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Congress slams govt over household indebtedness, it failed to acknowledge 'crisis'



malaise was the stagnation in real wages and claimed the government had failed to acknowledge the 'crisis'.

most worrying implications were for India's household finances. Ramesh said India's recovery from COVID-19 was based on consumption growth that was driven by loans.

TMC's Abhishek Banerjee reacts to reports on 'rift' with Mamata Banerjee

Kolkata, Feb 27: Abhishek Banerjee of the Trinamool Congress on Tuesday rejected reports that he has differences with party supremo and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

Atishi claims AAP MLAs barred from entering Delhi Assembly

New Delhi, Feb.27: Leader of Opposition (LoP) Atishi on Thursday said AAP MLAs were being stopped from entering the Delhi Assembly premises after being suspended for three days from the proceedings in the House.

history of the Delhi Legislative Assembly." On Tuesday, 21 out of 22 AAP MLAs, including Atishi, were suspended



from the House. The suspension of AAP MLAs came on a day when the Delhi government tabled a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report on the liquor policy, further intensifying the political face-off between AAP and the BJP.

Amanatullah Khan was the only AAP legislator spared from the suspension, as he was not present in the House during the protest. The motion for suspension was moved by minister Parvesh Verma.

Highway to connect Arunachal border districts: Rijiju

ITANAGAR, Feb 27: The Union government has approved the construction of the Arunachal Frontier Highway, a massive infrastructure project aimed at enhancing connectivity in border areas.

and strengthening infrastructure in border areas so as to facilitate rapid movement of troops. Rijiju said that while major expressways such as the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, Jaipur-Delhi corridor, and Kolkata-Chennai highway were built at a fraction of this cost, the Arunachal Frontier Highway will require unprecedented investment due to its strategic importance and challenging terrain.

resources in a balanced and sustainable manner. Meanwhile, Rijiju lauded Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar's presence at



the event, calling it a historic moment. "Boasimla is a small place, located beside the national highway... It will go down in history that the Vice President of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar, has visited Boasimla today," he said.

can proudly say that the Vice President has joined us in celebrating Nyokum Yullo." Vice President Dhankhar in his speech also expressed confidence that Rijiju's vision of a frontier highway in Arunachal Pradesh would soon be realized.

104 firearms voluntarily surrendered in 6 districts

New Delhi, Feb 27: Altogether 104 firearms and ammunition were voluntarily surrendered by the public in six districts in strife-torn Manipur, police said on Thursday.

Article 370 abrogation proved to be good for JK's development: Athawale

Mumbai, Feb.27: The Centre's decision to revoke Article 370 of the Constitution proved to be "good" as it strengthened development and "ended" terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, Union Minister Ramdas Athawale said on Thursday.

tourists visited the union territory last year, he said. "The increase in tourism means more development for the region. It was a very good decision to



revoke Article 370. Now the people want us to give the status of a state to J&K. When (Home Minister) Amit Shah announced the removal of Article 370, he also announced that J&K's statehood would be restored at an appropriate time.

minister lauded the highest voter turnout in Jammu and Kashmir in the assembly elections held last year. "Though the alliance of the National Conference and the Congress came to power, it hardly matters to us as we are with the people and want the region's development," he said.

'Nirbhaya case led to changes, but': Former CJ Chandrachud

New Delhi, Feb 27: As the investigation over the alleged rape of a woman inside a bus at Swargate depot of Maharashtra's Pune, calls for strictest punishment for the absconding accused are



growing, with former Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud also raising a similar demand. Amid mounting pressure from the opposition, which has likened the incident with the 2012 Delhi Nirbhaya gang rape, a frantic effort to crack the case is underway.

been on the run since the incident which took place on a Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) bus early Tuesday morning. Pune rape case updates A reward of ₹1 lakh will be given to the person providing information about his whereabouts, news agency PTI quoted Pune police commissioner Amitesh Kumar. Former CJ DY Chandrachud on Thursday said a lot of changes were made in the laws following the 'Nirbhaya' incident, however, we can not prevent such incident by only having laws.

Lunch, helping hand, welfare measures: UP Yogi'

Lucknow, Feb 27: Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday took part in a cleanliness campaign in Prayagraj to mark the conclusion of Maha Kumbh. He also felicitated sanitation and health workers announced enhanced welfare measures.



completion of Maha Kumbh, in which more than 66 crore devotees across 45 days. He also distributed certificates to sanitation and health workers to acknowledge their work during the festival. Announcing enhanced welfare measures, Adityanath said, "Our government has decided to provide ₹10,000 bonus to the sanitation and health workers at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj. We are going to ensure that from April, a minimum wage of ₹16,000 will be provided to the sanitation workers.

NEWS BOX

Kidney patients suffer as SCB's transplantation unit is in limbo

BHUBANESWAR. Once a pioneer in renal transplantation, SCB medical college and hospital (MCH) in Cuttack is now grappling with a severe crisis, thanks to the apathetic attitude of the Odisha government towards the premier healthcare institution.

SCB MCH was one of the few state-run hospitals to start renal transplantation in the country way back in 2012. A decade later, the transplantation unit is in limbo due to prolonged vacancies in the department of nephrology, which is crucial for both pre and post-operative care of kidney patients.

While the hospital had recorded 194 renal transplantations till 2022, only 14 were conducted in 2023 and nine in 2024. The hospital that was conducting at least two transplants a month until a few years back, has managed to perform only one transplant in last three months.

According to hospital records, of the nine transplants performed in 2024, three patients succumbed in the ICU itself and two are now undergoing dialysis. The hospital was also under scanner for poor transplantation in 2023 as the team had to remove a cadaver kidney transplanted in a patient after the 'diseased' organ stopped functioning and led to further complications.

The fall in transplant numbers is attributed to severe staff shortage, with key posts including that of a professor and one assistant professor, lying vacant for a long time. "If the shortage of doctors delayed evaluation of patients, post surgery care is even worse."

Traffic plan at Tidel Park Junction delayed due to congestion from CMRL work

CHENNAI. Even as two "U"-shaped flyovers at Indira Nagar and Thiruvanniyur on Rajiv Gandhi Salai have been thrown open for vehicular movement, state highways and traffic police have postponed the plan to convert the Tidel Park Junction into a bi-directional signal.

This decision is primarily due to the narrowing of Rajiv Gandhi Salai from a four-lane road (including service lane) to a double lane (six metres) because of CMRL construction work in Thiruvanniyur-Indira Nagar section. As a result, vehicles coming from Thuraiyakkam and Thiruvanniyur (on the "U"-shaped flyover) converge at the narrow section in Thiruvanniyur-Indira Nagar section, leading to a huge vehicular congestion.

"At present, motorists from Thuraiyakkam and SRP Tools are permitted to turn right to access Thiruvanniyur, ECR, and Adyar," said officials from Traffic Police and Tamil Nadu Road Development Company (TNRDC).

The proposal to change the Tidel Park Junction signal from four-way to bi-directional configuration was part of the "Development of Comprehensive Integrated Traffic Infrastructure at Tidel Park Junction" scheme initiated in 2019 to ease congestion on OMR and its connecting roads. The proposal includes construction of two "U"-shaped flyovers, foot over bridge at Tidel Park and widening of carriageway in Rajiv Gandhi Salai at a cost of Rs 108.13 crore.

According to the proposed plans, vehicles travelling from Thuraiyakkam/SRP Tools should take a detour of an additional 1 km and use the flyover at Indira Nagar to make a U-turn. From there, motorists will find Indira Nagar 2nd Avenue Road on their left, providing access to Adyar/R.A. Puram. Those heading towards ECR (Thiruvanniyur/Kottivakkam) can continue driving and take a left turn. However, this plan could not be implemented due to severe congestion caused by the narrow road.

Monitor e-filing of cases; upgrade to CCTNS 2.0 in three months: Madras HC

MADURAI. Observing that the e-filing system in the police department and criminal courts are not functioning optimally and that both parties are playing the blame game, leading to a huge pendency of charge sheets before courts, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court recently directed all principal district judges to constitute taluk-level and district level-committees to ensure proper functioning of the e-filing system.

The court further ordered the state police to complete the implementation of the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) 2.0 within three months.

Justice K Murali Shankar gave the directions while disposing of a petition filed by one S Janardhanan, seeking to quash an FIR against him by the Dindigul police in a cheating case in March 2024. Though the police claimed that they already filed the final report in his case through e-filing, the petitioner was informed by the lower court staff that they did not receive any final report. Noting that such occurrences have become common and there is widespread delay in taking final reports on file by the subordinate courts, the judge suggested the implementation of the Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) platform, introduced by the e-committee of the Supreme Court, in TN. However, it was informed that the ICJS system, which interconnects the CCTNS (Police), CIS (e-courts), e-prison (jail), e-forensic (Forensic Department) and e-prosecution (Prosecution), could not be implemented in the state as the current CCTNS platform used by TN police is not compatible.

Future is clean! DTPC to turn Ernakulam district's four beaches into green destinations

Tourism dept plans various initiatives at Fort Kochi, Munambam, Cherai and Kuzhupilly beaches

KOCHI. The sorry sight of plastic waste littering the beaches in the district could become a thing of the past after March 31. As part of turning Fort Kochi, Munambam, Cherai and Kuzhupilly beaches into green destinations following a state government directive, the District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC) will be implementing various initiatives.

"The Suchitwa Mission carried out a gap assessment study and has submitted a report to the DTPC, in which various issues were pointed out," DTPC secretary Lijo Joseph told. The main gap pointed out was a lack of adequate number of waste bins in and around the beaches, he said.

"Not that there are no waste bins at all. However, they are scattered and few. It has also been decided to set up boards that direct tourists to the location of the waste bins. Another initiative is to educate the vendors and the shopkeepers near the beaches on the need to avoid single-use plastics," Lijo said.

The plan is to phase out plastic water bottles from these beaches. When asked about the timely collection and disposal of plastic waste from the waste bins, the official said, "We have a team in place at all the destinations that see to



timely collection and disposal of the waste from the bins.

There are 22 people at Fort Kochi and a team of around four to five at other beaches. We have arrived at a plan, discussed at a meeting with

the district collector recently, on how to go about the collection and disposal."

In the long run, the department aims to turn these destinations into plastic-free zones. "We are thinking of setting up water kiosks at beaches so tourists can refill the water bottles they bring with them or even the pet bottles they buy. Refilling pet bottles will dissuade them from throwing them once the bottle runs out of water," the DTPC secretary said.

Another idea, which is yet to be finalised, is to introduce steel water bottles at a nominal fee, he pointed out. "The aim is to make the beaches plastic-free. As for toilet facilities, DTPC will be holding talks with the Kochi corporation to get the toilets at the parks under the civic bodies opened for tourists' use.

Also, under the green practices, steps will be taken to develop a digital platform or a mobile app that will help tourists get all details on destinations, including facilities available. The aim is to make the destinations flyer-free," Lijo said.

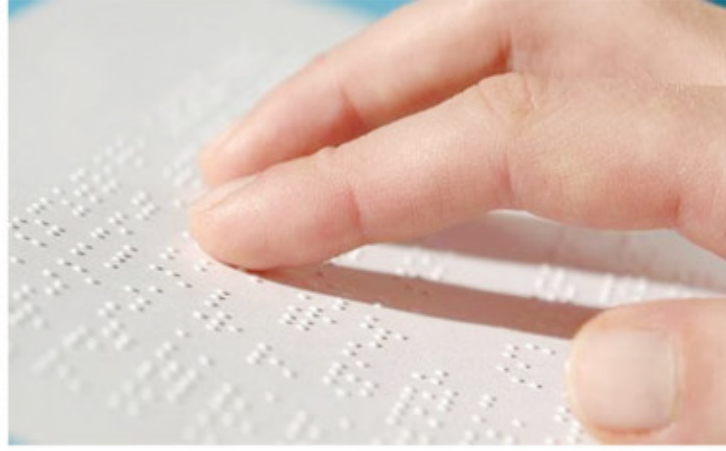
Land in Bhubaneswar sought for state's first visually impaired students' university

Sources said the decision on setting up the university for visually impaired students was taken by the department in August last year and it had sent the proposal to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi for approval.

BHUBANESWAR. The department of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities on Tuesday asked Khurda collector Chanchal Rana to allocate a 40 acre land in Bhubaneswar for establishment of the Santa Kabi Bhima Bhoi State University for Visually Impaired.

It would be the first university for the visually-challenged in the state and a one-of-its-kind in the country. Director of the department Niyati Pattnaik said the single patch of land will be used for construction of the university building and other related infrastructure. The university will have residential facilities for the students and an advanced digital lab on the campus.

Sources said the decision on setting up the university for visually impaired students was taken by the



department in August last year and it had sent the proposal to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi

either UG, PG or BE in the 2024-25 academic session.

Vigilance registers case into alleged backdoor recruitment at coop bank

In its preliminary investigation, VACB uncovered malpractices in preparing the question paper.

KOCHI. The Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) has launched an investigation into alleged exam manipulation and backdoor recruitment at Marampally Service Cooperative Bank, in Ernakulam district.

VACB central range, Ernakulam registered a case against Fathima T.K., secretary of the bank, Geetha C. of Aluva, who was tasked with preparing the question papers for the recruitment exam, and Saneesh, of Parakkadavu, who assisted Geetha.

According to VACB officers, a written examination was conducted for the posts of three peons, one salesman and a night watchman at the bank in February 2024. Around 50 persons took the exam. "Following the examination, six candidates, who officials claimed had scored the highest marks, were recruited to the permanent posts. However, other people who attended the examination alleged severe malpractices in setting the question papers and in

the evaluation process. They approached the Kerala High Court seeking a probe. A petition was filed with VACB to investigate the appointments," an officer said.

In its preliminary investigation, VACB uncovered malpractices in



preparing the question paper. "The accused were found to have improperly evaluated the answer booklets, awarding marks even for unattempted questions to ensure that designated candidates achieved the highest scores. We registered a case and conduct a detailed probe into the incident," an officer said.

VACB collected statements from those who appeared for the examination. "We are examining

whether the manipulation was carried out for pecuniary advantage or on the directions of the bank's board members. As part of the preliminary probe, we questioned people who sat for the exams and suspects in the case," an officer said.

Raizal, whose wife, Sumahiya, appeared for the examination, said that soon after the recruitment notification was issued in December 2023, they approached the court regarding possible backdoor appointments. "We issued names of certain candidates who were likely to be

appointed. As this was before the examination was conducted, VACB filed a report in court to the effect. But, after the results were published, the same candidates were found to have secured the top ranks and been selected for the jobs. So we approached the court again. The bank authorities had already decided on the persons to be appointed. The examination was a mere formality," he alleged.

Lack of clarity over converted land mutation leaves applicants worried

It is alleged that revenue officials refuse to complete the mutation process unless the word "converted" is inserted in all places in the deed where the phrase 'dry land' is written.

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. The revenue department's lack of clarity has left in pain thousands of applicants who have been waiting for months to complete the mutation process of the converted land they had bought. The issue is related to the land once converted from wet-paddy land to dry land. When a landowner converts land thus, the basic tax register records it as converted land. The problem arises when someone buys that particular land. It is alleged that revenue officials refuse to complete the mutation process unless the word 'converted' is inserted in all places in the deed where the phrase 'dry land' is written.

With the revenue department having made all services digital, only one option is available for the applicant while applying for mutation online - whether the land is wet or dry.

When a person wants to change the pattern of their land, they should submit an application to the revenue divisional officer (RDO) for land pattern conversion in each district. It is then handed over to the village offices concerned. The village officer would then inspect the land

for approval. It had then held discussions with officials of University of Tsukuba's School for the visually impaired in Japan in this connection.

According to official reports, there are more than 50 lakh visually impaired people in the country of which over 5.21 lakh are from Odisha. Around two lakh youth in the state are visually impaired. There is, however, no data on the number of visually impaired students pursuing higher education in government-run colleges and universities.

Close to 2,000 students with disabilities had taken admission to either UG, PG or BE in the 2024-25 academic session.



simplify the mutation process of such land, the state government has asked local bodies not to insist on documents about the conversion of land up to the permissible extent. According to applicants, however, the revenue department officials are insisting on correcting the deed to include the phrase 'converted dry land'.

'Swift squad' helps rescue kidnapped baby in two hours

DySP Rajesh, who led the operation, explains that the motive behind the abduction stemmed from a financial dispute.

KOCHI. A migrant woman from Bihar, visibly distressed, rushed into the Aluva East police station about 8pm on February 15. Instead of approaching the help desk, she went straight into the cabin of Station House Officer M M Manjudas.

Struggling to introduce herself, she managed to convey that her one-month-old baby had been abducted by two fellow migrant workers while she was preparing to return to her hometown. She had little information about the kidnappers beyond a few identification marks. They had demanded Rs 70,000 over a phone call for the child's release.

Noting the urgency, the officers on duty, led by Manjudas, sprang into action. "We bypassed the usual formalities," says an

officer. After reassuring the woman, the officers showed her the images from the crime gallery at the police station. Meanwhile, the police cyber cell started tracking the phone number used for the ransom demand.

The woman recognised one of the suspects - Rinki, 20, a transgender person from Assam residing in a rented house in Aluva. Manjudas alerted Aluva DySP T R Rajesh and Ernakulam district police chief Vaibhav Saxena about initiating a rescue operation.

Acting on the gathered details, a police squad reached Rinki's residence. It was vacant. Suspecting that Rinki and her accomplice, Rashidul Haq, 29, from Nagaon, Assam, had already fled with the infant, the district



police chief ordered an extensive search operation, involving the review of multiple CCTV footages and checks at railway stations, bus stands, airports, and road borders.

