Soni Razdan. Parineeti shared a post on X and wrote, "Some mysteries don't just unfold—they pull you in, keep you guessing, and refuse to let go" We've got a lead on this case. A new mystery thriller series is in the making! Shooting has begun, can't wait for you all to see this labor of love from team Netflix and us when it's ready! Making my series OTT debut (sic)." Speaking to the exciting new series and cast, the creators Siddharth Malhotra and Rensil D'silva shared, "We are thrilled to collaborate on this Noir Mystery Thriller with Netflix, a platform that celebrates storytelling in its most diverse and compelling forms. Working with Netflix has allowed us the creative freedom to push boundaries and bring a unique narrative to life. With a cast as talented as this and Parineeti choosing to foray into series with our production, we are excited for what lies ahead and cannot wait for the world to watch the mystery unfold." Tanya Bami, Series Head, Netflix India, added, "Some mysteries don't just unfold—they pull you in, keep you guessing, and refuse to let go. Set against the misty hills of Shimla, this gripping thriller unravels secrets, emotions, and the depths of human nature with unmatched intensity. With the creative vision of Rensil D'Silva and Siddharth P. Malhotra, and a powerhouse cast featuring Tahir Raj Bhasin, Anup Soni, and Harleen Sethi, the series captivates from the very first scene. We are delighted to welcome Parineeti Chopra back to Netflix following her stellar performance in Amar Singh Chamkila—now in her first-ever series and we're equally excited to have Jennifer Winget join us: Prepare for a journey that will keep you on the edge of your seat, hooked and guessing until the very end." This thriller series marks Parineeti Chopra's fourth outing with Netflix. She previously teamed up with the platform for Ribhu Dasgupta's mystery drama The Girl on the Train, Imtiaz Ali's biographical film Amar Singh Chamkila alongside Diljit Dosanjh, and an upcoming romantic comedy directed by Dhruv Tripathi. With each project spanning a different genre, Parineeti is proving she's here to conquer every corner of the OTT world!

Jyotika On Facing Sexism For Being Married To 'Superstar' Suriya: 'You May Have Identity Crisis'



After 26 years, Jyotika returned to Hindi films with Srikanth in 2024. And now, she's gearing up for the release of her next Hindi project, Dabba Cartel, a series that chronicles the story of five ordinary women, who accidentally become involved in a high-stakes drug cartel. The film sees Jyotika playing a housewife of a business tycoon, who has put her own high-profile career on hold to focus on her family. Incidentally, in real life, she too took a hiatus from the movies after her marriage to south star Suriya in 2006. Dabba Cartel, apart from narrating a gripping investigative tale, also touches upon the theme of casual sexism. Now, in an exclusive chat with News18 Showsha, Jyotika reveals that despite spending so many decades in the film industry, she often faces discrimination for being a woman and a large part of the same stems from being Suriya's wife. "It seems like an everyday thing. I'm married to a superstar. So, I face it every now and then, till date. I see it happening even during interviews," she tells us. Explaining her stance further, she says, "If I say that I feel lucky to have married Suriya, people say that he's a really nice guy. If he says that he feels lucky to have married a nice woman, it suddenly becomes something like Suriya is such a nice guy that he's thinking of his wife. You experience casual sexism even when it comes to materialistic things. I may buy a car but someone else is supposed to press the button and check the features out. It's now a part of daily life. There are hundreds of instances that I can point out." And this discrimination just doesn't end here. According to Jyotika, it often makes her question her own identity. "Sometimes, it reaches a level where you may have an identity crisis. A woman's search for her identity also nudges one to take a lot of decisions and make choices on their own. That's also how I chose my career path," she states. For the unversed, Jyotika and Suriya had first met on the sets of the 1999 Tamil film, Poovellam Kettuppar. After dating for a few years, they finally got married that led her to shift base from Mumbai to Chennai. A while ago, Suriya had revealed that post the pandemic, they shifted back to Mumbai as a family to help revive Jyotika's career and give a regular lifestyle to their children. Earlier, in an interview with us, Jyotika spoke about her strong relationship with Suriya and said, "My husband is my best friend. He was the first guy I met in the industry and I did my first film with him. We remained friends for a long time. Since we've lasted this long and continue to, I'm imagining that it's because of the friendship we share."

