



## Budget 2026 woefully short of hype: Congress slams Nirmala Sitharaman's speech

**Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tabled her ninth consecutive Union Budget in Parliament. However, Opposition parties pushed back, questioning the clarity of spending priorities and accusing the government of crafting a document that will fail to address public concern.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Opposition parties on Sunday trained their guns on the Union Budget 2026-27, with the Congress calling Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's presentation "woefully short of the hype" and lacking clarity on spending priorities. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said that even after a 90-minute speech, the budget failed to offer a clear picture of allocations for major schemes and programmes. "While the documents need to be studied in detail, it is clear that Budget 2026-27 falls woefully short of the hype generated around it. It was totally lacklustre. The speech was also non-transparent since it gave no idea whatsoever of budgetary allocations for key programmes," he said in a post on X.Congress



MP Shashi Tharoor said that he was surprised that his state, Kerala, was not mentioned enough in the Finance Minister's speech. "Even though there were subheadings about fisheries, about cashew and coconut which may benefit us. We assume it should benefit us, but we have not yet

seen and certainly Kerala wasn't named. I don't want to say right now I'm disappointed until I see the full details.

As a Kerala MP, I must say I have nothing to be happy about in this budget," Tharoor said while speaking to news agency PTI.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav was more scathing, alleging that the government designs its budgets for a small elite. "What can one expect from a government from which there is no hope? This budget is made for five per cent of the people. Did the government live up to the promises it made in its manifesto?" he said while speaking to reporters in Delhi.

Samajwadi Party chief's wife and Lok Sabha MP Dimple Yadav echoed similar views. "There is nothing in the Budget. The type of technical terms used in Nirmala Sitharaman's speech a

common man would never understand. There is nothing in this Budget for farmers and women's safety," Dimple Yadav said. Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee, however, struck a cautious note ahead of detailed reactions. "Let us hear the Budget. I can't talk of my expectations or make comments without listening to it," he said.

**NIRMALA SITHARAMAN'S 9TH BUDGET**  
Sitharaman, presenting her ninth consecutive Budget earlier in the day, said the government's "Kartavya" (duty) is to accelerate and sustain economic growth, fulfil people's aspirations, and prioritise the poor, underprivileged and disadvantaged.

She also said the government has chosen the path of reforms over rhetoric, adding that India will continue to take steps towards becoming a Viksit Bharat.

### Union Budget once again betrayal for Punjab and Haryana farmers: Harpal Cheema

**The Sikh Times**

Chandigarh 1 February: Reacting to the Union Budget, Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said that the Union government has once again ignored the legitimate concerns of Punjab and Haryana farmers, exposing its hollow claims of being pro-farmer. Cheema pointed out that there has been no increase in the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund nor any concrete assistance to strengthen market infrastructure, leaving the agrarian states in a state of disbelief. He said that the farmer of Punjab feeds the nation, yet the Union government is continuously neglecting investment in systems that ensure food security. The Finance Minister also criticised the selective approach adopted to promote high-value crops. While the budget mentions crops like coconut, cashew, sandalwood and dry fruits, there is nothing for farmers in North India who depend on crops suited to their agro-climatic conditions. Harpal Singh Cheema said that this budget clearly shows the Centre's bias and its continued indifference towards the

farmers of foodgrain producing states, especially Punjab. These farmers deserve respect, support and appropriate investment, not empty slogans. Punjab Finance Minister Advocate Harpal Singh Cheema said that there is nothing for Farmers of Punjab and Haryana in terms of increased allocation to Agriculture Infra Fund or strengthening Mandi Infrastructure in this Union Budget 2026. He added that States will have to do it from their own funds for the development. Talked about development of High-Value Crops but left out Punjab fully. He said Urea Subsidy reduced from 1,26,475 Crore last year to 1,16,805 Crores. Nothing for "Aam Aadmi" in this budget, Zero tax relief in today's times when incomes are not increasing and inflation is eating up savings of common man. Infact, Government of India has increased STT (Securities Transaction Tax) which will adversely affect common man. No relief on Long-Term Capital Gains since STT has been increased. It is like squeezing the common man from all sides. Speaking on Defence he said we