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How kumbh came to NCR with 'pool dubki'

Noida. Crores of people went to Mahakumbh, crores more missed out or stayed away. Many felt the yearning, but the prospect of crowded journeys and a packed Sangam was too daunting. But what if Sangam came to them? At several housing societies in NCR, it did in a symbolic way, showing how faith bridges gaps that reality can't. By Wednesday, when Mahakumbh ended with the final 'Shahi Snan' at the Sangam, many who could not make it were thankful for the 'holy dips' they could take in swimming pools of their housing societies. These were no regular dives. The 'dubkis' were organised after a symbolic purification and consecration of the pools by sprinkling Sangam water, which was brought back in jars and cans by those who did make it to Prayagraj. And thus were the pools transformed, bringing Kumbh to societies and solace to many who could not make the journey. At this age, what more could I ask for than to take this dip just below our flats? said JC Sharma (79), a resident of Mahagun Moderne in Noida who has been to five Kumbhs but could not make a sixth. The 'holy dip' was organised at the society on Feb 2 and 3,



said AOA member YP Gupta. He said more than 500 residents participated in it. One of them was Rahul Goel, a chartered accountant who could not go to Prayagraj because he did not get leave. "So when the holy dip was organised in our society's swimming pool, we participated. My children were also there. Since the pool was not functional because of winter, we filled it and then poured in 10 litres of Triveni Sangam water," he explained. A similar dip was organised last Monday at

Shipra Suncity in Ghaziabad, complete with rituals. Pooja Kapoor (49) said Sangam water was brought by fellow society residents who had been to the Kumbh. "It turned out to be such a wonderful experience," said Pooja, who has a physical disability due to which she thought she would never have been able to take a Kumbh dip and was full of gratitude for those who made it possible. Sanjay Kumar, the councillor for Ward 100

(Shipra Suncity) told TOI the "holy water was specially arranged for approximately 50 handicapped residents of Shipra Suncity as well as senior citizens, and for children who couldn't travel to Prayagraj due to their ongoing exams". By Tuesday afternoon, 622 residents participated in the holy dip. More than 2,000 residents travelled to Prayagraj in three buses arranged by us. We had 415 litres of Triveni Sangam water that they brought back with them," he said. At Sector 122 in Noida, a group of 11 senior citizens from an RWA arranged for Sangam water to be brought to a pond that was dug for Chhath Puja. The dip was organised from Feb 12 to 14 after a tanker brought 1,000 litres of water from Sangam. "We were discussing how many of us are unable to travel to Prayagraj when this idea came to us. It was not just senior citizens, but for everyone who could not go because of work or other reasons," said Umesh Sharma (80), who heads the RWA. Dips were also organised in societies such as ATS Pristine in Sector 150, Cherry County in Greater Noida and several others across Noida and Ghaziabad.

Two arrested for fake bill trading, tax credit fraud in Gurgaon

Gurgaon. The anti-evasion wing of CGST arrested two persons on Wednesday in connection with a fraudulent claim of input tax credit (ITC). The companies were engaged in paper trading to cheat the department by claiming fraudulent ITC. "The two accused created and operated a chain of firms registered with different proprietors and directors. These firms issued goods-less invoices of taxable value Rs 20.3 crore involving ITC of Rs 7.1 crore," said a CGST official. A tax credit fraud of Rs 66.6 crore, exposed on Feb 20, led the CGST commissionerate of Gurgaon to the accused. The accused, in their statement, admitted their role and were arrested under section 69(1) of the CGST Act, 2017. They were sent to judicial custody for 14 days. "These accused are also involved in circular trading and fraudulent claims of refund in some other firms. Further investigation is ongoing," said the official. On Feb 20, tax sleuths uncovered a massive GST scam operating from an inconspicuous 10x10sqft shop in the narrow lanes of Khandasa village merely 12km from the city centre. The operation generated fake invoices worth Rs 97 crore for tobacco products and soft drinks and fraudulently claimed input tax credits of Rs 66.6 crore. Cigarettes, which attract a staggering 108% tax, including central GST and cess, and soft drinks with their 40% tax burden, were the primary focus of this fraudulent operation.

Suicide pact or murder Families file counter complaints after hotel deaths

Gurgaon. In the suspected case of a suicide pact, police have received counter complaints — one each by the families of the two youngsters whose bodies were found with bullet wounds in a hotel room on Monday. Nikhil (23), an ITI diploma holder from Pataudi, and Komal (20), an undergraduate student from Kherki Daula, had checked into room 303 at Haveli Hotel along NH-8 in Manesar on Monday morning. By night, Komal's family had reached the hotel while searching for her and called in cops to open the room's door. Police broke open the door and found the bodies, lying side by side and covered with a blanket up to their chest. According to initial investigation, police had said it appeared that the youngsters were in a relationship and made a suicide pact after Komal's marriage was fixed with another man by her family. Komal's cousin Sunil on Tuesday night filed a complaint, alleging that Nikhil killed her. By Wednesday, Nikhil's brother Chanchal filed a counter complaint and accused Komal's family of killing both the youngsters. "My brother Nikhil left home on Feb 24 morning to work at a private company in Manesar. As he did not return home till late, we thought he stayed back at the company for a night shift. Around 4am on Feb 25, we were informed by police that he and a woman, Komal, were found shot dead in a Manesar hotel," Chanchal said. He said in his complaint to police, "After visiting the hotel, we think that my brother and Komal were shot by her family members. Please verify CCTV footage from the hotel and initiate appropriate legal action against the accused." So far, there are no indications of murder in the probe. Police said Komal's post-mortem examination was carried out on Wednesday, and no injuries other than the bullet wound were found. Nikhil's autopsy will be conducted on Thursday. "The bullet hit Komal's chest on the left and was lodged on the right side. It was retrieved. There were no other injuries on her body. Viscera sample was preserved for toxicology analysis," a forensic medicine expert told TOI.

Small team of senior engineers in MCG: Staff crunch adds to civic woes

Gurgaon. Thirty-six wards with 68 villages spanning across 311.6sqkm area. A 4,569km network of roads, 3,738km of water pipelines and 3,540km of sewer lines; and an added 1,276 parks — management of all this infrastructure under MCG is supervised by a small team of senior engineers. At present, there are six executive engineers out of the ten posts in MCG. Under them are seven assistant engineers, less than half of the sanctioned strength of 16 for the corporation. MCG also has two positions for superintendent engineers, but both seats are lying vacant. With civic polls approaching March 2, the city's residents are hopeful that the newly elected councillors will address necessary reforms, particularly the need to appoint more senior engineers, fill existing vacancies and hire others, to manage Gurgaon's daily upkeep. MCG's chief engineer Manoj Yadav, who heads the department, acknowledged that there were few senior officials to oversee the city's eight divisions. "One of the executive engineers (XeN) is currently overseeing four divisions. Ideally, one XeN should oversee one division. The extensive area under a single XeN makes it challenging to conduct site visits for ongoing development work across multiple locations. Achieving timely and quality outcomes would be possible if we receive personnel according to the approved staff strength," Yadav said on Wednesday. He added that the corporation had forwarded the request to the state govt to fill the existing vacancies in Sept 2024, after which one of the positions was filled. "The state govt has assured us that additional personnel will be deployed once municipal elections conclude," he said. The state govt appoints senior officials, including the chief engineer, of civic bodies. The senior-most posts are chosen from Haryana Public Service Commission (HPSC) officers, and junior engineers are selected from the Haryana Staff Selection Commission (HSSC).

After court hearing, estranged husband hits woman with car in Gurgaon

Gurgaon. A 35-year-old man was arrested on Wednesday for allegedly trying to kill his wife by running her over with a car after she refused to withdraw a maintenance case she had filed against him in court. The woman (33) is admitted to a hospital with bruises and internal injuries. Her condition is stable, police said. The couple, residents of Mohammedpur Jharsa in the city, got married in 2012 and have two children, aged 9 and 11. Cops said the woman, a homemaker, approached a local court in 2023 and accused her husband of harassing her and sought maintenance under the Domestic Violence Act. On Feb 20, there was a hearing in a city court, where the husband allegedly warned the woman to withdraw the case. "While the woman was returning home, the accused followed her and hit her with his car. She

escaped with injuries and lodged a complaint with police on Feb 24," inspector Geeta of Sector 37 police station said. According to the woman's complaint, her husband used to beat her up and refuse to give her money for her personal needs. "He used to threaten to kick me out of the house. In this regard, I filed a domestic violence complaint against him and his family members in court, seeking maintenance," she said. Her in-laws live in the same house. On the day of the hearing, the woman said she was leaving the court when her husband threatened to kill her if she didn't withdraw the case. "My friend was at the court, and she offered to drop me near my house. She dropped me at Narsinghpur on the Delhi-Jaipur highway and started walking home. My husband came in a white Verna car and hit me from the back. I fell on the road and sustained

injuries. He reversed the car to run over me again, but I managed to get up and hide behind other parked vehicles nearby," the complaint read. The woman raised an alarm after which the husband fled the spot. She was admitted to Sector 10 Civil Hospital and is getting treated there. Cops said they registered an FIR naming her husband and his parents under sections 109(1)(attempted murder), 3(5)(common intention), and 356(3) (criminal intimidation) of BNS. "The complainant did not suffer any fractures. She is out of danger," the inspector said. The husband was arrested from his house on Wednesday. "During interrogation, he confessed to trying to kill his wife for refusing to withdraw a maintenance case filed against him. He was sent to Bhondsi jail and is in judicial remand," Gurgaon police spokesperson Sandeep said.

Artificial wetlands fuel 10% growth in Haryana's water bodies, 3k ha added in 6 years

Gurgaon. The total wetland area in Haryana grew from 33,649ha in 2017-18 to 36,984.5ha in 2023-24, marking an increase of 3,335.5ha, or 10%. This growth is largely due to the creation and expansion of human-made wetlands, such as artificial ponds, tanks and waterlogged areas, as per a report titled "Indian Wetlands: High Resolution Remote Sensing Assessment and Analysis" by the Space Applications Centre. While this increase is a positive development for the overall wetland area, it highlights the ongoing challenge of preserving natural wetlands, which continue to face threats from urbanisation and agricultural expansion. The state has a substantial number of man-made wetlands, totalling 25,606, with an area of 23,527.1ha. These wetlands make up 63.61% of the total wetland area, reflecting the state's efforts in creating

Party rebel obstructing poll campaign, says BJP candidate in Gurgaon

Gurgaon. A Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate from MCG's ward no. 15 has alleged she is being stopped from campaigning in certain parts by an independent candidate. "I am not able to reach out to my supporters and voters," Bharti Hansana has alleged. Bharti filed a police complaint and alerted the leadership — in a BJP-ruled state — about the situation, wherein the candidate who was denied a ticket by the party is "obstructing" the campaign of the official candidate. Besides Bharti, there are two other candidates from ward no. 15 — Neha Yadav from Congress and independent candidate Pravin Lata. Lata, the outgoing councillor, was denied a ticket by BJP. Bharti alleged Lata is using "her influence to manipulate the campaign" to deny her entry into a few societies. Bharti claimed she was unable to meet her supporters and residents in South City 2, as they were being denied entry into the area, a move that disrupted her efforts to

directly engage with the electorate "during this critical phase of the campaign." Lata and her husband Rakesh Yadav are close associates of Haryana minister Rao Narbir Singh. Yadav was seeking a ticket for himself from ward no. 14 and for his wife, Pravin Lata, from ward no. 15. The couple were denied tickets despite having the minister's blessings. During the assembly election, the couple worked extensively for Narbir and had organised a big rally in South City 2. From this rally, Narbir had

threatened to switch over to Congress if denied a ticket. After this rally, Union minister Amit Shah intervened to ensure a ticket for Narbir from the Badshahpur assembly constituency. BJP district president Kamal Yadav said in many wards, rebel candidates are contesting as independents against the official candidates and spreading rumours that they are from

the party and are contesting on the direction of the party. "There is only one party candidate in each ward who is contesting on the lotus symbol. We are helping all our candidates in the campaign and providing all necessary help," Yadav said. RWA president of South City 2 Neeraj Yadav said.

NAME CHANGE It is for general information that I, RAVENDRA KUMAR S/O NARESH KUMAR R/O Plot No. 22 F/F, New Plot No. 68, Kt. No. 10/1, Roop Nihar, Mubarak Pur Dabas, North West Delhi, Delhi-110081, declare that name of mine and my father have been wrongly written as RAVINDER and LOTAN SINGH in my Aadhaar Card No. 3365 9243 59 and my PAN Card No. CKVPR3317J, and name of my father has been wrongly written as LOTAN SINGH in my Driving Licence No. UP81 20120007929. The actual name of mine and my father are RAVENDRA KUMAR and NARESH KUMAR respectively.

NAME CHANGE I, RAM NIWAS GARG S/O NORIYA MAL R/O B-125 A UTTAM NAGAR, VISHVA PARK D.K. MOHAN GARDEN, DELHI 110059, I have changed my name from RAMINIWAS TO RAM NIWAS GARG for all future purpose.

NAME CHANGE I, hitherto known as PARMOD MAHENDRU alias PARMOD KUMAR son of GORU SHANKAR residing at FLAT NO-B-4/1A, ASHOK VIHAR PHASE-2, DELHI-110052 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as PARMOD MAHENDRU.

NAME CHANGE It is for general information that I, Sumit Bindoo S/O Madan Lal Bindoo R/O FLAT D-78 Manglam Regency, SEC-21D, Faridabad, Haryana 121001, declare that my name has been wrongly written as Sumit Kumar Bindoo in mine and my father's passport. The actual name of mine is Sumit Bindoo, which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE I, AMARDEEP S/O PUTTALU R/O PLOT NO-54, THIRD FLOOR F BLOCK MAHAVIR ENCLAVE PART 3 DELHI-110059 declare that my father's name in my 10th certificate is mentioned as 'PUTTU LAL GAUTAM' but my father's name in all my documents is mentioned as 'PUTTULAL'.

NAME CHANGE It is for general information that I, RAJBIR SINGH DAHIYA son of AMIR SINGH DAHIYA residing at D-2, CHARCH ROAD, GREEN AVENUE SPRING VALLEY, VASANT KUNJ, NEW DELHI-110070, declare that name of mine and my father has been wrongly written as RAJBIR SINGH and AMIR SINGH in my ADHAR CARD NO- 78825611 5779. The actual name of mine and my father are RAJBIR SINGH and AMIR SINGH DAHIYA, which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE I, BEENA DEVI is legally wedded spouse of No. JC-72876W Rank-Subj/Rt Name-ASHOK CHIL, POKHRIVAL R/O VILL-KAPHOLA NAUGON, PO-PATISSIAN, TEHSATPULLI, DIST-PAURI GARHWAL (UTTARAKHAND)-246167 have changed my name from BEENA DEVI TO BEENA POKHRIVAL for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE I, hitherto known as CHANDRAKUNWAR W/O BABU LAL R/O C-114, J1 Colony, Block - C, Bawana, North West Delhi, Delhi - 110039 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as MANKAUR.

NAME CHANGE It is for general information that I, ANAS S/O MOHD SHAHZAD, R/O C-271 F/F, Old Seemapuri, Jhilmil, PO: JHILMIL, DIST: East Delhi, Delhi - 110095, declare that name of my Father has been wrongly written as SHAHZAD in my 10th class Educational Documents. The actual name of my Father is MOHD SHAHZAD which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE I, hitherto known as ANIL KUMAR alias KARAM SHIL SHARMA S/O DHARAM DUTT residing at 321, Kot Mohalla, Near Mata Temple, Sonapat, Haryana - 131001 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as ANIL KUMAR.

NAME CHANGE I, hitherto known as JAMUNIA W/O JAG NAYAK residing at B-217 T-Hults, Cluster G P Block, Piliam Pura, Shaheen Bagh, North West Delhi, Delhi - 110088 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RENU.

PUBLIC NOTICE Mrs. Sunita Sushel Kaul, Owner of the Residential Flat/Dwelling Unit No. 102, Block-4, on 2nd floor, Phase-IV, Kendriya Vihar-II, Sector-82, Noida, G.B. Nagar, U.P., Mrs. Sunita Sushel Kaul have lost Original Allotment Letter Cum Card Copy dated 16.11.2001 By Central Government Employees Welfare Housing Organization (ie CGEWHO) in favour of Mrs. Sunita Sushel Kaul and Handing over on Possession dated 17/06/2005 By Central Government Employees Welfare Housing Organization (ie CGEWHO) in favour of Mrs. Sunita Sushel Kaul, for which complaint lodged to the police. That any person(s)/appropriate authority etc. if find the misplaced Allotment and possession letter aforesaid said person may come forward and inform the undersigned within 15 days from the date of Publication.

RAHUL KUMAR GUPTA (ADVOCATE) Off.: 43B, Third Floor, Patparganj Village, Mayapuri Vihar Phase-I, Delhi-11 M.NO- 7252922875

NAME CHANGE I, SANITA BHATTACHARJEE D/O SAJAL BHATTACHARJEE permanent R/o 337 FL-701, Motilal Gupta Road, Purbha Barisha, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal-700008, and currently residing at RZ-62B/1, Vashiast Park, Street No.12, Pankha Road, New Delhi, West Delhi, Delhi-110046, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SANIA BHATTACHARJEE, for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE I, KHUSHBOO Pandey Wife of Mohit Pathak R/O E-274B upper front side Ground Floor Mahavir Enclave Part -3 Gali No-73 New Delhi 110059 declare that I have changed my name from KHUSHABU PANDEY TO KHUSHBOO PANDEY for all in future purpose.

NAME CHANGE I, MOHAMMAD SADRA ALAM S/O ABDUL SAMAD R/O E-404 GALI NO-10 BRHAMPURI GARHI MENDU NORTH EAST DELHI 110055 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO MOHD SADRALAM

NAME CHANGE I, KAMALA SINGH Mother of JC-779695N Rank-Subj Name-ANAND PRAKASH SINGH Presently residing at VILL-KORIHARA, PO-SEMARPARHA, TEH-LALCAJAJ, DIST-RAE BAREILLI, UTTAR PRADESH-223206, have changed my name from KAMALA SINGH TO KAMLA SINGH for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 27/02/2025 before Executive Magistrate, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE I, hitherto known as Diksha alias DRAKSHA D/O Nempal Singh W/O Ganga Prasad, R/O 54, 00, Isampur Danda, PO: Isampur Danda, DIST: Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh - 202522 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as DRAKSHA.

NOTICE General Public is hereby informed that Sh. Chiman Lal and Sh. Sundeep Dutt Sharma GPA Holder of Built up Third floor, with roof terrace rights, property bearing no. 14 & 16, area measuring 72 sq. yds. Out of Kharsa no. 22/11, Situated in the area of Village Razapur Khurd, the colony known as commercial Enclave, Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059 Initially, Sh. S. R. Yadav was the owner in respect of said property Later, Notarized GPA & ATS & Will dated 22/12/2011 executed by Sh. S. R. Yadav in favour of Sh. Raj Kumar in respect of said property Later, Notarized GPA & ATS & Will dated 20/03/2012 executed by Sh. Raj Kumar in favour of Sh. Manohar Shankar Jha in respect of said property. Later, Notarized GPA & ATS & Will dated 26/03/2012 executed by Sh. Manohar Shankar Jha in favour of Sh. Ajay Jain in respect of said property Later, Notarized GPA & ATS dated 24/07/2013 executed by Sh. Ajay Jain in favour of Smt. Ruchika Kumari in respect of said property Finally, Notarized GPA & ATS & Will dated 28/08/2024 executed by Smt. Ruchika Kumari in favour of (1) Sh. Chiman Lal, (2) Sh. Sundeep Dutt Sharma in respect of said property in respect of said property to intending purchaser who shall further mortgage said property for his bonafide requirements with Centum Housing Finance Limited. Whosoever is having an 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.