John Abraham Calls Entourage Costs 'Mental', Urges Actors To Cut Down Fees: 'We Are Suffering'



John Abraham recently expressed his take on why the film industry is suffering. He called out actors demanding a hefty fee and loading a film with their entourage costs. He introspected the dire condition of the film industry, stating that it is "bleeding". The Satyameva Jayate actor also suggested that actors accept a pay cut and work on a film from the backend. "It's already hurting Hindi cinema," John Abraham told The Hollywood Reporter. He added, "At this point of time, we shouldn't be paying people to act in films because we don't justify those huge budgets. The huge fees that we get paid, and we can't load a film with entourage costs as well. It's ridiculous. Don't know if actors are thinking this way or is it their agent making them think differently. I understand you are put in a bubble, but you can't be so daft. You need to see the real world. If people are blowing sunshine from your backside, you need to wake up and smell the coffee. As an industry, we are really suffering." The actor said that stylists these days charge Rs 2 lakh per day, which is "mental". He called this one of the reasons why the film industry is not able to rake in money. "First thing to make amends is by cutting your personal cost. When a director tells you that you aren't worth that much, you need to take that in cognizance. We don't have that thought yet. We compare ourselves to other actors, and we want to broadcast our fees, and that's the worst thing to do," explained John. The Jism star further expressed his concern for the industry and said that it's time actors realise the "deep black hole" they are steadily seeping into. He felt artists should go to the backend to work on a film. He further added that actors' profit-making from films should be dependant on the film's box office business. "How much more will you suck the system dry?", a concerned John said.

Govinda's Wife Sunita Ahuja

Lived Separately, She Feared He Was Cheating: 'Never Trust A Man'

Govinda and Sunita Ahuja may divorce after 37 years. Sunita hinted at worries about Govinda cheating and revealed they lived separately amid unconfirmed disagreements.



In the latest shocking development, Govinda and his wife Sunita Ahuja may be heading for divorce after 37 years of marriage, according to reports. However, it has to be noted that the couple has not confirmed or denied the news yet. According to unverified sources, ongoing disagreements and differing lifestyles have led to frequent arguments between them. This reminds us of a recent interview that Sunita gave wherein she hinted at her worries about Govinda cheating on her. She had made some startling revelations about their marriage including the fact that they lived separately. Sunita had revealed that she was the one who initiated their relationship, as Govinda "was even scared to touch women." However, she added that Govinda is not the romantic type, at least not in real life. "Now, I don't know if he has become like that. You never

know what people do behind your back. Never trust a man. People change colours like a chameleon. It's been 37 years since we got married. Where would he go? Earlier he never went anywhere, now I don't know..." she said in an interview with Hindi Rush. Sunita also shared that they mostly lived in separate houses, with Govinda often staying at his bungalow. "We have two houses, we have a bungalow opposite our apartment. I have my temple and my kids in the flat. We live in the flat whereas he gets late after his meetings. He loves talking so he'll gather 10 people and sit chatting with them. Whereas me, my son and my daughter live together, but we hardly talk because I feel if you end up wasting your energy by talking too much," she explained.

When asked about Govinda's romantic nature, Sunita said, "I have told him that in my next life, he should not be my husband. He doesn't go on holidays. I am a person who wants to go out with her husband and eat pani-puri on the streets. He spent too much time working... I don't recall a single instance when we both went out to watch a movie." Sunita also shared that she used to feel secure in her marriage earlier but it's not the case anymore. "I used to be very secure earlier on in our marriage, now I am not," she said with a laugh. "Kya hai na saath (60) ke baad log sathiya bhi jaate hai na... (After 60, people even lose their senses) He has crossed 60, you never know what he does..." she added. News18 Showsha contacted Sunita Ahuja and daughter Tina Ahuja for a comment, but they had not responded at the time of publication.