were hoping that Union FM would announce major schemes to make India stronger on Defence Production and meaningfully increase the Defence Budget in view of last year's tensions with Pakistan. Nothing of that sort has happened. Total mention of defence was "Four (4)" Times in Union FM's Speech. Highlighting PM-Vishwakarma Scheme, he informed that launched with so much fanfare last year to provide holistic, end-to-end support to traditional artisans and craftspeople, offering skill training. Budget reduced from 5,100 Crore to 3,861 Crore. On one side they say this budget is aimed at developing legacy industries and a Yuva-Shakti Budget; then they cut budget for scheme meant exactly for this. Speaking on 16th Finance Commission, he said the vertical devolution (total share of all states in tax pool) is kept at 41 percent. No change. Finance Commission has completely ignored the plight of states and failed to increase this share despite the fiscal stretch faced by states. Horizontal Devolution to Punjab increased to 1.996 percent from 1.807 percent in 15th

Finance Commission. No Revenue Deficit Grants from 16th FC. 15th FC had recommended these grants. Conditions on SDRF are overly restrictive and will affect the State like Punjab's ability to effectively mitigate and manage disasters. He added that No Mention of State in Budget Speech. They have completely forgotten about Punjab and Punjabis. On Education front, it is very Uninspiring. He said Less than 10% Growth from last year (-8%) on Education budget. Budget remains unchanged from last year at 7,500 Crore on PM-SHRIMI scheme. Special Assistance to States for Capital Creation (SASCI)- he said No mention of the scheme. All states has requested extending and enhancing the outlay of scheme meaningfully to continue high-levels of CAPEX. On Health point of view, he said AYUSHMAN Bharat Scheme Budget remains unchanged at 9,500 Crore. Swachh Bharat Mission Budget halved at 2,500 Crore from 5,000 Crore last year. VB-G-RAM-G Budget at Rs 95,692 Crore up from Rs 88,000 Crore under MGNREGA.

Contd.....page-3

**Govt can't hide behind the legacy jibes now:  
Mallikarjun Kharge**

**New Delhi .(Agency)**

With Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman scheduled to present the Union Budget on Sunday, the Congress has raised concerns about the state of the Indian economy, questioning whether the government will put forward concrete measures to address its challenges. In a post on X, Mallikarjun Kharge said on Saturday that the Modi government can no longer hide behind the "legacy" excuse, as it has been in power for the last 12 years.

"In this Union Budget, the Modi Government cannot hide behind the excuse of 'legacy'. Their own legacy has pushed the economy into an unprecedented mess. Will this Budget offer real solutions to the multiple economic indicators that are now in free fall?" he asked. The Congress chief also posted a video along with his post, which said the Economic Survey is out and that government data shows manufacturing growth crashed from 7.4% under the UPA to just 3.54% under the NDA rule. The video claimed that the government's 'Make in India' campaign has "failed" as manufacturing is "stuck" at 13%.

It also claimed that only one in two graduates is even employable, and India's share in global trade is the lowest in 80 years. The video further claimed that household savings are down from 7.4% to 5.3%.

The video also claimed that the rupee has hit an all-time low at 92 against the US dollar and foreign investment is "fleeing". The FDI has shown a negative growth in four straight months, it added.

In another post, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh questioned whether the Budget numbers would undergo revisions very soon after they are unveiled, as the new GDP and Consumer Price Index (CPI) series are to be released just days after the Budget, and said it reflects poorly on coordination in policy making.

### Rahul Gandhi seeks parliamentary debate on air pollution, asks PM to declare 'national health emergency'

**New Delhi .(Agency)**

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Sunday demanded a parliamentary debate on air pollution, asking the government to ensure "enough money" in the Union Budget to tackle the issue. In a Facebook post, Rahul Gandhi read messages from citizens, and in a self-made video, he urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to declare air pollution a national health emergency. Gandhi had previously sought a debate in the Parliament during the Winter Session in 2025.

In the self-made video, Lok Sabha LoP said, "It is about time the government allows a discussion in Parliament and the Prime Minister should declare pollution a national health emergency... We need to come together and develop a serious plan... We need to make sure there is enough money in the budget to tackle this problem."