PRAGYA BHUSHAN ADVOCATE Enr. No. D/721/02 Office: L-27,GF, Kailash Colony, New Delhi-48 Mob.: 9968006418

NAME CHANGE It is for general information that I, MOHD JASIM S/O MOHD ISRAFIL Residing at C-5256, Bhalswa Dairy, Resettlement Colony Near Mother Dairy, Badli, Saraji Pur, North West Delhi, Delhi - 110042 declare that the name of my Father has been wrongly written as MOHD, ISHRAFIL in my 10th, 12th and Graduation Educational Documents. The actual name of my Father is MOHD ISRAFIL which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE I, Army No. 14630703K Rank-NB SUB(MACP), Name-ASHOK KUMAR Presently residing at VILL-LAKHAPUR, PO-ABHINAVPUR, DIST-ETAWAHA, UTTAR PRADESH-205225, I have changed my son's name from ROHIT KUMAR TO ROHIT for all future purposes and in my service record my son's date of birth wrongly mentioned as 16/08/2001 instead of his correct date of birth as 16/08/2005 vide Affidavit dated 27/02/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE I, RAMPAL SINGH Father of JC-442812M Rank-SUB/CLK (SD) Name-PANKAJ Presently residing at VPO-LUNBI, BHARGALTA, DIST-SAGH- PATI, UTTAR PRADESH-250617, have changed my name from RAMPAL SINGH TO RAMPAL for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 27/02/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE I, hitherto known as AKSHAY Alias AKSHAY RANA Mother of SHARDA DEVI R/O PLOT NO-G-862, FLAT NO-201, RAMPHAL CHOWK ROAD, NEARAN GARDEN S.C., WEST DELHI, DELHI-110075 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as AKSHAY RANA.

NAME CHANGE I, hitherto known as ASHOK KUMAR ALIAS ASHOK KUMAR DHIMAN EMPLOYED AS OFFICE SUPERINTENDENT OF WESTERN STORE DIVISION (GREF), PATHANKOT, PUNJAB R/O PART-1, H-N-52A, L-EXT., RAM PARK, UTTAM NAGAR, D.K. MOHAN GARDEN S.C., WEST DELHI, DELHI-110059 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as ASHOK KUMAR DHIMAN.

NAME CHANGE It is for general information that I, KHAGESH KUMAR BATHRA M/O RENU BALA, R/O WZ-D-16A, HAUZ KHAS, SOUTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110045 declare that name of my mother has been wrongly written as RENU BATRA in my birth certificate-MCD09R-0122-1206148584. The actual name of my mother is RENU BALA, which may be amended accordingly.

PUBLIC NOTICE Public notice is hereby given that my clients Mr. Manish Chauhan and Mr. Nikhil Chauhan both S/o Mr. Subhash Chauhan, R/o Chauhan Colony, Chauhan Chaulpaal, Barola, Sector-49, Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh 201301, are owner of Residential Freehold Plot area measuring 165 Square Yards, out of Kharsa No. 1073-M, situated in the Village Barola, Pargana and Tehsil District Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, vide Khataun/Lambandi/Fard Fasli Year 1429-1434. My clients are absolute owner of the said property which is free from encumbrance. The said property neither falls under acquisition nor falls under any litigation in any court of law. On date, being the absolute owner of the said property, my clients Mr. Manish Chauhan and Mr. Nikhil Chauhan, going to sell the said property to Mr. Praveen Kumar and Mr. Naaveen Kumar both S/o Mr. Roshan Chauhan, R/o S/o Mr. Subhash Chauhan, R/o Chauhan Colony, Chauhan Chaulpaal, Barola, Sector-49, Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh. If any person(s) has/have any objection regarding the above said property, then kindly may submit his/her objection within 7 days from the date of the Notice in writing to undersigned on the said Bank/FI. The said objection may be kindly sent to the undersigned/bank by way of the Registered Post on the address given below and by E-mail. Failing which, the claim as per aforesaid shall be treated as null and void in respect of the subject property.

(RUPESH KUMAR ROUSHANI) Advocate D-803, Nandgram, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh 201003

NEWS BOX

Supreme Court, for now, blocks order for Trump administration to release billions in US foreign aid

WASHINGTON. The Supreme Court on Wednesday temporarily blocked a judge's order giving the Trump administration a midnight deadline to release billions of dollars in U.S. foreign aid.

Chief Justice John Roberts said the order issued by U.S. District Judge Amir H. Ali will remain on hold until the high court has a chance to weigh in more fully. Ali had ordered the federal government to comply with his decision temporarily blocking a freeze on foreign aid, ruling in a lawsuit filed by nonprofit groups and businesses.

An appellate panel refused the administration's request to intervene. The federal government froze foreign assistance after an executive order from President Donald Trump targeting what he called wasteful programs that do not correspond to his foreign policy goals.

Diesel's zombie apocalypse theme stuns Milan Fashion Week with graffiti & milky eyes

MILAN. The zombie apocalypse is now, according to Italian denim brand Diesel, which sent models onto a heavily graffiti-ed runway with unsettling milky gazes and spray-painted smiles.

Revealing silhouettes set the tone for the Fall-Winter 2025-26 co-ed collection premiered on Wednesday on the second day of Milan Fashion Week. Mini skirts were little more than peplums, requiring leggings or matching panties. Men wore cheekily low-rise jeans. Diesel has become a must-see of fashion week, in part due to its textile innovations. A silicone fisherman-pattern V-neck featured realistic chest hair detailing. Denim was treated to a reflective sheen, while jersey seemed to dissolve. Designer Glenn Martens is soon taking his innovative spirit to the Parisian fashion house Maison Margiela, which shares an Italian owner. He takes over from John Galiano. No creative changes have been announced at Diesel.

Burning Man's iconic 747 art plane finds new home in Las Vegas

UPDATED. A hulking section of a decommissioned jumbo jet that was transformed into a party venue at the 2017 Burning Man Festival is getting a new life off the Las Vegas Strip. The cockpit and section of the fuselage of the Boeing 747 were towed Wednesday from a spot at the Las Vegas Motor Speedway on the northern part of the city to a nearby entertainment district known as AREA15. The district bills itself as a site for immersive art installations, including Meow Wolf. Organizers say the jet, which was gutted after its Burning Man days in the Black Rock Desert of northwestern Nevada, will be transformed into an event and nightlife venue at AREA15. We just really want to celebrate the arts community and find immersive and experiential ways (to enjoy art)," said Pearl Verzosa, the district's marketing director. "We are open for everybody. We want families, friends, partners just to have a really good time here. And I think that the airplane will be one of those really special places."

Mysterious 'crying disease' kills over 50 in Congo: What we know so far

world. Unidentified illnesses have killed more than 50 people in north-western Congo's Equateur province over the past five weeks, with nearly half of the victims dying within hours of falling ill. Notably, 'crying' is also one of the symptoms reported by patients.

Health officials report 419 cases and 53 deaths since the outbreaks began on January 21 in two remote villages separated by over 120 miles.

Authorities are still investigating the cause of the diseases and whether the cases in the two villages—Boloko and Bomate—are linked. It is still unclear how the diseases are spreading, including whether human transmission is involved.

Outbreak details

The first outbreak was recorded in Boloko, where three children died within 48 hours after eating a bat. In Bomate, more than 400 people have fallen ill, with malaria identified in some patients.

However, no connection has been established between the outbreaks in the two villages, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Dr Serge Ngalebato, medical director of Bikoro Hospital and a member of the government response team, noted differences between the two outbreaks. "The first one with a lot of deaths is an unusual situation that we continue to investigate. In the second episode, we see many cases of malaria," he said.

Symptoms and investigation

Congo's ministry of Health reported that about 80% of patients exhibit symptoms such as fever, chills, body aches, and diarrhoea. Patients experienced symptoms including neck and joint pain, sweating, and shortness of breath. Those under 59 years old reported intense thirst, while children exhibited persistent crying. Initially, concerns were raised about the possibility of a hemorrhagic fever like Ebola, due to the rapid progression from sickness to death. However, Ebola and similar diseases like Marburg have been ruled out after testing more than a dozen samples. The WHO is now investigating other potential causes, including malaria, viral hemorrhagic fever, food or water poisoning, typhoid fever, and meningitis.

Trump administration says it's cutting 90 per cent of USAID foreign aid contracts

President Donald Trump and ally Elon Musk have hit foreign aid harder and faster than almost any other target in their push to cut the size of the federal government.

WASHINGTON. The Trump administration said Wednesday it is eliminating more than 90% of the U.S. Agency for International Development's foreign aid contracts and \$60 billion in overall U.S. assistance around the world, putting numbers on its plans to eliminate the majority of U.S. development and humanitarian help abroad. The cuts detailed by the administration would leave few surviving USAID projects for advocates to try to save in what are ongoing court battles with the administration. The Trump administration outlined its plans in both an internal memo obtained by The Associated Press and filings in one of those federal lawsuits Wednesday. The Supreme

Court intervened in that case late Wednesday and temporarily blocked a court order requiring the administration to release billions of dollars in foreign aid by midnight. Wednesday's disclosures also give an idea of the scale of the administration's retreat from U.S. aid and development assistance overseas, and from decades of U.S. policy that foreign aid helps U.S. interests by stabilizing other countries and economies and building alliances. The memo said officials were "clearing significant waste stemming from decades of institutional drift." More changes are planned in how USAID and the State Department deliver foreign assistance, it said. President Donald Trump and ally Elon Musk have hit foreign aid harder and faster than almost any other target in their push to cut the size of the federal government. Both men say USAID projects advance a liberal agenda and are a waste of money. Trump on January 20 ordered what he said would be a 90-day program-by-program review of which foreign assistance programs deserved to

continue, and cut off all foreign assistance funds almost overnight. The funding freeze has stopped thousands of U.S.-funded programs abroad, and the administration and Musk's Department of Government Efficiency teams have pulled the majority of USAID staff off the job through forced leave and firings. In the federal court filings Wednesday, nonprofits owed money on contracts with USAID describe both Trump political appointees and members of Musk's teams terminating USAID's contracts around the world at breakneck speed, without time for any meaningful review, they say. "There are MANY more terminations coming, so please gear up!" a USAID official wrote staff Monday, in an email quoted by lawyers for the nonprofits in the filings. The nonprofits, among thousands of contractors, owed billions of dollars in payment since the freeze began, called the en masse contract terminations a maneuver to get around complying with the order to lift the funding freeze temporarily. So did a Democratic lawmaker. "The administration is brazenly

attempting to blow through Congress and the courts by announcing the completion of their sham 'review' of foreign aid and the immediate termination of thousands of aid programs all over the world," said Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The State Department said Secretary of State Marco Rubio had reviewed the terminations. In all, the Trump administration said it will eliminate 5,800 of 6,200 multiyear USAID contract awards, for a cut of \$54 billion. Another 4,100 of 9,100 State Department grants were being eliminated, for a cut of \$4.4 billion. The State Department memo, which was first reported by the Washington Free Beacon, described the administration as spurred by a federal court order that gave officials until the end of the day Wednesday to lift the Trump administration's monthlong block on foreign aid funding. "In response, State and USAID moved rapidly," targeting USAID and State Department foreign aid programs in vast numbers for contract terminations.

What's next for Trump's agenda after House GOP approves tax breaks and slashed spending in US budget

WASHINGTON. Now that House Republicans have passed an ambitious budget blueprint for US President Donald Trump's agenda, it's time for the hard work of turning ideas for \$4.5 trillion in tax cuts and \$2 trillion of slashed spending into a bill that lawmakers warn could bring intense changes to Americans back home.

Republicans are insisting the costs of the tax breaks be partly paid for by the steep reductions in federal government spending as a way to ensure the nation's \$36 trillion debt load doesn't balloon to dangerous levels. But deciding what to cut—health care, food stamps, green energy, government regulations or student aid—is a politically agonizing choice. And it's not just the House that has to agree. GOP senators have their own plans. Their priority is to make the tax cuts permanent, rather than have them expire in a decade, as the House proposed. GOP senators see that as non-negotiable, but it would skyrocket the costs. Eventually, the House and Senate must vote on a final package.

"We have a lot of hard work ahead of us," House Speaker Mike Johnson said after the late Tuesday vote.



It's the start of a weeks-long—if not months—slog that is expected to consume Congress as Republicans try to deliver on Trump's agenda and their own campaign promises. Trump met Wednesday with Johnson and Senate Majority Leader John Thune at the White House, after Republicans also met with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent. Trump's chief of staff Susie Wiles huddled privately with GOP senators at the Capitol. Republicans say if they fail to act, the lower tax rates first approved in 2017 will expire, which would amount to a massive tax hike for many Americans. They believe keeping the tax cuts in place will partly pay for themselves, unleashing economic growth and fresh revenues, though

others say those projections are optimistic. Democrats put up stiff opposition against the House GOP plan—one lawmaker dashed from California after a week's stay in the hospital and another returned to Washington for the vote with her newborn son. Democrats will spend the weeks ahead warning Americans what's at stake. "Republicans and Trump promised to lower costs on day one, and instead their priorities have been focused on ripping health care away from kids, moms and others who need it most," said Brittany Pettersen, D-Colo., cradling her 4-week-old son, Sam. "All to fund tax breaks for billionaires like Elon Musk while increasing our national deficit by trillions of dollars," she said. "How can anyone show their face in their district after voting yes for this?" Trump, during a free-wheeling Cabinet meeting Wednesday at the White House, insisted he will not touch the nation's premier safety net programs—Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security—but seek ways to root out what Republicans call waste, fraud and abuse.

Electrocuted, Whipped, Tortured: The Reality Of Southeast Asia Scam Centres

Nairobi, Kenya. Starved, beaten and electrocuted, Ahmed remains traumatised months after being trafficked to Southeast Asia, one of an untold number of Africans forced to work in scam centres far from home. The complexes have flourished across the region, often staffed by foreigners who are made to swindle people in what analysts say is a multi-billion-dollar industry. Among them are Ethiopians, like 25-year-old Ahmed, who sign up for the promise of well-paid jobs. Instead, they run "love scams" -- often referred to as "pig butchering" -- inside infamous prison-like compounds that have mushroomed across Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.

The scammers operate fake profiles of wealthy Western women to lure men, and sometimes women, into investing in crypto-currencies -- before vanishing with their savings. Hundreds have been released from complexes in Myanmar in recent weeks, according to local sources. But the United Nations said in 2023 that "hundreds of

thousands" were "forcibly engaged by organised criminal gangs into online criminality" across Southeast Asia. Ahmed -- whose name AFP has changed to protect his identity -- endured months of captivity last year and returned home in December.

"I contemplated suicide," he said. Imprisoned, abused Ahmed said he was approached by an old friend offering him a job abroad that paid up to \$500 a month. It was a fortune in Ethiopia where the median monthly wage hovers around \$24, according to the International Labour Organization.

His family raised \$1,600 to send him to Laos, but he soon realised his friend had betrayed him when he was sucked into the scam world. He managed to talk his way out of a compound in Laos, only to be abducted by armed men and taken to another in Myanmar, where his captors demanded \$5,000 for his release.

"When I told them I'm poor and don't have money they laughed and then gave me electronic shocks that left me unconscious," he said. On the 11th day,

he said, half-starved, he was presented with a choice: work for free for 18 months, pay the ransom, or have sex on camera. He chose to work for free, but conditions were significantly worse than in Laos. "There were people in the compound who lost limbs because of torture," Ahmed said. "The administrators of the place used to cut fingers of 'misbehaving or mediocre' staff," he added.

"I feel lucky... Even though I'm still suffering the effects of electrocution, my limbs haven't been amputated."

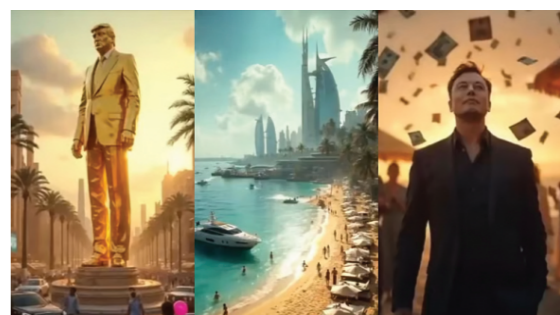
Africa targeted Ahmed said there were roughly 3,000 people working in the Myanmar centre, including Ethiopians, Kenyans and Ugandans. Africans are increasingly a target for scam centres, which require people who are proficient in English, desperate for work and digitally literate, said Jason Tower, Myanmar country director for the United States Institute of Peace who is based in the Thai capital Bangkok.

There is also little intervention from their governments.

Clip of Gaza as seaside resort posted on Trump's social media

WASHINGTON. US President Donald Trump's official social media accounts posted an apparently AI-generated video depicting war-ravaged Gaza rebuilt into a seaside resort, replete with a towering golden statue of himself. The video, which racked up more than 15 million views on Instagram and was shared thousands of times on Trump's Truth Social network by Wednesday morning, prompted some commentators to question whether the president's accounts had been hacked. The 33-second clip remained on Trump's accounts without denial or retraction hours after the initial posting on Tuesday night.

The video "Gaza 2025 What's Next?" opens with people on a rubble-strewn street emerging from a tunnel onto a beach with palm trees and yachts. Trump has floated the idea of a US takeover of Gaza under which its Palestinian population would be relocated - a proposal met with global condemnation. He later appeared to soften his plan, saying he was only recommending the idea, and conceding that the leaders of Jordan and Egypt - the proposed destinations for relocated Gazans - had rejected any effort to move Palestinians against



their will. In the social media clip, the soundtrack includes lyrics such as "Donald's coming to set you free, bringing the light for all to see", and "Feast and dance, the deal is done, Trump Gaza number one".

Seemingly AI-generated renditions of Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sip cocktails in swimsuits by a pool, while other shots show what appears to be Elon Musk dancing under a shower of cash on the beach. Social media users reacted with both support and criticism, but many questioned whether Trump himself had posted the montage.

AFP did not find any evidence the video had been shared online before it was posted to Trump's Truth Social and Instagram accounts. One scene closely resembles an AI-generated image of Trump and Netanyahu drinking cocktails that began circulating in early February. Another scene shows belly dancers shimmying on the beach, sporting thick, long beards more typically worn by Islamists.

More than 15 months of war, triggered by Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, have left much of the Gaza Strip in ruins and most of its population displaced from their homes. In Gaza, people who watched the video were in disbelief.

Hamas hands over four dead hostages to Red Cross, as Palestinians leave Israeli prison

Crowds of cheering families, friends and supporters gathered in the West Bank town of Beitunia, jostling for a glimpse of the bus as it arrived.

KHAN YOUNIS. Hamas handed over four dead hostages to the Red Cross early Thursday in exchange for Israel's release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, days before the first phase of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip was to end. An Israeli security official confirmed that Hamas handed the hostages' bodies to the Red Cross. Israel said the caskets were delivered with the help of Egyptian mediators through an Israeli crossing and an identification

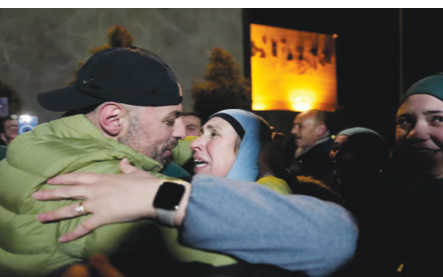
process had begun. At around the same time, a Red Cross convoy carrying several dozen released Palestinian prisoners left Israel's Ofer prison. Crowds of cheering families, friends and supporters gathered in the West Bank town of Beitunia, jostling for a glimpse of the bus as it arrived.

Well-wishers greeted the released prisoners, hugging them and snapping photos. One released man made a victory sign as he was carried on the shoulders of supporters, with the crowd chanting "God is Great."

Hundreds of other prisoners were to be sent to Gaza, many of them detained after the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks and never charged.

Israel had delayed the release of over 600 Palestinian prisoners since Saturday to protest what it called the cruel treatment of hostages during their handover by Hamas. The militant group has called the delay a "serious violation" of the ceasefire and said talks on a second phase aren't possible until the Palestinians are freed. Earlier Wednesday, Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu's office said the latest release of hostages' bodies would be carried out without ceremony, as opposed to past Hamas releases with stage-managed events



in front of crowds. Israel, along with the Red Cross and U.N. officials, have called the ceremonies humiliating for the hostages. Among those scheduled to leave Israel early Thursday were hundreds of detainees arrested from Gaza, held on suspicion of militancy after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack, without charge for months.

They include 445 men, 21 teenagers and one woman who were all arrested after the Hamas attack, according to lists shared by Palestinian officials that did not specify their ages. Only around 50 Palestinians were released into the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem in this round. Dozens sentenced to life over deadly attacks against Israelis will be exiled out of the Palestinian territories, taken to Egypt at least temporarily until other countries accept them.

The handover would complete both sides' obligations under the ceasefire's first phase, during which Hamas returned 33 hostages, including eight bodies, in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

The family of a hostage in Gaza said it was notified he is dead and his body was among those to be returned to Israel. The family did not say who informed them. Notifications typically come from Israel's military.

NEWS BOX

Nigerian drug supplier arrested in Mumbai in Chennai cocaine peddling case



CHENNAI. The Greater Chennai Police on Tuesday arrested a Nigerian man from Mumbai, who was identified as a drug supplier, as part of its ongoing investigation into a cocaine peddling gang. The anti narcotics intelligence unit (ANIU) arrested Eko Nathaniel Chibuzor from Mumbai and seized 5g of cocaine from him. He was brought to Chennai on a transit remand and sent to a prison here. Two others, V Purushottaman (32) of Urapakkam and A Ramkumar Raju (37) of Greams road were also arrested in the case registered on January 25.

ANIU and the Choolaimedu police, which were involved in the operation, had then arrested 14 people and seized around 60g of cocaine, 1.15 kg of ganja and their mobile phones. Some of them included people who worked in a private restobar and supplied to customers.

Based on interrogation of the accused, other members of the network were tracked which led to the arrest of Mayur Purot, S Waran Grake Kani (28) of Chengalpattu and S Surendran (35) of Thiruvannamiyur four days ago. Information given by them led to the latest arrests, police said.

GHMC Annapurna canteens cry for repairs

HYDERABAD. Most of the Annapurna centres, which serve affordable and hygienic food at Rs 5 to thousands of poor and needy people have become unfit, rusted, and are on the verge of collapse. More than 50% of the centres, built with tin sheds over a decade ago, have corroded and become unfit, requiring immediate repairs or replacement.

GHMC officials told that out of GHMC-run 150 Annapurna centres, eight have been removed due to road widening, and another nine have been relocated due to low turnout. Around 60-65 centres are said to be in good condition, while nearly 65-70 canteens have become rusted and corroded.

The Annapurna Meals Scheme is implemented in about 150 centres, with one centre in each GHMC division, providing around 30,000 meals per day at a cost of Rs 27.63 per meal. On an average, 250 meals per centre are served daily to needy people, with an annual GHMC budget of Rs 25 crore.

Officials told TNIE that many Annapurna canteens have rusted and decayed, requiring revival, while those severely damaged will be replaced with new structures. To improve their functioning, GHMC commissioner K Ilambarathi has constituted a committee to inspect the condition and facilities at the existing canteens. GHMC chief engineer Bhaskar Reddy has been appointed as the head of the committee, with additional commissioners Pankaja (Health) and Venugopal Reddy (Advertisement) as members. As per the commissioner's instructions, the committee visited the Annapurna centre at Mint Compound, Lakdikapul, recently.

Telangana police uncover child trafficking racket, arrest couples buying infants illegally

HYDERABAD. A joint investigation by the police and Child Welfare Committee members into a child trafficking case has revealed that childless couples were purchasing infants outright, though they were aware that what they were doing was illegal. The Special Operations Team (SOT) of Malkajgiri, in collaboration with Chaitanyapuri police and Child Welfare Committee members, on Tuesday uncovered a child trafficking case in which prospective parents sought to purchase the infants. The police had arrested the suspects involved in the transportation of the infants illegally from Gujarat to Hyderabad, as well as the couples who tried to purchase children.

The investigation revealed that some of the accused obtained infants from private individuals rather than through authorised government channels for supplying them to childless couples.

A similar case had been reported in May 2024 at the Medipally police station, where individuals approached the CWC for adoption but turned to illegal means due to delays in the official process. "However, in the case busted on Tuesday by the Chaitanyapuri police, the adopting parents were fully aware that they were taking the babies illegally," the official disclosed.

Police arrested two couples and one individual for purchasing infants illegally at rates of Rs. 1.5 lakh for a baby girl and Rs 2.5 lakh for a baby boy. The investigation identified Vandana as the key suspect. She is alleged to have sent infants from Gujarat to Hyderabad along with Sunitha Suman and Savitri Devi. The babies were then handed over to Kola Krishnaveni, Deepthi, and Sampath Kumar by intermediaries including Sharada, Umarani, Jayasree, Sravan, and Soni Keerthi.

Activists, residents criticise BBMP Chief Commissioner for inaction on illegal construction

Residents have alleged that the BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath delayed hearings of an illegally constructed building for 106 days.

BENGALURU. Civic activists and residents have criticised Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath for his alleged inaction against developers constructing illegal buildings across Bengaluru. They accuse him of allowing violators to complete their projects unchecked, despite clear violations of building norms.

One such case has surfaced in Seegehalli, where a building owned by Jayaram Naidu was allegedly constructed without any sanctioned plan or approvals. Activists claim that instead of taking action, BBMP authorities gave Naidu ample time to finish the illegal construction. This is not Naidu's first instance of flouting regulations. According to residents, he has previously built two other unauthorised structures that have received notices from BBMP.

Residents of SS Layout in Seegehalli of Basavanapura Ward in KR Puram, allege that the Chief Commissioner delayed hearings for 106 days, postponing them at least four times, which ultimately enabled Naidu to complete



the construction of his illegal building on Sai Mandir Road.

"Violators are required to maintain the status quo and halt construction once a notice is issued. However, in the Mahadevapura BBMP zone, developers seem to operate without any fear of the Commissioner or his orders," said Sandeep Anirudhan, a civic activist, who is also a resident of Mahadevapura zone. "The top official does not seem to be taking any action against negligent officials," he added.

Residents highlight the case of Appeal Number 285/2024, involving the controversial Seegehalli building, where BBMP repeatedly postponed hearing—from November 30, 2024 to December 7, then from December 21 to February 1, and again from February 15 to March 15.

A senior official from BBMP's legal department noted that, previously, citizens had to represent BBMP in court on such matters. However, following a High Court directive, the Chief Commissioner is now responsible for hearing cases and passing final orders. "One of the main reasons illegal buildings are not razed is the lack of cooperation and support from ward engineers. If the Chief Commissioner suspends five to six ward engineers across different zones, we might finally see some change," the official stated. BBMP has also issued notices to Naidu's other projects in the same locality- Building No 17 and 18, which reportedly has 46 flats, including a penthouse, across six floors, allegedly violating multiple building bylaws.

Water tanker demand in Hyderabad rises 60 per cent as summer begins early

HYDERABAD. With temperatures soaring earlier than expected this year (February, 2025), the demand for water tankers in Hyderabad has already increased by 60% compared to February 2024. As groundwater is depleting, officials anticipate a further surge in demand during the peak summer season from March to May.

From February 1 to 24, over 1.44 lakh water tankers were booked through Metro Customer Care (MCC), HMWSSB mobile app, IVRS (customer care) and other platforms, compared to 87,700 during the same period last year. The highest number of tanker bookings comes from areas under HMWSSB divisions like Manikonda, Durgam Cheruvu, Kukatpally, S R Nagar, Nizampet, Hafeezpet, Saheb Nagar and others. According to official sources, the Water Board supplies around 545 million gallons of water (MGD) per day with additional water sourced from groundwater reserves. Water consumption usually rises by about 15% during summer. However,

authorities assure that there is no water shortage in Hyderabad as major reservoirs — Osmansagar, Himayatsagar, Manjira, Singur,



Krishna and Godavari — have adequate water storage. Further, the Water Board has taken necessary steps to ensure uninterrupted supply of water.

For this summer, HMWSSB will continue to provide 545 MGD upto ORR. However, certain areas experiencing significant groundwater depletion — Asifnagar, Shaikpet (Division-3), Banjara Hills, Jubilee Hills, SR

Nagar, Fateh Nagar, Erragadda (Division-6), Moosapet, Bhagyanagar, Kukatpally, Hasmathpet (Division-9), Madhapur, Kondapur, Gachibowli, Ayyappa Society (Division-15), Hydernagar, Budwel, Attapur (Division-16), Miyapur, Chandanagar (Division-17), and Manikonda, Kismathpur, Jalpally (Division-18) — are being closely monitored.

To prevent any disruptions in supply, HMWSSB has ramped up its tanker services by deploying additional staff at filling stations, ensuring uninterrupted pumping operations, reducing turnaround time and increasing the number of tanker trips as needed. There are more than 966 registered tankers under HMWSSB, with the majority having a 5,000 litres capacity followed by 10,000 litres and above. The board has more tankers at its disposal this year compared to last summer, ensuring that most requests are fulfilled within the Service Level Agreement (SLA) timeframe.

KSRTC staff dig up dumpyard, revive forgotten pond at Vizhinjam depot

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. A heap of waste lay near the Vizhinjam KSRTC depot. And the stench was unbearable. It was a place no one paid much attention to, except to park three buses on its hardened surface. Little did the KSRTC employees know that a pond buried for over 35 years under the waste would be a solution to their long-standing water shortage. "It was just a dumping ground for years. Old employees told us there was once a pond here, a place where people used to bathe and where fish thrived. Honestly, we didn't believe it at first," said Sathesh Kumar V O, inspector at the depot.

For over three decades, the pond had been buried beneath layers of mud, waste and discarded scraps. Meanwhile, the depot had been battling a severe water crisis. Drinking water was delivered twice a week, barely enough to quench thirst, let alone clean the fleet of buses or maintain toilets. Attempts to dig a borewell were futile. Situated on a coastal belt and with the Vizhinjam port project nearby, the depot couldn't secure permissions. Ministers were approached, requests were filed, but every route seemed blocked until an offhand comment from a senior employee gave hope.

"They mentioned the pond like it was some myth. But desperation makes you try everything," said K Shibu, Transport Democratic Federation (TDF) representative. With approval from KSRTC and an initial fund of Rs 78,000, excavation began. An excavator rumbled onto the site, clawing at the dirt. Soon, they realised that the heap of waste was just the tip of the iceberg. "We thought we'd clear it in a week. But one load after another, the muck just wouldn't end," said Shajikumar V S, vehicle supervisor.

By the time they reached halfway, the funds had dried up. Work halted. The half-excavated pit stood still and so did their hopes, briefly. The corporation would sanction the fund if water is seen and a report of completion given. Neither of that happened. That's when over 30 depot employees decided to pool in money from their pockets. Another Rs 80,000 was collected and the job was done.

Gas leak sparks scare at city plant; TNPCB says it's only steam, emission within limits

Residents near the facility were unaware of the leak until informed by foundry unit employees.

CHENNAI. After a cloud of gas emerged from Coromandel International Limited's (CIL) plant at Ennore on Wednesday morning, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) officials inspected the plant and confirmed that only steam had leaked from the economiser unit.

Employees at Ashok Leyland's adjacent foundry division noticed mist-like formations from CIL's facility around 9 am, causing eye and throat irritation, some employees told. However, no one required hospitalisation or medical treatment.

"I was working at the plant when we suddenly experienced eye irritation, a foul smell, and mild breathing difficulty. Someone pressed the emergency button, and the management swiftly moved us to a room," an Ashok Leyland employee said. Normalcy resumed within 30 minutes, employees added.

A TNPCB official stated that at 8.45 am, a steam leak was detected in the first economiser of sulphuric acid plant 2 at

CIL. The economiser removes excess heat from sulphur dioxide, produced during the sulphur melting process, by passing water through a coil. The cooled

coil. As a precaution, the boiler feed water system connected to the economiser was isolated, and CIL will rectify the puncture, the official said.



sulphur dioxide is then converted into sulphur trioxide with a catalyst. The leak is suspected to have been caused by a puncture in the economiser's steam

While the leaked steam may contain SO2 residuals, emission levels remained within permissible limits, the official added, noting that the mist seen was steam.

Residents near the facility were unaware of the leak until informed by foundry unit employees. Meanwhile, CIL released a statement refuting rumours of an ammonia leak and urging the public not to panic. In December 2023, around 68 tonnes of ammonia had leaked in 15 minutes from the offshore pipeline of CIL's Ennore fertiliser plant.

"We clarify that the rumours of an ammonia leak are untrue. The plant does not currently operate ammonia facilities, so such a leak is impossible," CIL said, adding that it follows strict safety protocols and regulatory guidelines.

White-topping work hits businesses on Bengaluru's Commercial Street

Traders along the stretch, which also connects Commercial Street and other busy roads, say the dust and rising temperature have further deterred customers from visiting the area.

BENGALURU. Main Guard Cross Road, a crucial link between Bowring Hospital Road and Infantry Road in Shivajinagar, has become a major headache for traders and motorists due to the slow progress of white-topping work by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's (BBMP's). The public has complained that work is dragging on at snail's pace, inconveniencing them.

Traders along the stretch, which also connects Commercial Street and other busy roads, say the dust and rising temperature have further

deterred customers from visiting the area. "Parking is not allowed due to the ongoing white topping work, and increased traffic congestion is making matters worse. Vehicles that were supposed to be diverted to Cubbon Road are also entering Main Guard Cross Road to reach Wheeler Road, Banaswadi and other areas. This has led to a dip in customer footfall," said a shopkeeper at Safina Plaza.

Echoing this, Mayank Rohatgi from Commercial Street Association stated that there is a 20 per cent dip in business, compared to the normal season. "Customers are worried about

getting stuck in traffic, and many decide at the last minute to shop elsewhere instead of coming to Commercial Street," said Rohatgi.

To ensure regular customers and staff are not inconvenienced, a popular jewellery store on the stretch has made alternative arrangements.

"For the benefit of customers, alternative route maps have been shared via WhatsApp. We pick up customers and bring them to the shop and offer refreshments. This is done to ensure they are not inconvenienced," said a staffer at the jewellery store.



Europe unsure if US is still an ally

SINCE the end of World War II, America's grand strategy was to ensure that no hostile power arose on either flank of Eurasia. To this end, the US initiated the Marshall Plan and helped rebuild ruined Europe. This, in turn, became an important factor in raising US prosperity in the 1950s and 1960s. It also shaped the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) alliance and provided men and material to ensure the security of Europe.

In the east, the US went further in the pursuit of its goal. It fought a war in Korea that cost it over 35,000 lives and another in Vietnam, where it lost over 58,000 soldiers. The US occupied Japan till 1952 and completely remade its society and government in its own image, and it still retains substantial forces in the country at over a dozen bases. American President Donald Trump seems to be wanting to turn this policy inside out. He seems to want to make deals with the Eurasian powers the US targeted — Russia and China — and write off America's erstwhile friends. His pursuit of territorial expansion with regard to Canada, Panama and Denmark looks like a "sphere of influence" policy where the US will be the dominant Western Hemisphere power, while Eurasia will be left to the tender mercies of Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. His new posture is manifesting itself in his approach to the war in Ukraine, where he has adopted what can, at best, be termed as a "Russia-leaning neutrality". This is apparent in the stark difference visible in a US draft resolution circulated at the United Nations to mark the third anniversary of the Russian invasion. The draft has mourned the loss of life in the "Russia-Ukraine conflict" and sought "a swift end to the conflict, including by addressing its root causes", while calling for a lasting peace between Ukraine and Russia. This is a rival resolution to the one that Ukraine and Europe have backed, which speaks of Russian aggression and the implementation of past resolutions demanding that the Russians end the war and withdraw from Ukraine's internationally recognised territory.