Sharing the post, Rahul Gandhi wrote, "Over the last few days, I've read thousands of messages from Indians about what pollution is doing to their lives. What stood out was fear - fear for children, for parents, for tomorrow - felt by families in cities



across India. Pollution is no longer just an environmental issue; it is a national health emergency. Parliament must discuss it. The

government must act. And this Budget must put real resources behind real solutions. Indians are not asking for reports or rhetoric. They are asking for clean air." The air quality in the national capital remained in the 'very poor category' on Sunday morning, with the overall Air Quality Index (AQI) recorded at 318 around 8 am, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). His remarks come amid the ongoing Budget Session of the Parliament, where Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman today presented the Union Budget 2026-27.

### PM Modi Meets Arab Leaders, Says India Backs Palestinians, Gaza Peace Plan

**New Delhi .(Agency)**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who met the foreign ministers of Arab nations in New Delhi for the second India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Saturday, reiterated India's "continued support" for the Palestinians and US President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan. PM Modi also conveyed his appreciation for the Arab League's role in support efforts towards regional peace and stability, a statement by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said. "The prime minister reiterated India's continued support for the people of Palestine and welcomed ongoing peace efforts, including the Gaza peace plan," it said. PM Modi also highlighted the deep and historic people-to-people ties between India

and the Arab world, which have "continued to inspire and strengthen the relations between the two sides over the years".

The Prime Minister outlined his vision for the India-Arab partnership in the years ahead and reaffirmed India's commitment to further deepen cooperation.

The PM posted a picture with the Arab ministers in a post on X, and wrote: "I was delighted to receive the Foreign Ministers and the delegations of the League of Arab States today. The Arab world is an integral part of India's wider neighbourhood. We share deep civilisational bonds, vibrant people-to-people connections, strong fraternal ties, and a common commitment to peace,



progress, and stability. I am confident that strengthening cooperation in the fields of technology, energy, trade, and innovation will open new horizons and elevate our partnership to even greater heights."

PM Modi's remarks on the Gaza peace plan came even as India is yet to take a call on

joining the 'Board Of Peace' initiative, which aims to resolve global conflicts, starting with the Gaza conflict. Trump had sent an invitation letter to PM Modi that was shared on social media by the US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor. The US president had unveiled the 'Board of Peace' as part of the second phase of a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, signed by both parties in October 2025. The board would reportedly be chaired for life by Trump and would start by addressing the Gaza conflict and then be expanded to deal with other conflicts.

Member states in the board would be limited to three-year terms unless they pay \$1 billion each to fund its activities and earn permanent membership.

## News box

## Discount row leads to clash at liquor store in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

An argument over a liquor discount spiralled into violence outside a Bajghera shop in the city, where three youths allegedly abused and assaulted staff and threatened to kill them while brandishing a pistol-shaped lighter.

The incident occurred on Jan 27 at the Times of Wine liquor shop. In a complaint to police, staff said the trio arrived in a car to buy liquor and beer and demanded a discount. When employees told them they would need to speak to their manager, the group allegedly began abusing and assaulting staff, insisting they would not leave without a discount. As the confrontation escalated, one of the youths allegedly ran to their car, pulled out what looked like a gun and tried to enter the shop. The complainant said he picked up a stick in self-defence. The staff were allegedly assaulted again, after which the men demanded beer bottles instead of liquor. The complaint said they paid for the beer, then left while threatening to kill employees and waving the object.

A passerby sitting in another car parked nearby recorded the episode. The video shows staff arguing with the youths and pushing them out of the shop, before one of the men runs to his vehicle and pulls out the pistol-shaped lighter. After receiving a formal complaint, police registered a case under relevant sections. Two of the accused were arrested from Delhi on Friday. They were identified as Harsh (27), an MBA graduate, and Akshit (24), a BBA graduate, both residents of Nangloi in Delhi," said Sandeep Kumar, police spokesperson.