Trump has adopted a hard approach towards Kyiv. After freezing out Volodymyr Zelenskyy from the first US talks with Russia, Trump falsely accused Ukraine of starting the war that has ravaged that nation and killed thousands of people. When Zelenskyy criticised him for living in a "disinformation bubble", Trump lashed out, calling the Ukrainian President a "dictator". He attacked Ukraine for tricking the US into spending \$350 billion "to fight a war that couldn't be won". And he has demanded a deal through which the US would control half the mineral rights of Ukraine to repay the money that Washington has spent in supporting Kyiv. According to US News & World Report, the US has actually spent around \$100 billion, while the Europeans have put in nearly \$400 billion till now. The Trump plan is based on delivering a systemic shock to Europe and Ukraine to destabilise, if not destroy, the older system where the US was a firm NATO ally and a key backer of Ukraine in its war with Russia. The second objective has been to freeze out Europe and embrace Russia as a partner in making peace in Ukraine, even while blaming it for causing the war. Earlier this month, Trump called Putin and talked to him about ending the war without consulting either Ukraine or its European allies.

As for China, things seem to be moving towards a major trade deal which would take up from where the Phase I trade deal between the US and China in the last year of his previous administration left off. His advisers such as Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent have been pushing a new deal, while his new alter ego, Elon Musk, has extensive business interests in China. Just how deep the shift against Europe is was manifested by the speech of US Vice-President JD Vance at the Munich Security Conference last week. He said free speech and democracy were under attack in Europe, but not from Russia or China, but mainstream political parties that were attacking European right-wing parties like the Alternative for Germany (AfD). It is no coincidence that the Far Right in Europe is soft towards Putin.

How a legal loophole shields marital rape in India

Marriage has evolved from a contractual bond to a partnership of equals, built on mutual respect and consent. Yet, the marital rape exception contradicts this shift, perpetuating abuse and denying women legal recourse.

The Chhattisgarh High Court acquitted a man convicted under Sections 304 (culpable homicide), 375 (rape) and 377 (unnatural sexual offence) of the IPC of the death of his wife. The court ruled that non-consensual sex and unnatural acts within marriage do not constitute offences due to the marital rape exception under Section 375. The court extended this exception to Section 377, relying on the SC's decriminalisation of homosexuality.

While the judgment is legally sound, it is disheartening that a woman lost her life after enduring extremely gruesome violations — details of which cannot be reproduced. This resulted in the loss of her honour, dignity and self-esteem, an outcome that sends chills down the spine, leaving a sense that something deeply wrong remains unaddressed.

Marriage has evolved from a contractual bond to a partnership of equals, built on mutual respect and consent. Yet, the marital rape exception contradicts this shift, perpetuating abuse and denying women legal recourse. By presuming perpetual consent, the law disregards modern understandings of dignity, autonomy and human rights. Legalising non-consensual sex within marriage undermines individual freedom and the principle that a wife's bodily autonomy is as vital as that of a husband. Globally, about one in three women have experienced sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime (WHO, 2021). A study has found that sexual violence from intimate partners in women aged 15-49 ranged 6-59 per cent across 10 countries (WHO, 2005).

The National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) and National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) are primary sources of national-level data on violence against women in India. However, the data includes only reported cases and marital rape is not legally recognised, leading to less than 1 per cent of such cases being reported. Resolving marital rape in India is complex due to cultural norms surrounding marriage and sexuality. Unlike western societies that emphasise individual autonomy, the Indian society tends to be more conservative, with limited open discussion on sexual matters. Women face societal pressure to conform to traditional roles and any deviation is often seen as a threat to the institution of marriage. The concept of consent within marriage is complicated by cultural and moral implications, where, in more conservative areas, men may feel a strong expectation to fulfill their sexual needs within marriage as sex outside of it is either unavailable or morally rejected. This can blur the line between entitlement and mutual consent. According to a study by Deosthali et al, which analyses data, a 2010 survey found that one in five men reported forcing their wives into sex. In rural Karnataka, 36 per cent women agreed that husbands might force sex even if their wives refused. A Chennai study found 31 per cent women reported sexual violence by husbands while a survey in UP found 32 per cent husbands admitted to forcing sex.

The NFHS (2019-2020) shows that 29 per cent married women have experienced physical or sexual violence from their husbands. Studies also highlight high rates of sexual violence during pregnancy, with 40 per cent



women reporting violence during pregnancy, experiencing sexual violence. These figures likely under-report the prevalence of marital rape due to stigma. Marital rape leads to severe physical, sexual, reproductive and psychological health issues for women. Research shows that abusive husbands are more likely to engage in extramarital sex, have sexually transmitted infections and expose their spouses to increased health risks. Sexual violence is linked to stillbirths, pelvic inflammatory diseases, limited access to prenatal care and even suicide attempts by women. These findings raise serious questions about the cost women have to pay to "save" the institution of marriage, often cited as a reason to exempt marital rape. Sweden criminalised marital rape in 1965, leading to a rise in reported cases and public awareness.

A 2013 study by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention showed that this legal change, coupled with public education on consent, helped women identify non-consensual sex as rape. It also empowered women to seek help from authorities and support organisations, redefining marriage as a partnership based on equality and mutual respect, which fostered broader social changes. The criminalisation of marital rape has brought about significant shifts in societal attitudes and increased reporting. In the UK (1991), it empowered women to recognise marital rape as an abuse of power, leading to higher reporting rates (Kelly & Gavey, 2001). In the US (1993), legal reforms raised awareness, reduced tolerance and underscored a woman's right to refuse sex in marriage (Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 2005). In Australia (1981), it resulted in higher reporting and

prosecution, with a shift in societal views from seeing forced sex as a private matter to acknowledging it as a violation of personal rights (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008).

Though initially met with opposition, these legal changes gradually fostered greater recognition of women's rights and helped instill more progressive values in society.

The Justice Verma Committee (2013), the 2014 Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, and the Pam Rajput Committee (2015) recommended criminalising marital rape, saying that marriage does not imply consent. While international law recognises marital rape, 36 countries, including India, do not. Its criminalisation would ensure proper law enforcement response, survivor support and alignment with global human rights norms.

Recognising and criminalising marital rape in India faces challenges like cultural resistance, potential misuse, inadequate support systems, judicial burden and marital tensions. While legal recognition is vital, a holistic approach is equally crucial — encompassing comprehensive sex education, stronger marriage counselling, legal literacy, victim support, gender sensitisation, open discussions on consent, community interventions and reinforced legal protections. A multifaceted strategy combining education, legal reform and societal support is essential for lasting change.

Even the Mahabharata, despite its narratives of wronged women, upholds an undeniable truth in the Anushasana Parva (The Book of Precepts): "The righteousness of men depends upon women." A society that denies women dignity and autonomy imperils its own moral foundation.

Laptops over trees

Uttarakhand govt squanders forest funds



Uttarakhand, a state revered for its natural beauty and ecological significance, faces a stark paradox. While citizens rally to protect Himalayan cedar trees and discuss solutions for environmental degradation, a recent Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report exposes rampant misuse of funds meant for forest conservation. Money intended for afforestation under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) has instead been squandered on iPhones, laptops and office renovations. The report reveals that Rs 14 crore meant for reforestation was diverted to non-essential expenditures, even as afforestation projects lagged. The CAMPA mandates that funds be used within a set timeframe, yet in 37 cases, compensatory afforestation took over eight years. It is not surprising that under these circumstances, the survival rate of planted trees between 2017-2022 was a dismal 33 per cent, far below the 60-65 per cent

standard set by the Forest Research Institute. This financial mismanagement is even more alarming, given Uttarakhand's mounting ecological crises. The

state is already struggling with a drying Ganga, landslides and deforestation-driven disasters. Reports highlight unchecked hill cutting, unstable slopes and pollution concerns. Yet, those in power continue to divert funds away from genuine conservation efforts. Beyond the forest department, the Workers Welfare Board spent Rs 607 crore without proper approvals and 52 projects bypassed mandatory environmental clearances. Such governance failures demand accountability. Forest Minister Subodh Uniyal has ordered a probe, but unless it leads to strict action, public trust will further erode.

When citizens are fighting to save trees and restore degraded landscapes, the government's financial recklessness is nothing short of betrayal. Uttarakhand must act decisively — before its rivers dry up, its forests vanish and its green cover becomes just another forgotten policy promise.

Deadly cost of hyper-competitive education

What has severely damaged the intellectual growth of our kids is the one-sided importance to one's performance in tests like the JEE, NEET and CUET.

ISN'T it absurd that we can't think of anything beyond a set of technical solutions — say, the installation of 'suicide proofing' fans in hostel rooms, or nets in balconies and lobbies — to the recurring problem of suicides or the abrupt end of the life-journey of broken/shattered/ disillusioned young students in Kota, which is a site of the demonic coaching industry?

Well, in recent times, the business of the Kota coaching industry has somewhat declined because of the 'bad' name it got as newspapers began to report regularly about the pathetic mental health of young aspirants. In fact, the number of students in Kota is falling and, as a report reveals, the annual revenue of this business enterprise has been reduced to Rs 3,500 crore from Rs 7,000 crore. However, nothing seems to have changed as far as the agony of young minds is concerned. In this year only, seven students have ended their lives by suicide and sought to convey the message that they could not bear the pressure and fulfil the parental aspirations for 'good' careers/lucrative salary packages.

It is sad that we are not yet ready to think of a meaningful solution to this sort of suicide beyond the parameters of the typical 'law and order' discourse or even a set of routine 'counselling sessions'. In fact, it is high time some of us began to raise certain critical issues we seldom talk about. In this context, as a teacher and concerned citizen, let me make four observations. First, what has severely damaged the intellectual/psychic growth of our children is the faulty pattern of education that has attached almost one-sided importance to one's performance in standardised tests, like the JEE, NEET and CUET. It has systematically devalued what really matters for the intellectual, aesthetic and moral development of the child.

And, I have no hesitation in saying that these standardised tests destroy the joy of learning and kill the ecstasy of a

creatively nuanced critical pedagogy. Instead of arousing the learner's curiosity or activating his/her ability to think, interpret, contemplate and go deeper into the exciting domain of sciences and humanities, these problematic MCQ-centric tests transform him/her into a 'war strategist', continually mastering the 'technique' of identifying the 'one and only one correct answer' — instantly and mechanically.

Second, in addition to the obsession with standardised tests, we are witnessing another disturbing phenomenon — the growth of 'dummy schools'. As these schools have a setting with coaching centres, young students need not attend regular classes and take part in the dynamics of school culture. Instead, they do what coaching centres dictate — say, the act of mastering the 'success manuals' or all sorts of strategies for cracking such tests as the JEE and NEET. Be it physics or mathematics, biology or chemistry, everything is reduced to an MCQ question. No wonder, the formative years of these youngsters are spent in an environment that promotes endless drilling, mental fatigue and hyper-competitiveness and the chronic fear of failure. It destroys the joy of learning, or the art exploring the domains of science, culture and aesthetics holistically, creatively and mindfully. No wonder, they miss what a comprehensive school culture provides — say, a life-long relationship with good teachers, a spirit of fellow feeling and the joy of music, theatre, sports and other 'non-utilitarian' creative pursuits.

Third, it is equally important on the part of the parents to accept a set of fundamental facts about their children's unique aptitudes, inclinations, capabilities and mental

orientations. For instance, there is no harm if your child is not particularly inclined to science and mathematics. Likewise, it is possible for a child to have deep interests in the so-called 'soft' domains — say, music, literature, aesthetics, theatre or social work.

And, it is not a mistake on the part of your child if she/he needs some breathing space for exploring and

psychic pressure and fulfil the unnatural parental ambitions. No wonder, it is now common to find a suicide note like this: "I am the worst daughter. Sorry mummy, papa. Yahi lasts option hai."

And finally, let us accept that the routinised acts like pariksha pe charcha or a set of counselling sessions fail to address the real issue. The fact is that these youngsters

are suffering because we live in an over-populated society of perpetual scarcity. Moreover, because of the neoliberal/market-driven doctrine of hyper-competitiveness and the resultant logic of the 'survival of the fittest', the commodification of almost every aspect of life seems to have become normal. As education is increasingly commodified and marketed, it loses its libertarian potential. Nobody joins the coaching industry to think critically or activate the faculties that make us truly humane, compassionate and sensitive.

Likewise, these days, the worth of being educated is measured primarily in terms of "placement and salary package." And this reckless pressure to emerge as a saleable commodity or a "resource" that the market needs to use tends to cripple

one from deep inside. Alienation or chronic nervousness is the price of 'success'. Indeed, as the latest National Crime Records Bureau data suggests, with 13,044 student suicides in a year, an "epidemic is sweeping India."

When will we wake up, initiate a movement for structural and cultural transformation and give a life-affirming vision of education and vocation to our children?



understanding what she/he really wishes to do in life. However, as the anxiety-ridden middle class parents abhor any 'risk', they want their kids to follow what is seen as the standardised path towards a 'secure' career. So, these youngsters, irrespective of their inclinations and capabilities, are compelled to nurture the same ambition that is seen as 'acceptable': the desire to become a software engineer or a doctor. Quite often, it becomes exceedingly difficult for them to bear the resultant

There are an array of things to choose from when it comes to picking the right hobby idea for your child.

Choosing a hobby idea when your little one is ready for summer holidays is not rocket science. Just you need to take care of the following things:
 Know his or her interest: It is very important. Not knowing what interests the most to your child may backfire if you get him or her into a wrong hobby class. So, seek their opinion first and ask them which class they want to go for.

Don't press for one:

If your child wants to enjoy some fun moments at home and is comfortable this way, let it be. It does not

Hobby ideas for your Child

mean that since everybody is doing a hobby class, should your child too does it.

Make your home a hobby destination:

Home is where most of the fun is. So during the vacation, turn your home into a camping zone at night by installing a tent and hosting a camping party in the garden. You can invite your child's friends and let them have a blast in the party.

Popular hobby ideas:

Painting, drawing, cooking, baking, musical interments like guitar are some of the popular ideas one can pursue. Also in vogue are calligraphy and the art of gift wrapping. Creative writing is also one of the sought after hobby ideas.

Not only these hobbies let your child pick up extra skills, but also will let them look at things with a different perspective.



Does your little one suffer from diaper rash?

The main cause for that annoying rash on the bum and thighs of your baby are nappies or wet diapers that cause great discomfort. Although the main cause for diaper rash is excessive wetness, other causes include tight diapers, humid climate, and not washing cloth nappies properly, which

- rash in the first place.
- Petroleum jelly goes a long way in curing diaper rash effectively.
- Avoid using perfumed soaps or detergents to wash nappies — it might be the cause for the rash.
- Use a mild soap and lukewarm water instead of wipes to clean your baby.



- Always let the diaper area dry completely before making your baby wear another nappy.
- Add a little oatmeal to warm water when you're giving your baby a bath.
- Avoid using diapers that have

- leaves residues of detergent in the nappy.
- Change your baby's nappy as often as you can so as to keep their bottoms clean and dry.
- Letting your baby stay without a diaper for a few minutes helps the rash heal faster.
- Applying aloe vera gel on the rash keeps the skin free of moisture.
- When you keep dirty nappies for a wash, add half a cup of vinegar to the water and rinse the diapers without using any detergents, which might be causing the

- plastic edges.
- Dry your babies bottom gently with a soft towel or cotton — don't scrub it.
- As much as you can, try and avoid using talcum powder on your baby, it can get into the little one's lungs.



Being a parent is difficult and so is coming off as a proud child. It's only human to give vent to your rage by using harsh words. However, when the recipient of your outrage is your own child, it might have uncertain and unmanageable repercussions. We list 9 insensitive things that you should avoid saying to your child.

1. I was much more responsible when I was your age
 Comparing your child and giving him an example of what all you were capable of when you were a kid is the first big mistake parents make. Their irritation stems from 'expectations' - expectations of bringing up the 'perfect' kid. Try and recall your shortcomings as a child and what all troubles you bothered your parents with. You are the elder one in the relationship hence you ought to know more. A statement such as this will break your child's confidence.
2. You always end up taking wrong decisions
 Don't penalise your kid for being immature. Everyone is allowed to make mistakes and it is in fact a part of the learning process. He might have taken up a field of study that doesn't interest you or perhaps working with a company that you're not very proud of, but that doesn't mean you accuse him of the decision.
3. Why can't you be more like your brother/sister?
 This is once again an unreasonable comparison and a common one at that. Avoid seeding in animosity between your children by comparing their abilities. Doing so may create a fissure between the siblings. You don't want your kid to harbour negative feelings for you, hence avoid assessing your kids.
4. Leave me alone!
 Adults have huge responsibilities to take care of, responsibilities that children are innocently oblivious of. And there are times when we want to be left alone too. Kids are incapable of understanding the gravity of such situations. An impatient outburst of 'Leave me alone!' can make your child feel neglected, unwanted and depressed at the same time. Show some patience and avoid saying something bad to him.
5. You should be ashamed of yourself
 This statement is outright harsh and saying such an awful thing to any child is simply 'bad'. Yes, there are mischievous kids who go about pestering people with a devil-may-care attitude but that does not mean you reprimand him like this. There are better and milder ways to make the child understand the difference between good and bad.
6. You're just like your father/mother
 Not all married couples are happy living together and the bitterness in their relationship often translates into exchange of unkind words against each other. Some relationships end in separation too. Either ways, kids are a witness to this mutual hostility and criticism. So when you shower

9 things never to say to Your child

- your partner's animosity on your kid, that's when he begins to lose respect.
- 7. You always find ways to hurt me
 There are times when children hurt their parents' sentiments by going against their wishes. Most times it is unintentional but there are kids who do so on purpose. However, saying something like the above statement would make your child feel guilty about his/her decision. He might comply with your demands to make you happy but you'd be taking away his right to happiness in the long run. Let your children take their own decisions and let them live a guilt-free life.
- 8. It's better to be childless than have a kid like you
 This statement is outright harsh and saying such an awful thing to any child is simply 'bad'. Yes, there are mischievous kids who go about pestering people with a devil-may-care attitude but that does not mean you reprimand him like this. There are better and milder ways to make the child understand the difference between good and bad.
- 9. Get rid of the bad company of your friends
 We (read adults) don't think before making friends. Neither do children. The only difference is that we know how to stay away from bad company and children don't. Their friends mean the world to them and therefore you cannot just order them to get a new set of 'good' friends.



The above statement is mostly an extreme emotional outburst but can have grave consequences on the kid. Unquestionably, it is the most hurtful thing you can ever say to your child. No matter what the crisis is, saying something like this could make you regret for life.

Danish Siddiqui Journalism Award announced. Entries open now

Honouring fearless journalism, the Danish Siddiqui Foundation invites entries for its inaugural award. Recognising truth, courage, and integrity in the media.

Broadcast media. Danish Siddiqui, a two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist, was renowned for his fearless story telling and eloquent imagery.

Danish was tragically killed while reporting in Kandahar, Afghanistan, on July 16, 2021, yet his legacy endures, inspiring journalists to pursue impactful journalism with courage and conviction.

AWARD CATEGORIES AND ELIGIBILITY

The award is available to all Indian nationals, including foreign correspondents working in India. Submissions must be based on work done between January 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024.

The entries are judged on a relevance and impact matrix while observing ethical standards with particular attention to new and unheard stories.

A distinguished panel of senior journalists will assess the nominations:



Rajdeep Sardesai: A veteran Indian journalist and news anchor.

Vaishna Roy: Senior journalist.

Kishalay Bhattacharjee: Dean, Jindal School of Journalism and Communication.

Gabrielle Fonseca: South Asia editor at Reuters Pictures.

Speaking about the award, Rajdeep Sardesai said, "I am honored to be a part of a jury to decide on the awards that are being

instituted in the name of Danish Siddiqui, a photojournalist, who, in the truest sense of words, represented the best values of journalism. Danish with his ground reporting, with his photography, stood for courage, he stood for truth, he stood for empathy. I would encourage all journalists out there to apply for the award and celebrate Danish's legacy by doing the kind of meaningful, impactful work that we would like to honor and recognise."

SUBMISSION DEADLINE AND CEREMONY DETAILS

Nominations will be accepted until March 31, 2025. The awards ceremony is planned for May 4, 2025 in New Delhi. As Akhtar Siddiqui, a member of the foundation board, put it, the purpose of the award is to honour journalists who report as per the ethos of Danish description of journalism, which is 'a reflection of the consciousness of society.'

Out on bail, Pune rape accused used mask to hide identity, manhunt to arrest him

A history-sheeter out on bail since 2019 allegedly raped a 26-year-old woman inside a stationary state transport bus at the busy Swargate bus station in Pune.



New Delhi. Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Wednesday said the Pune rape case accused deserves nothing but the death penalty. He said he has directed the Pune police commissioner to investigate the alleged rape of a woman inside a stationary state transport bus at the Swargate depot and swiftly arrest the accused.

The accused, who is on the run, used a mask to hide his identity after the crime. The Pune Crime Branch has deployed 13 teams along with a dog squad to arrest the accused. Additionally, a bounty of Rs 1 lakh has been announced by the police for anyone providing information about the accused.

A 26-year-old woman was allegedly raped inside a stationary state transport bus at the Swargate depot in Pune on Tuesday morning. The accused, identified as 36-year-old Dattatraya Ramdas Gade, was out on bail for a previous criminal case. Gade is a history-sheeter with several criminal cases registered against him at Shirur, Shikrapur, and Swargate police stations. The accused is currently on the run.

Ajit Pawar instructed the Pune Police Commissioner to investigate the incident thoroughly and arrest the accused at the earliest.

"The incident of rape at the Swargate bus station is extremely unfortunate, painful, infuriating, and shameful to all in civilised society. The crime committed by the accused is unforgivable, and there can be no other punishment for him than death. I have directed the Pune police commissioner to personally look into this matter and arrest the accused immediately," Pawar said. Pawar said that the Maharashtra Chief Minister has also taken note of the incident and given necessary instructions to the police.

"Instructions have been given to the Minister of Women and Child Development and the Chairperson of the State Women's Commission to provide justice, psychological support, and all possible assistance to the victim," he added.

PUNE RAPE CASE

The incident happened when the woman was waiting for a bus for Phaltan in adjoining Satara district at one of the platforms at around 5.45 am.

According to the woman, as she was waiting for the bus, a man approached and engaged her in conversation, calling her 'didi' (sister), and said the bus for Satara had arrived at another platform.

He took her to an empty 'Shiv Shahi' AC bus parked elsewhere on the sprawling station premises. As the lights inside the bus were not on, she hesitated to get in at first, but the man convinced her that it was the right vehicle. He then followed her inside and raped her before fleeing, the woman told police.

Police are examining CCTV footage of the Swargate bus station and nearby areas, and seeking technical assistance for clues and to track down the accused.

Army cracks down on ex-soldiers tarnishing its image on social media

New Delhi. The Army has initiated strict action against former soldiers who are allegedly spreading misinformation and damaging the army's reputation on social media. According to sources, Army headquarters has instructed all commands to actively monitor social media platforms and file FIRs against any ex-serviceman found engaging in such activities.

FIR REGISTERED IN JAIPUR, MORE UNDER RADAR

In a recent development, an FIR has been registered in Jaipur against a former soldier accused of repeatedly making allegations against the army and its functioning through a YouTube channel.

Sources suggest that several other ex-servicemen across different cities are also under the army's radar for similar activities. Some of these individuals reportedly include those who were dismissed from service due to indiscipline.

ARMY'S STRATEGY, IDENTIFYING AND PROSECUTING OFFENDERS

To counter this issue, the Army headquarters has ordered all its commands to continuously monitor social media, track individuals involved in spreading false narratives, and take legal action against them.

Commands have been directed to gather detailed information on such ex-servicemen, establish their identities, and file FIRs under relevant sections. Army Headquarters will actively follow up on these cases to ensure strict action is taken.

As AAP firefights BJP in Delhi, where is Arvind Kejriwal?

Since the AAP's debacle in the Delhi Assembly polls, party chief Arvind Kejriwal has been conspicuous by his absence and has not been seen at any public events. Kejriwal, who was defeated by the BJP's Parvesh Verma in New Delhi, was last seen publicly on February 23 at the AAP legislative party meeting where Atishi was announced as the leader of the opposition.

Kejriwal's sudden disappearance has generated curiosity about his next move, with speculation gaining ground that he might enter the Rajya Sabha from Punjab. The buzz started after the AAP announced that its Rajya Sabha MP Sanjeev Arora would contest the Ludhiana West bypoll. The Congress and the BJP were quick to point out that the move was to pave the way for Kejriwal's Rajya Sabha seat. The AAP immediately denied the speculation with a one-line statement. The party also scotched rumours about him becoming the Punjab Chief Minister.

Interestingly, Kejriwal has remained silent even after the suspension of 21 AAP MLAs from the Assembly amid an uproar over the tabling of the CAG report on Delhi's controversial liquor policy.

WHERE IS ARVIND KEJRIWAL?

Top sources said Kejriwal was preparing for the upcoming Assembly elections where the party has strong roots, particularly Punjab, which is the only state under the AAP. The idea of contesting polls in other states with INDIA bloc partners is now in cold storage as the AAP is not eyeing entering the fray in Bihar. Elections are due in Bihar in November.

For now, the focus of Kejriwal is to win the Ludhiana West bypoll and subsequently prepare for the 2027 Punjab Assembly election. Sources said Kejriwal's daily routine involves regular meetings with party leaders with key roles in Punjab. The AAP chief is also taking feedback from ground-level workers in the state. A number of meetings were held recently at Kejriwal's residence with Punjab leaders and the in-charge of the state. Taking a cue from the Delhi debacle, where AAP lost power to the BJP after a decade, the party's core focus is now on organisational strength and governance model. Former Delhi deputy chief minister and senior leader Manish Sisodia has been frequently visiting schools in Punjab. The Punjab government has decided to expedite the reform of government schools and the entire education sector on the basis of AAP's 'Delhi model'.

Bajrang Dal's 'love jihad' tableau on Maha Shivratri sparks row in Bihar

New Delhi. A tableau themed around "Love Jihad" in a Maha Shivratri procession organised by Bajrang Dal in Bihar's Munger has triggered a major political row. The grand procession, which featured over 50 tableaux, toured the city before concluding at the Mankeshwar Nath Mahadev Temple.

One of the tableaux depicted alleged atrocities committed by Muslims against Hindu girls and included a refrigerator with dolls representing chopped-up women, visually suggesting a girl's body cut into pieces.

The tableau also featured newspaper cuttings of crimes against Hindu women, adding to the controversy. Slogans reading, "If you abandon your religion, you will be torn apart," were also displayed. The tableau drew sharp criticism from opposition parties, with

RJD leader Mrityunjay Tiwari accusing the ruling JD(U) of failing to maintain communal harmony.

"An attempt is being made to spoil the



atmosphere... A conspiracy is being hatched to incite riots... Why was a 'love jihad' theme shown on Shivratri? Nitish Kumar says there will be no Hindu-Muslim conflict in Bihar, but will the JD(U) oppose this Bajrang

Dal-BJP tableau?" he asked.

Defending the procession, LJP (R) leader Dharendra Munna pointed out that multiple tableaux were part of the event and argued that singling out one was unfair. "There were many tableaux, but questioning just one is not right... Law and order in Bihar is good," he said. Hindustani Awam Morcha leader Shyam Sunder Sharan also defended the state government's stance, emphasising that the authorities were keeping a close watch on the situation.

"The law in Bihar is vigilant... The government is keeping an eye on everything... We will not let Bihar's harmony be disturbed... Everyone has the right to express their feelings, but the government is alert to ensure that harmony is not disrupted," he said

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar on Kumbh water row: Ganga doesn't allow bacterial growth

New Delhi. Spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said it was the devotion of people that drove crores to the Maha Kumbh, which culminated on Wednesday, asserting that it showcased the rich diversity and the spiritual wealth of India.

In an exclusive interview with India Today's Rajdeep Sardesai, Ravi Shankar also weighed in on the controversy over high faecal coliform detected in the water at Prayagraj, saying scientists have found that Ganga is one of the world's most robust bodies of water.

"I see only three things that are the driving force for crores of devotees - faith, faith, faith. It is the devotion of people that is driving them. The festival is deeply ingrained in the psyche of India," Ravi Shankar, who is the founder of the Art of Living Foundation, said.

The Maha Kumbh, billed as the world's largest religious gathering that takes

place after 12 years, concluded on Wednesday, with over 67 crore devotees taking the holy dip since January 13.



The spiritual leader, who has lakhs of followers across the world, said taking a holy dip was a way to "uplift one's spirit to higher consciousness".

"A dip can bring you back to your true nature. Taking a holy dip is a way to uplift one's spirit to higher consciousness, forgiving the past and forgetting the past and coming to the present," he said.

Weighing in on the controversy over a report by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) that found alarming levels of 'faecal coliform' bacteria in the Ganga, Ravi Shankar said the river was known for its "self-purification abilities".

"Scientists have come up with experiments on Ganga water, saying how it is the most robust water which purifies itself and does not allow bacteria to grow in it. There could be issues, but the quality of the water, as per scientists, is something very amazing and authenticates what our belief has been for millenniums," he said.

The spiritual leader said previously people and political leaders would come to the Kumbh and take dips "undercover". "They would feel so ashamed. We were not honouring our roots. Now that is gone. We are proudly proclaiming who we are. We are honest to ourselves, that dishonesty, that deceit, hypocrisy is gone," he said.

As a result of the accident on February 14, Neelam Shinde suffered serious injuries to her head, hands, legs and chest. She also had to undergo immediate surgery and is currently in critical condition.

New Delhi. A woman from Maharashtra's Satara district is currently battling for her life in a hospital in the US after she suffered critical injuries in a road accident. Neelam Shinde's family is seeking the Centre's help to get a visa immediately so that they can visit her. According to information, the accident took place on February 14 and a person has been arrested in connection. Shinde's family was informed two days later by her roommate.

Shinde suffered serious injuries to her head, hands, legs and chest. She also had to undergo immediate surgery due to the head injury.

In the wake of her condition, the hospital sent an e-mail to the family, asking them to come to the US as soon as possible.

A few days ago, Shinde's mother also died. As the family is facing trouble with acquiring an



immediate visa to the US, it has sought the Central government's help with efforts also to provide all kinds of required medical assistance. Speaking to the media, Neelam Shinde's uncle

Maharashtra woman battles for life in US after road accident, family seeks visa

said the family went to the passport office to get an immediate visa and also approached Union Minister Murlidhar Mohol, former MP Shrinivas Patil, and former MLA Balasaheb Patil (both from Satara).

"But they (family) were left in disappointment. There has been no help from the government till date," he added.

Meanwhile, NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule sought External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to help the Shinde family get a US visa.

Tagging Jaishankar and the External Affairs Ministry in a tweet on Wednesday, Sule said, "Student Neelam Shinde has met with an accident in the USA and is hospitalised in a local hospital."

"Her father, Tanaji Shinde, from Satara, Maharashtra, India, urgently needs to visit his daughter due to a medical emergency. Tanaji Shinde has applied for an urgent visa to the USA and requires assistance," she added.



Being a teenager can not only turn out to be stressful for your kid, but even for you.

If you are unable to understand your kid's situation as a parent, put yourself in his/her shoes. Understand that your teen is going through emotional stress and accept the fact that what may not be a big deal to you could be an issue for your child.

Communicate

A free, two-way communication between parents and kid is most important. Engage in activities that involve bonding with your child, be it going for movies or dinners together. Working parents, especially, find it difficult to spend sufficient time with their kid and this may lead to lack of communication.

"A friendly environment will encourage your kid to share his/her worries with you. A parent's job is to show the right path in those situations, in non-authoritarian way," says Dr Sonar.

Respect privacy

While it is important to monitor what your child is upto, it is equally essential to know when to back off and respect his/her privacy. Giving your kid his/her space will ensure that he/she turns into an independent adult.

Be a friend more than a parent

At this age, your kid is looking more for a friend in you rather than a strict parent. "Often, parents have tears in their eyes when they come to me seeking help because their child is not talking to them. You need to be patient. Take interest in your kid's friends and if you are objecting to any particular behaviour of your kid, give a reason," says Chheda.

Dos and don'ts when dealing with a teen

- Dos**
- Listen to your kid
 - Encourage sharing
 - Share your experiences to guide them
 - Keep a non-threatening atmosphere at home
 - Take interest in his/her friends
 - Bond with your child by doing things he/she likes
 - Be patient
 - Set a good example
- Don'ts**
- Preach your kid
 - Snap at them
 - Ridicule or judge them
 - Be a neglecting parent
 - Hate them for their mistakes



menstruation once she gets her first period. This would only make her press the panic button. Instead, start earlier. Answer the early questions that your kid has about his/her body, the difference between boys and girls or where do babies come from. This will also stop your kid from surfing the internet trying to find answers.

Listen to your kid

According to Dr Pavan Sonar, the most common mistake parents make is that they often judge their kids. They expect their child to act like an adult at this age and ridicule him/her for the smallest mistake. Dr Sonar says, "Parents should listen to what their kid has to say."

Don't pressurise

"Parents set standards for their child by talking about the things they used to do when they were of their kid's age. This is likely to add additional pressure on your child. Instead, it is important that you understand today's generation and set realistic expectations," says Chheda.

Empathise

A parent's guide to Dealing with a teen



While you've lived through your kid's 'terrible twos' that involved him/her crying for hours in the night, dealing with a teenager can lead to anxious times for many parents. This is the time when your child goes through hormonal changes, leading to physical as well as behavioural changes. This is also a time when peers take over a more important role in your child's life leaving you feeling neglected. Says child psychologist Niru Chheda, "Teenage is a very sensitive period and parenting a teenager is very difficult, especially in today's times where the kids are exposed to the world through technology." Here's your guide to dealing with your kid's teen years.

Start early

There's no point telling your daughter about

Mom alone and proud of it

Indian society may not be even close to losing faith in the institution of marriage or the overhyped yearning for sons, but some women are daring to break tradition. An increasing number of women is opting for in vitro fertilization (IVF) and daring to tread the brave new path to being single mothers. And contrary to its image, society seems to be rather open to the concept.

Documentary filmmaker Anindita Sarbadhikari, who mothered a son through IVF a year ago, feels society has come a long way vis-a-vis acceptance for all things radical. "We always fear society's reaction. But when my son Aarush came into my life, the reception amazed me. We were showered with love. All the people I know — even middle-class Bengali women, traditionally considered troublemakers — were protective of my son. I didn't face a single negative

experience all through my pregnancy and the past year since his birth. I've also had school principals calling me up, asking me not to worry about his admission." As for her decision to become a single mother, Anindita said, "We live only once and I wanted to make the most of my life. I wanted to be a mother, but there was no man in my life. I knew I could meet someone and get married at 50. But motherhood would be out of question by then. So I decided to juggle the chronology a bit and be a mother first. The best part was that the country's law allowed me to do so."

Revealing that her four-five-year stay in Europe had brought her in contact with a lot of single mothers, sowing the seed of an idea to become one herself, Anindita said her attempts to conceive started when

she was 35, but it took her two-and-a-half years to get there. "I was scared of anonymous donors. My only priority was high IQ, as that's the only thing in a man that attracts me," she added.

After Anindita's story was highlighted by the media, her doctor Biju Singh started receiving cases every month. This growing demand for IVF was corroborated by gynaecologist Dr Gautam Khastgir. "People from all strata of society are coming in for IVF, especially after knowing that it is an easy procedure. Society, too, has accepted it wholeheartedly. I get approximately two patients every month," he said. Dr Khastgir said most of his patients were women who hadn't found the right man yet or wanted a child after divorce or lesbian couples desiring babies.

Government employee Kalidasi Halder, 55, who had a daughter through IVF last December, said, "I am unmarried, but wanted to become a mother. Though I dilly-dallied for two-three years fearing societal reactions, after giving birth, I realized that there were two types of people — those who looked away, and those who welcomed us with open arms. My colleagues not only took me to the hospital, but also got me discharged and looked after us. Yes, support was less, but it wasn't non-existent."

"I think it's very important for girls to be financially independent to take such a step," Kalidasi added. City schools, too, are equally open to accepting children of single mothers. Ranu Biswas, headmistress of the primary section of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, said, "We still haven't received any application for admission of a child of a single mother.

But if I do, such children would be treated on a par with other students." Sunita Sen, principal of The BSS School, added, "We welcome children of single parents. A child is a child, whether he has one parent or both. Our only concern is quality parenthood — whether the mother can give the child proper attention."



Sensex, Nifty open higher as banking and financial stocks gain in early trade

New Delhi. Benchmark stock market indices opened higher on Thursday, driven by gains in heavyweight banking and financial sector stocks in early trade.