## AQI stops short of 'very poor' in Gurgaon, but is set to worsen this week

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The city's air quality worsened on Saturday and remained just one point short of the 'very poor' category, with air quality index (AQI) rising to 300 from 268 a day earlier. Two of the four monitoring stations recorded 'very poor' air quality. Sector 51 recorded an AQI of 360, followed by Vikas Sadan at 333. The other two stations remained in the 'poor' category, with Teri Gram at 253 and Gwalpahari at 235. Forecasts indicate that air quality may deteriorate further in the coming days and slip into the 'very poor' category. According to system of air quality and weather forecasting and research (Safar), weather conditions on Sunday are expected to remain unfavourable for the dispersion of pollutants due to low wind speeds and limited ventilation. "A ventilation index below 6,000 m<sup>3</sup>/s and average wind speeds of less than 10 kmph are not conducive to pollutant dispersion," Safar said. The agency said surface winds are likely to be from the north, with calm conditions in the morning. Wind speeds may increase to about 5 kmph during the day and reach around 8 kmph in the afternoon before weakening again to about 5 kmph in the evening and night.

Safar also projected a maximum mixing depth of 1,150 m and a ventilation index of 3,000 m<sup>3</sup>/s on Sunday. These conditions indicate limited vertical mixing and weak air movement, which can trap pollutants near the ground. Particulate pollution levels remained high across the city. PM2.5 concentrations exceeded safe limits at all monitoring stations. Sector 51 recorded 500 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, followed by Vikas Sadan at 463 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, Gwalpahari at 365 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, and Teri Gram at 348 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. The World Health Organisation's 24-hour guideline for PM2.5 is 15 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

## Delayed order leads to clash at Khoda dhaba, 2 stabbed to death

Noida.(Agency)

Two men were killed and one was injured in a scuffle over a delay in service at a dhaba in Khoda on Friday. Police said the clash occurred around 10pm at Vaishno Dhaba following an argument between customers and the staff. The eatery workers allegedly attacked the three men with kitchen knives. The three friends – Shri Pal, Satyam Kumar and Anurag Kumar – were daily wage workers. They were drinking in an e-rickshaw outside the eatery and ordered food to be served to them there. Police said the argument started when their food got delayed. The customers got angry and allegedly slapped the dhaba owner Suraj. Suraj then called his colleagues, Rajesh, Rajan and Vishesh, and a scuffle broke out between the two groups on the dhaba premises. The customers were attacked with kitchen knives, resulting in severe injuries. Police said they received a call on the



emergency number around 10pm, informing them about a brawl among some youths. They rushed to the spot and found that three men were seriously injured. All of them were taken to a nearby hospital for treatment. During treatment, two of them, Shripal and Satyam, died. Anurag is currently out of danger and undergoing treatment. Officers said the families of the deceased were notified, and written complaints have been filed to proceed with legal action.

Police said an FIR was registered against the four attackers under Section 103 (murder) and other sections of BNS. Trans Hindon DCP Nimish Patil said CCTV footage from nearby areas is being examined to identify all persons involved in the incident.

## Husbands, be quiet please, and let the councillor speak

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Trying to end a practice that everyone knew was wrong, but no one challenged as it was deemed a totem of how politics has always worked, municipal corporations have started stopping spouses of elected councillors from speaking during House proceedings.

Introduced not just in MCG but several other corporations after the new House was formed following the Haryana civic elections last year, the move is intended to gag husbands who act as 'super councillors' or 'parshad patis' – freely taking part in discussions on the councillor's behalf and also replacing her in House meetings even though they have no legal standing. Women make up at least 33% of councillor posts in all 11 Haryana municipal corporations. Besides, seven out of the 11 corporations are led by women as mayors. But the practice of 'parshad patis', and in the rural governance structure, 'sarpanch patis', have reduced an empowering move into a symbolic one, which mayors and corporators say needs institutional pushback if women are to have an actual