The S&P BSE Sensex gained 115.61 points to 74,717.73, while the NSE Nifty50 added 37.30 points to 22,584.85 as of 9:20 AM. Dr. V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services said that since a broad rally in the market will need indications of recovery in growth and earnings, investors can focus on micro rather than macros in the near-term. "Plenty of stock-specific action ahead, despite headwinds from FII selling and Trump tariffs news. Sharp correction in the broader market has made the valuations in certain segments attractive. Defence stocks, which had run up too much too fast, have corrected sharply making

In FY25, so far, FIIs have sold stocks in the cash market for Rs 3,87,976 crores. Interestingly, the DIIs have more than compensated for this selling through buying for Rs 5,55,519 crores. Despite this, the market has been trending down. It is possible that the activity of HNIs, UHNIs and family offices which are not reflected in the DII data are also impacting the market. This smart investor category might have been on the sell side since they move with the fundamentals, and, fundamentals have been deteriorating with the cyclical slowdown in GDP growth and corporate earnings.

SpiceJet turns net worth positive first time in a decade; reports Q3 PAT at Rs 26 crore

NEW DELHI. Low-cost carrier SpiceJet reported a net loss of Rs 441.7 crore for the July-September quarter but bounced back to profit in the October-December (Q3FY25) quarter. The airline posted a net profit of Rs 26 crore in Q3FY25 on revenue of Rs 1,651 Crore. Ajay Singh, Chairman and Managing Director of SpiceJet said that for the first time in a decade, the company has turned net worth positive – an important milestone that underscores the success of our turnaround strategy.

"The past is behind us, and we are now firmly focused on building a stronger, more resilient future for SpiceJet," added Singh.

The airline's successful Rs 3,000 Crore Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP), which saw participation from leading global investors has significantly strengthened its financial position, said SpiceJet. This has enabled the resolution of major legacy liabilities, fleet expansion, and accelerated operational growth. Singh added that they have significantly strengthened our balance sheet, resolved key disputes, and are continuously expanding our fleet. He informed that SpiceJet is in discussions with OEMs for advanced deliveries of aircraft and is actively exploring both organic and inorganic growth opportunities. Debojo Maharshi, Chief Business Officer, SpiceJet, said, that strong demand and effective network optimization are expected to drive a double-digit growth in RASKs during the fourth quarter of FY25 compared to the previous year. "This anticipated increase will not only enhance our revenue streams but also significantly improve our cash flows, contributing to the overall financial health of the company and enabling us to invest in key initiatives," added Maharshi.

Paytm partners with AI startup Perplexity to offer in-app search for users

New Delhi. Fintech major Paytm said on Thursday it will partner with Perplexity to integrate the artificial intelligence (AI) startup's search features with its application.

Paytm said the integration will allow its customers users to ask questions, explore topics in Indian languages and make financial decisions. The Noida-based company described the collaboration as a "major step" in integrating AI and mobile payments. The chatbot will be available as a button on the Paytm app. The launch of the collaborative consumer-facing feature comes more than a year after Paytm said it used AI automation internally, leading to a 10-15 per cent reduction in employee costs. Paytm founder



Vijay Shekhar Sharma said the shift from search to AI-driven actionable insights needs local data training and the industry is moving towards that. He was speaking on X Spaces alongside Perplexity's co-founder Aravind Srinivas.

"This collaboration is a step towards a future where AI enhances everyday interactions and digital experiences for all," Srinivas said. Perplexity gives answers to users' questions from real-time sources.

"AI is transforming the way people access information and make decisions. With Perplexity, we are bringing the power of AI to millions of Indian consumers, making knowledge and financial services more seamless and accessible," Sharma said. "...the need for instant and reliable information to support informed decision-making is increasing—whether in managing finances, exploring market trends, or making daily choices," said Paytm.

Stock market today: Top 3 stocks that could deliver good return in near term

Since peaking at an all-time high in September last year, Dalal Street has seen nearly a 12% correction, leading investors to search for stocks that could offer gains despite market uncertainty.

New Delhi. Stock markets are set to resume trading on Thursday after a holiday break on February 26 for Maha Shivratri. The market has been volatile, with the Nifty and Sensex struggling to hold gains as investors remain cautious. Since peaking at an all-time high in September last year, Dalal Street has seen nearly a 12% correction, leading investors to search for stocks that could offer short-term gains despite market uncertainty. Analysts

believe certain stocks, particularly in the non-banking financial company (NBFC) segment, could deliver positive returns in the near term. Aditya Gaggar, Director of Progressive Shares, said that the Nifty50 ended slightly lower at 22,548 in the previous session, with the overall trend remaining bearish. The key support and resistance levels for the index stand at 22,400 and 22,720, respectively. BankNifty is also moving within a defined range of 48,450-48,840.

Gaggar pointed out that FMCG stocks are approaching a crucial support zone, which could provide a buying opportunity if the support holds. However, the IT and Metal sectors are expected to remain under selling pressure.

"On the stock front, certain NBFC stocks, particularly Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, and Cholamandalam Holdings, are showing strong technical strength and could see further upside in the near term," he added. Vishnu Kant Upadhyay, AVP –

Research & Advisory at Master Capital Services, said the stock has broken out of a downward-sloping consolidation pattern, signalling renewed bullish momentum. He explained that the stock is



trading above both the 21-day and 200-day exponential moving averages (EMA), which reinforces a positive trend. The Relative Strength Index (RSI) at 58.61 is moving higher, indicating increasing

strength in the uptrend. Additionally, the Moving Average Convergence Divergence (MACD) has given a bullish crossover, further confirming the upward movement. Upadhyay said that Cholamandalam Finance Holdings has the potential to reach Rs 1,698 and then Rs 1,720 in the near term, while Rs 1,476 remains a key support level. He recommended buying at the current levels, with dips providing opportunities for additional accumulation.

Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said that markets will take cues from global trends in early trade, followed by a shift in focus to the monthly expiry of February's derivatives contracts. "We maintain our 'sell on rise' stance on the benchmark while advising a balanced approach in stock positions. Meanwhile, investors can start accumulating quality stocks, available at attractive valuations," said Mishra.

5 PSU banks may see government stake sale of up to 20%: Report

New Delhi. The government is planning to sell up to 20% of its stake in five public sector banks (PSBs) over the next four years, according to a report by Business Standard. The stake sale in public banks is aimed at meeting the Securities and Exchange Board of India's (Sebi) minimum public shareholding norms, which require listed companies to have at least 25% of their shares held by the public.

A senior government official quoted in the report said that the government is working on a plan in consultation with the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), the Department of Financial Services (DFS), and state-run banks. "This will be done to comply with the Securities and Exchange Board of India's (Sebi's) minimum

public-shareholding norms. While market conditions will be considered, the government plans to use both the offer for sale (OFS) and qualified



institutional placement (QIP) routes," said a senior govt official as quoted by Business Standard. The five banks where the government is looking to reduce its shareholding are Bank of

Maharashtra, Indian Overseas Bank, UCO Bank, Central Bank of India, and Punjab and Sind Bank. In each of these banks, the government's stake will be brought down to below 75% in a phased manner. On February 25, it was also reported that DIPAM had invited bids from merchant bankers to assist with the stake sale in public sector banks and other listed public financial institutions. The Request for Proposal (RFP) issued by DIPAM states that the selected merchant bankers will be empanelled for three years, with the option of extending their term for an additional year. These bankers will provide guidance on the timing and structure of the government's equity dilution in these banks and financial institutions.

Best place to invest: Why is World Bank bullish on India despite FII sell-off

New Delhi. Dalal Street has been jittery and has seen a nearly 12% correction since it peaked at an all-time high in September last year. The major reason has been the FIIs selling stocks, leading to dampening market investment, but the World Bank thinks the move might not be the right one.

The World Bank has said that India remains the best place to invest, even as foreign institutional investors (FIIs) continue to pull money out of the stock market. World Bank Country Director Auguste Tano Kouame, while speaking at the Advantage Assam 2.0 Business Summit, dismissed concerns over the recent market downturn and reaffirmed confidence in India's growth. "We are not worried about India's growth at the moment. We are very bullish about India and will remain bullish," Kouame said. He urged investors to focus on the bigger picture, adding that India is "the shining light in the world" and a prime destination for investment. The statement comes at a time when the Indian stock market has been under pressure due to heavy selling by FIIs. Since October 2024, FIIs have withdrawn nearly Rs 2 lakh crore from the Indian stock market, leading to a decline of over 10% in the Sensex.

Midcap and smallcap stocks have been hit even harder, with the BSE Midcap index falling 19% and the BSE Smallcap index dropping 21% during the same period. The trend has continued into 2025, with FIIs offloading almost Rs 1 lakh crore worth of shares in just 33 trading sessions until February 14. India is not alone in witnessing these outflows, as several other emerging markets, including Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam, have also faced similar trends. The only exception has been Thailand, which has attracted \$17 million in FII inflows. Experts believe that the FII sell-off is largely driven by rising bond yields in the US. Higher yields have made American assets more attractive, prompting global investors to shift money away from emerging markets like India. Vipul Bhowar, Senior Director of Listed Investments at Waterfield Advisors, explained that FIIs are choosing the stability of US equities over Indian stocks. Another factor impacting investor sentiment is the slowdown in corporate sales growth. In the December 2024 quarter, the combined gross sales of Nifty50 companies grew by 6.6% year-on-year, down from 9.2% in the same quarter the previous year. This slowdown has made investors more cautious about Indian stocks. Despite these challenges, India's broader economic fundamentals remain strong. However, analysts warn that external risks could continue to affect market sentiment. Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research at Kotak Securities, pointed out that concerns such as US tariffs on Indian exports, domestic economic uncertainty, and weak corporate earnings in the third quarter of FY25 have contributed to market volatility.

Do you have multiple UANs Here's how to merge them

Every time you join a new company, give your employer the existing UAN so they don't create another. If they've already made a new one, you need to merge it with your old one.

New Delhi. If you've switched jobs a few times, chances are you've ended up with more than one Universal Account Number (UAN) from the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). That's a mess you need to fix, or you might lose track of your money. Hence, it is advisable to keep consolidate all your previous UANs and consolidate with the latest one to avoid confusion. WHY MULTIPLE UANs? At times, the employee does not provide his UAN or EPF account at the time of joining a new organisation. Hence, the new employers register a fresh one because either you didn't give them

your old UAN or your last employer didn't update your exit date properly in the EPFO system. If this info isn't in the system on time, the EPFO might just generate a brand-new UAN for you. **FIX UP THE MESS: MEGE YOUR UANs**



You can merge all your EPF accounts under one UAN. Every time you join a new company, give them your existing UAN so they don't create another. If they've already made a new one, you need to merge it with your old one.

HOW TO CONSOLIDATE MULTIPLE UANs Log on to the member sewa portal. Select 'One Member - One EPF Account (Transfer Request)' under the 'Online Services' tab. Here, your personal

details and current EPF account will be shown. Now, for PF transfer, the employee must get the old account either attested by the previous employer or the new employer. However, opting for the current employer fastens the processing. Submit the old UAN or PF account number and click 'Get Details'. Verify the information, generate an OTP and submit. After the request is submitted, the current employer will be required to approve the request. Thereafter, the EPFO will process and merge the previous accounts with the current one. Now, keep checking the portal to track the merger status.

Important: Your old EPF accounts must be KYC compliant for this to work. If you have multiple old accounts, you have to merge them one by one.

ALTERNATIVE WAY

You can also email uanepf@epfindia.gov.in with both your old and new UANs. EPFO will verify, deactivate the extra UANs, and keep just one active. After that, you'll need to claim the money from the deactivated UAN and transfer it to the active one.

Mahindra SA inks MoU to explore auto production feasibility in South Africa

The study will allow Mahindra South Africa and IDC to make an informed assessment before any future decisions are taken

New Delhi. Mahindra South Africa, the local subsidiary of the Indian automotive giant, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) to undertake an in-depth feasibility study on the potential establishment of a Completely Knocked Down (CKD) vehicle assembly facility in the country. Mahindra South Africa is also in the process of increasing its productive capacity at its established facility operation by AIH Logistics in KwaZulu-Natal province as it enters a third decade in the country, which it often refers to as "Mahindra's

second home." Reaching the milestone of our 25,000th locally assembled Pik Up is (a) testament to Mahindra's growing footprint and long-term commitment to South Africa," said Rajesh Gupta, CEO of Mahindra South Africa. Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd "As we continue to strengthen our operations, this MoU allows us to explore the feasibility of expanding our local assembly capabilities. This study will provide valuable insights into the potential for deeper integration into South Africa's automotive landscape while supporting the country's industrial growth objectives," Gupta added.

Mahindra has become the fastest-growing brand in the country in recent years with sales of its vehicles tailor-made for the local market, especially its pickup, which beat more established Japanese and European brands. The MoU marks a significant step in evaluating the potential for expanded local manufacturing, with a detailed study

set to examine key factors such as South Africa's automotive industry incentives, export market potential, workforce development, and supply chain infrastructure. Additionally, the study will

that though the MoU signals Mahindra's intent to explore local manufacturing opportunities, it is purely an evaluation at this stage, and no commitment has been made toward establishing a CKD facility yet.

The study will allow Mahindra South Africa and IDC to make an informed assessment before any future decisions are taken. Acting Divisional Executive for Industry Planning and Project Development at the IDC Rian Coetzee said Mahindra's commitment to the feasibility study aligns with the objectives of the South African Automotive Master Plan (SAAM) 2035, which aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the country as an automotive assembly location. Depending on the outcome of the feasibility study, there is great potential for the company to increase its production output in South Africa a factor that has the potential to create employment opportunities, said Coetzee.



assess logistics and supply chain feasibility, including potential locations, to determine how Mahindra can further integrate into the country's industrial landscape, including New Energy Vehicles (NEV). The partners emphasised

NEWS BOX

PAK vs BAN: Bangladesh, Pakistan look to salvage pride as rain threat looms large

Pakistan and Bangladesh have nothing to lose when they face off in the penultimate Group A match on Thursday, 27th February, in the Champions Trophy 2025 at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. Both teams have already been eliminated from the competition but will aim to avoid finishing at the bottom of the points table. However, there is a significant chance that rain could spoil the game. With an 88 per cent likelihood of rain throughout the match and clouds hovering over the venue, there's a real possibility that the encounter could be interrupted. Earlier, the match between Australia and South Africa was abandoned without a ball being bowled, and the upcoming clash may end up being a damp squib. As the host nation, Pakistan has not had the best tournament. Despite having quality players, they failed to make it to the semi-finals. In their opening game, Pakistan suffered a 60-run defeat at the hands of New Zealand, followed by a six-wicket hammering by India at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium.

Mohammad Rizwan began his tenure as



Pakistan's captain with three consecutive series wins against Zimbabwe, Australia, and South Africa. However, the absence of key opening batsmen Saim Ayub and Fakhar Zaman significantly impacted their performance. Additionally, their decision to include just one specialist spinner, Abrar Ahmed, backfired. Also Read: Even MS Dhoni couldn't have done anything with Rizwan's team: Ex-Pakistan captain

The pace trio of Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, and Haris Rauf also leaked runs at an alarming rate. Babar Azam showed some promise against India, with five boundaries in his 23-run knock, but was unable to return to his best. The only thing Pakistan can now hope for is to finish with a win in front of their home crowd.

Can Bangladesh finish on a high?

Before the Champions Trophy began, Najmul Hossain Shanto stated that Bangladesh would enter the tournament with the aim of winning it. Unfortunately, the Tigers failed to live up to expectations, exiting the competition after back-to-back losses to India and New Zealand. It is clear that Shanto's side have not lived up to the promise they showed in pre-tournament statements.

No emotional statements: Jos Buttler on captaincy future after England's exit

New Delhi. Jos Buttler opened up on his future as England captain after the Three Lions failed to qualify for the semi-finals of the Champions Trophy 2025. On Wednesday, February 28, England lost to Afghanistan by eight runs at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. After losing to Australia by five wickets, Buttler's men faltered against the Afghans and failed to go through to the next round. Back in 2023, Buttler couldn't take his team through to the World Cup semis after which England failed to defend their T20 World Cup title under his leadership. Before the Champions Trophy, England lost 0-3 to India in the bilateral series and failed to take any momentum into the multi-nation event.

Champions Trophy: Full Coverage | Points Table

Buttler didn't give an 'emotional statements' on his captaincy, but said that England should 'consider all possibilities'. With Buttler as ODI captain, England have won 18



out of 44 matches and lost 25 while one match didn't produce a result. [AFG vs ENG: Highlights] "I don't want to say any emotional statements right now. But I think for myself and the other guys at the top, we should consider all possibilities," Buttler was quoted as saying in the post-match presentation ceremony.

Buttler praises Joe Root After being asked to chase down a stiff target of 326, England were bowled out for 317 in 49.5 overs. Joe Root scored 120 off 111 balls with 11 fours and a six to keep England in the hunt, but his efforts went in vain. Buttler lauded Root for the way he handled pressure. "He played an unbelievable innings tonight. The way to handle pressure in a run-chase. He needed one of the other top six batters to stay in with him and take the game deeper," Buttler added. England's last and final Group B game is against Temba Bavuma's South Africa on Saturday, March 1 at the National Stadium in Karachi.

Dope suspended wrestlers at IIS camp, Dangal raise eyebrows

The camp was organised in Vijayanagar, Karnataka close on the heels of an MoU signed between the United World Wrestling and Inspire Institute of Sport during the 2024 Paris Olympics

CHENNAI. An international camp held for women wrestlers at the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS) last month and Haryana Dangal organised by the charitable trust on February 19 and 20 have come under the scanner due to participation of athletes serving provisional suspensions for dope violations. The camp was organised at the IIS, Vijayanagar, Karnataka close on the heels of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the United World Wrestling (UWW) and IIS during the 2024 Paris Olympics last year. "This strategic partnership is designed to foster collaboration and enhance the development of wrestling in India by establishing a

framework for mutually beneficial programs, projects, and activities," said an UWW statement soon after the signing of the MoU. Incidentally, an exposure trip to Italy was also planned for a few men and women wrestlers by the IIS after the completion of the camp. One of the selected wrestlers for the trip too was provisionally suspended by the World Anti Doping Agency (for SARMS) after prohibited substances were found in his sample taken during an international tournament in July 2023.

The trip, however, is unlikely to go ahead with chances of selection trials for the Asian Championships next month. Besides, the Italy Federation has enquired its Indian counterpart (Wrestling Federation of India) about the trip and the latter has clarified that it is not part of the plan and the list contains a provisionally suspended wrestler. "I cannot comment on the issue," was the response from an IIS official when queried about the participation of a provisionally suspended wrestler in the camp. He, however, said the tour may not go ahead due to the proposed selection trials. Meanwhile, Siyanand, head of IIS, Hisar, who was also the tournament director at the Haryana Dangal, accepted the woman wrestler had participated in the camp. "She has been provisionally

suspended, that's why she was allowed in the camp. Again that's what my opinion is as only higher officials at the IIS can talk about this elaborately," Siyanand told this daily. Speaking on suspended wrestlers



competing in the Dangal including the above-mentioned woman wrestler, he said, "The said woman wrestler was disqualified ahead of her bouts. We spoke to the National Anti Doping Agency and once we got confirmation from it then we didn't allow her to participate." Interestingly, quite a few suspended wrestlers competed at the tournament with a few of them winning a bout or two. "We prevented a few from competing but as we didn't have any comprehensive list of suspended wrestlers, there is a possibility that a few might have

gone to participate," added the tournament director. The competition was held at the Haryana Agriculture University, Giri Centre, Shahid Madan Lal Dhingra Multipurpose Hall in Hisar. Each participant was charged Rs 1000 as entry fee for the tournament, which was held in four weight categories in each style (men's freestyle and Greco-Roman and women's wrestling). Interestingly, a couple of coaches from the Sports Authority of India (SAI) also assisted the tournament director for the competition. The winners (gold, silver and bronze medalists) were also given cash prizes apart from the medals.

A WFI source said the Italy federation mailed it seeking information on the proposed tour. "The WFI was not kept in the loop before organising the camp and holding the tournament. The federation told its Italian counterpart the same and also informed it about the presence of a suspended wrestler in the list. As far as the tournament is concerned, the guidelines clearly say the competition will be held according to the WFI and UWW Rules and Regulations but the same were not followed. How wrestlers serving suspension or provisional suspension can be allowed to compete," said the source.

Afghanistan replicate Delhi heroics to show World Cup win was no fluke

Champions Trophy 2025: Afghanistan are one win away from securing their maiden semi-final berth in the history of the tournament. On Wednesday, Hashmatullah Shahidi's men beat England by eight runs and knocked the Three Lions out of the competition.

New Delhi. Never count out Afghanistan. NEVER! The team may have suffered a 107-run defeat against South Africa and seemed in trouble, but Hashmatullah Shahidi's men scripted a remarkable comeback to knock England out of the Champions Trophy. In their maiden appearance in the mega event, Afghanistan now stands a realistic chance of qualifying for the semi-finals. In the 2023 ODI World Cup on Indian soil, Afghanistan looked down and out after defeats to Bangladesh and India in their first two games. However, under Hashmatullah's leadership, they rose

from the ashes to defeat England by 69 runs at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi. In Lahore, they fought even harder to come out on top. Afghanistan isn't a team that gets bogged down under pressure. They demonstrated this in the ODI World Cup, the T20 World Cup last year, and now the Champions Trophy. Their win over



England in Delhi was no fluke. It was their first-ever World Cup victory against a full-member nation, and now, their first win in Champions Trophy history. Ibrahim Steps Up Under Pressure

Rahmanullah Gurbaz is the more popular Afghan batter due to his hard-hitting

pross, especially in T20 leagues around the world. But his opening partner, Ibrahim Zadran, is not far behind. At just 23, Ibrahim has already etched his name in Afghan cricket history not once, not twice, but three times. [AFG vs ENG: Highlights]

In the ODI World Cup, Ibrahim became the fastest Afghan batter to reach 1,000 runs in the 50-over format. He also became the first Afghan batter to score a century in an ODI World Cup. Later, Ibrahim also broke Ben Duckett's record for the highest ODI score in Champions Trophy history. This is the same Ibrahim who was on crutches after ankle surgery in September. The same Ibrahim who made his ODI comeback in the Champions Trophy after 11 months. The winning catch to dismiss Adil Rashid only added to what was a memorable day for the Khost-born Ibrahim. "It means a lot to me. As much as you work hard, I had trust in myself and wanted to keep batting. That 177 is a special moment for me. We played here last time in the Asia Cup, so I had an idea. I wanted to take my time and play proper cricketing shots, and it worked for me. I'm happy," Ibrahim said after the match.

Shoab Akhtar recalls inspiring message to Afghan player, celebrates England's exit

New Delhi. Pakistan cricket legend Shoab Akhtar was thrilled after Afghanistan's thrilling win over England in the Champions Trophy on February 26. The former pacer took to social media to congratulate the Afghan team and revealed a special conversation he had with all-rounder Gulbadin Naib before the match. Akhtar shared how he had encouraged Naib to do whatever it takes to secure victories against England and Australia, a message that seemed to have inspired Afghanistan's fighting spirit. Afghanistan's historic 8-run victory over the defending champions knocked England out of the semi-final race in a high-intensity clash that went down to the wire. Shoab Akhtar, through a special video message on his social media account, praised Afghanistan's resilience and lauded their achievement in securing their first-ever Champions Trophy win. [AFG vs ENG: Highlights] "Congratulations Afghanistan, very happy for you! I remember telling Gulbadin 'please defeat England'. He said



that 'don't worry brother, we will not spare them.' I told him you shouldn't spare Australia either. I was in Dubai when I told Gulbadin that you should win at any cost," Akhtar said. "You have made Afghanistan very proud today. Now you have the maturity and you know how to play cricket. You have slayed a big team. Enjoy this day, but do not forget that you are going to play beyond the semi-final," he said. After winning the toss, Afghanistan chose to bat first and posted a competitive 325/7 in 50 overs, thanks to a record-breaking knock from opener Ibrahim Zadran, who smashed 177 off 146 balls. His century played a crucial role in setting up a strong total for the Afghan side. In response, England fought hard but ultimately fell short, getting bowled out for 317 in 49.5 overs. Azmatullah Omarzai starred with the ball, delivering a match-winning performance with figures of 5/58, ensuring Afghanistan crossed the finish line. With England eliminated, the semi-final race in Group A is now between Australia, South Africa, and Afghanistan.

WPL 2025: All-round Nat Sciver-Brunt fires as Mumbai Indians hammer UP Warriorz

New Delhi. Nat Sciver-Brunt put in a strong performance as Mumbai Indians (MI) beat the UP Warriorz by eight wickets at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru to go to the top of the points table in the WPL 2025. On Wednesday, February 26, Sciver-Brunt won the Player of the Match award after scoring a match-winning half-century and taking a three-wicket haul. After being asked to bat first, the Warriorz got themselves to 142 for the loss of nine wickets. Sciver-Brunt gave MI the crucial breakthrough after dismissing Kiran Navgire. But Grace Harris, who was promoted to open the batting, and Vrinda Dinesh's 79-run stand injected momentum into the innings for the Warriorz.

WPL 2025 Full Coverage Harris scored 45 runs off 26 balls before holing out to

Shabnim Ismail off Amelia Kerr. Sanskriti Gupta dismissed Vrinda, who gave Harris support with a steady 33-run knock. But



after Harris got out, the Warriorz lost momentum and could only manage 61 runs off their last 10.4 overs. Sciver-Brunt was the pick of the bowlers for MI with figures of 4-0-18-3. Ismail took two wickets while

Gupta and Kerr accounted for a scalp apiece. From once having a chance of posting a score in the range of 180 and 200, the Warriorz would be disappointed with their second half.

Sciver-Brunt rocks UP Warriorz

MI lost the early wicket of Yastika Bhatia as Deepthi Sharma gave the Warriorz a good start with the early wicket. But Sciver-Brunt and West Indies captain Hayley Matthews made sure to put MI in a position of command. The duo built a partnership of 133 runs to take the sting out of the Warriorz batting. Matthews scored 59 runs off 50 balls with seven fours and two sixes. By the time Sophie Ecclestone dismissed her, MI were on the cusp of victory. Sciver-Brunt, on the other hand, batted until the very end as Mumbai romped home with three overs to spare.

How cricket greats reacted to Afghanistan's win vs England, ft Sachin Tendulkar

- Ibrahim Zadran's 177 powered Afghanistan to a strong total
- Azmatullah Omarzai's five-wicket haul sealed Afghanistan's historic victory
- Cricket greats, including Tendulkar, hailed Afghanistan's England triumph

New Delhi. Afghanistan's thrilling win over England in their Champions Trophy Group B clash on February 26 left the cricketing world in awe. The Hashmatullah Shahidi-led side stunned the defending champions, keeping

their semi-final hopes alive while officially eliminating England from the tournament. The match saw edge-of-the-seat action, prompting many cricketing greats, including Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar, to heap praise on Afghanistan's spirited performance. Opting to bat first, Afghanistan put up an imposing total of 325/7 in their 50 overs, thanks to a phenomenal knock from opener Ibrahim Zadran. The 22-year-old smashed 177 off 146 balls, anchoring Afghanistan's innings with a masterclass in batting. His innings, laced with exquisite stroke play, ensured Afghanistan set a stiff target for England. England, in response, put up a fight but ultimately fell short. Despite Ben Duckett's brilliant 100, they were bowled out for 317 in 49.5 overs. Azmatullah Omarzai was the hero with the ball, claiming a match-



winning five-wicket haul (5/58) and sealing Afghanistan's first-ever Champions Trophy win. [AFG vs ENG: Highlights] Afghanistan's performance earned widespread appreciation from cricketing legends. Sachin Tendulkar took to social media to praise the team's resilience, while former Indian pacers Munaf Patel and Irfan Pathan also

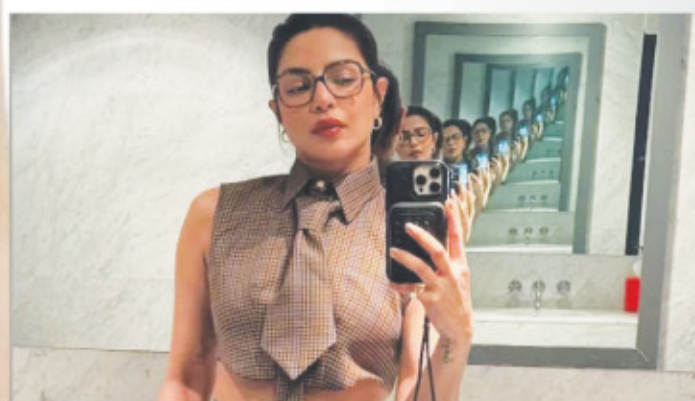
congratulated the side. Pakistan legend Shoab Akhtar went a step further, backing Afghanistan to push beyond the semi-final stage. Even former England skipper Michael Vaughan praised Afghanistan's performance, hailing it as deserving of the win over an England which was just not up to the mark. Even former India cricketer and former Afghanistan mentor Ajay Jadeja took to his social media to congratulate Afghanistan on the win. With England now out of the tournament, Australia, South Africa, and Afghanistan remain in contention for the two semi-final spots from Group A. Currently sitting third with one win from two games and a net run rate of 0.160, Afghanistan must beat Australia in their final group match to qualify. Meanwhile, a victory for Australia will see them and South Africa progress to the semi-finals.



Priyanka Chopra's

Mother Opens Up About Bareilly's Bitter Reaction After Her Miss World Win

Priyanka Chopra recently returned to India to attend her brother Siddharth Chopra's wedding to Neelam Upadhyaya on February 8.



Priyanka Chopra was crowned Miss World In 2000 after winning the Miss India title in the same year. The actress was just 18 years old when she became the fifth Miss World from India. At a time when the whole world was praising Priyanka Chopra, she received an unpleasant reaction from her hometown Bareilly. Priyanka's mother Madhu Chopra has opened up on being upset about not receiving enough support from Bareilly. In a recent interview with Lehren TV, Madhu recalled returning to Bareilly after Priyanka's Miss World win, only to receive a bitter welcome. Madhu revealed, "Jo Bareilly mein humara reception hua that was not kind at all. The state machinery said ye naari shoshan hain, hum log isko nahi accept karenge. Unka funda hai ki jis seher se aayi hain usi seher pe uska welcome hoga (The state apparatus declared that this was female exploitation and that it would not be tolerated. The winner of Miss World had to return to her hometown for a ceremonial celebration)."

Madhu Chopra further revealed that even after permission from the chief minister, the state machinery gave excuses for not welcoming her. "Toh ye tha ki Bareilly jana hain aur Bareilly ne Chief Minister ke office se manaya tha... Toh we can't have her here law and order ka issue, kuch kuch toh bola tha, We were very upset." She added.

Madhu Chopra claims that the Bareilly authorities forbade Priyanka's homecoming celebrations from being extravagant. Rather, a modest gathering was planned in the army zone, where her father was stationed at the time. However, she received a heartfelt reaction from the entertainment industry in Mumbai. Filmmakers and producers saw her potential and gave her a chance in Bollywood. Priyanka Chopra recently returned to India to attend her brother Siddharth Chopra's wedding to Neelam Upadhyaya in Mumbai on February 8. On the work front, Priyanka Chopra is gearing up for SS Rajmouli's next, alongside Mahesh Babu. The official announcement is anticipated to be released shortly. However, she wrapped up shooting for her upcoming action-thriller The Bluff. She will also feature with John Cena and Idris Elba in the American action-comedy Heads of State.

Alia Bhatt REACTS To Post Defending Ranbir Kapoor Against 'Womanizer' Tag: 'Jealous People Call Him Red Flag'



Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor are among the most talked about couples in Bollywood. Although fans love to watch their chemistry on-screen and in real life, a certain section of people often subject Ranbir to tags like 'misogynist' and claim he is 'not supportive enough' due to misunderstandings. Alia Bhatt often indirectly defends her husband on social media and her recent Instagram activity has caught everyone's attention again. Alia Bhatt recently reacted to a post defending Ranbir Kapoor. The post mentioned, "Funny how jealous people always call him red flag, womanizer, mumma's boy etc. but Ranbir Kapoor literally included his wife and daughter's initials in his brand's name. If this is red flag then I guess it's better than every so called green flag on the internet." Alia Bhatt 'liked' this post on Instagram. Check it out here:

This is not the first time that Alia has seemingly defended Ranbir online. A few months ago, a video surfaced online showing clips where Ranbir Kapoor seemingly ignored Alia Bhatt at Raj Kapoor's 100th birth anniversary celebration. The actress 'liked' the video titled, 'The Ranbir Kapoor they don't post about'. The video was a compilation of clips from Raj Kapoor's 100th birth anniversary. In the video, Ranbir could be seen taking care of Alia and his older family members. Previously, Riddhima Kapoor Sahni opened up about the continuous trolling and judgment her family faces, specifically targeting her brother Ranbir Kapoor and sister-in-law Alia Bhatt. Speaking to Zoom, Riddhima said that Alia and Ranbir are happy together and do not care for what people say about them. "They adore each other. They've created the most beautiful ever child, Raha. She is so so adorable. They are amazing parents. So, I don't think they really care about what people say," she said.

Himesh Reshammiya Reacts To Janhvi Kapoor Doing Bicep Curls To Tandoori Nights



Himesh Reshammiya's Badass Ravi Kumar has been in the headlines ever since its release earlier this month, mostly for its songs. One of its tracks, Tandoori Days, is also earning love from fans, reminding them of his previous track, Tandoori Nights, from the 2008 movie Karzzzz. The party anthem was viral among fans and even celebrities like Janhvi Kapoor also loved the song. Now, Himesh has talked about Janhvi's comment about him and the song, promising to release more such tracks. For your reference, Janhvi Kapoor, during an old episode of Koffee with Karan, admitted to stalking Himesh Reshammiya's Instagram reel wherein he is seen doing bicep curls while lip-syncing Tandoori Nights. Laughing, she said, "It's the best thing in the world. I love it."

In an interaction with Pinkvilla, Himesh Reshammiya was asked to react to Janhvi Kapoor's statement. Responding, he exclaimed, "Oh wow, Tandoori... outstanding. Ab Tandoori Days, Tandoori Nights, ab Tandoori Afternoons, pata nahi kya kya aayega (Now Tandoori Days, Tandoori Nights, now Tandoori Afternoons, I don't know what else will come)."

Shedding light on the audience's love for the song, Himesh stated, "Lekin Tandoori ko jitna aap logon ne pyaar kiya hai mujhe lagta hai ki tandoori food aapko bahut pasand hai (But as much as you guys have loved Tandoori, I feel that you like tandoori food very much)."

Continuing further, Himesh Reshammiya also talked about his latest track Tandoori Days and noted that there is something about the specific word adding that it was very lucky for him. After a successful streak of songs, Bollywood singer and composer Himesh Reshammiya ventured into acting. He made his debut in the 2007 hit Aap Kaa Surroor. After years of break, he recently returned to big screens with his latest release, Badass Ravi Kumar. Directed by Keith Gomes, the film is a spin-off to the 2014 drama film The Xpose. Produced by Himesh Reshammiya Melodies, it shows him reprising his role of Ravi Kumar from the film. Apart from Himesh, the film also features celebs such as Prabhudeva, Kirti Kulhari, Sunny Leone, Sanjay Mishra, Johnny Lever, Mohan Joshi, Raza Murad and others.



Dhanashree Verma

Shares 1st Post After Dismissing Rs60 Crore Alimony Claims: 'I Feel Strong, Fearless'

Dhanashree Verma took to her Instagram handle on Wednesday evening to share her first post ever since her family dismissed Rs 60 crore alimony claims. Dhanashree shared a series of pictures of herself and sought blessings from Lord Shiva on the occasion of Maha Shivratri. "With Lord Shiva's blessings, I'm Unstoppable... I feel strong and fearless. Shoot diaries for you The love and respect at work is unreal. Har har mahadev Dhanashree wrote. Check it out here: This comes days after several reports claimed that the choreographer was seeking Rs 60 crore in alimony from the cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal amid their divorce. However, Dhanashree's family recently rejected the claims. On Friday, a member of the Verma family issued a statement and called alimony reports "baseless". The family member expressed disappointment with the viral claims and urged everyone not to spread "baseless" information.

The member clarified that Dhanashree Verma never asked for any alimony from Chahal. "We are deeply outraged by the baseless claims being circulated about the alimony figure. Let me be absolutely clear—no such amount has ever been asked, demanded, or even offered. There is no truth to these rumours whatsoever. It is deeply irresponsible to publish such unverified information, dragging not just the parties but also their families into unnecessary speculation. Reckless reporting like this only causes harm, and we urge the media to exercise restraint and fact-check before spreading misinformation and also be respectful towards everyone's privacy," the statement read. Dhanashree and Yuzvendra, who tied the knot in 2020, are heading for a divorce. Recently, the former lawyer also shared that their divorce proceedings are currently underway. "I have no comments to make on the proceedings, the matter is currently sub judice. The media should fact-check before reporting, as a lot of misleading information is being circulated," the lawyer said.