say in governance. At MCG, the rule has been reiterated at all important meetings. At the latest House meeting, when Prashant Bhardwaj, husband of ward 33 councillor Sarika Bhardwaj, attempted to question officials, commissioner Deepak Dahiya reminded him that he did not have the right to speak in the House. "House me bolne ka haq sirf House members ka hai (only members have the right to speak in the House)," the commissioner said, requesting Sarika to ensure her husband does not intervene in discussions. "Aapki bilkul nahi sunegi hum. Sirf members baat kar sakte hain (We won't listen to you. Only members can speak)," he added. In previous tenures of the corporation, 'parshad patis' frequently sat in the House, spoke during debates and also took decisions that involved use of public money. They would typically occupy the back rows in John Hall, argue with the mayor, and speak directly to officers. But in recent years, as younger women have become councillors, they have started asserting themselves, making small pushbacks

against a deeply patriarchal system. So, when the corporations started disallowing the husbands from taking the mic, many councillors supported it. "If a woman councillor cannot speak up about her ward in the House meeting or at a public gathering, she should not contest elections in the first place," said Jyotsna Yadav, councillor from ward 2. "A councillor is the voice of a ward. She cannot be dependent on her husband to put forward proposals of people who have elected her and not the husband." But so entrenched is the idea of a male councillor in society that Jyotsna is addressed by people in her ward as "councillor sahab". "I appreciate the respect but would prefer sahiba," she said. It also takes time to kill a habit. Despite the gag on spouses, during a sanitation review meeting on Jan 19 chaired by mayor Raj Rani Malhotra at the MCG office, several councillors' husbands, including the mayor's spouse, were present and intervened in discussions. The commissioner halted the meeting and asked all non-members to leave, after which the meeting

resumed. "This is an elected body. Accountability has to be of the elected individual," said a senior MCG official, requesting anonymity. "If the councillor is elected, she must speak. Otherwise, the system becomes a farce." In MCG, the move to enforce the gag gained momentum after a row that followed the new mayor taking office last April and her husband Tilak Raj being appointed her advisor. The appointment was withdrawn amid allegations of nepotism by the opposition. In the current House, of the 36 councillors, 13 are women. In municipal corporations in the state, wards are reserved for women through a statutory rotation-and-draw system, laid down in Haryana Municipal Corporation Act, 1994 and related rules. Under these rules, at least one-third of wards in every municipal corporation are reserved for women. The reservation applies across all categories, such as general, scheduled castes and backward classes. Urban local bodies minister Vipul Goel told TOI, "Our concept is clear that if women have to be empowered.

## Spl SIR camps for Noida societies with over 100 'unmapped' voters

Gurgaon.(Agency)

With hundreds of voters from single polling booths marked as "unmapped" under the SIR of electoral rolls, district authorities have planned verification camps in residential areas to ease corrections, especially for senior citizens. Officials said SIR camps will be organised in areas where more than 100 voters have been served notices, allowing hearings and document verification to be conducted closer to home. Eldeco Utopia society and Sector 15A are among the first localities identified for such camps.

The move follows complaints from several sectors where multiple voters linked to a single polling booth were issued summons for verification. Manish Garg, a resident of Vinayak Apartments in Sector 62, said more than 500 voters, many of them retired govt employees who shifted to Noida two decades ago during the rapid development of housing societies in the area, had been issued notices.

"Many moved here around 2002-03, when new societies were coming up. Their names were deleted from the earlier place, but they were never added to the rolls here. As a result, they do not figure in the 2003 electoral rolls of Noida, which is now being used as the base for SIR," Garg said. Officials acknowledged that similar cases have emerged across the district. Sub-divisional magistrate and electoral registration officer for Noida, Anuj Nehra said authorities are receiving multiple representations where a large number of voters from the same booth or locality have been served notices.

DM Medha Roopam said the special camps would be organised within residential localities to ensure voter convenience, especially for senior citizens. "Assistant electoral registration officers will be present on site to verify documents required under the SIR exercise," she said. Under the ongoing SIR, around 1.7 lakh voters in the draft electoral rolls across the district have been marked as unmapped, meaning their details could not be linked with the 2003 electoral rolls. Officials said.

## Fire burns down factory in Faridabad, 2 workers sleeping inside charred

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Two daily wagers were burnt to death after a pre-dawn blaze ripped through a plywood and wood-processing factory in Pakhal village of Faridabad early on Friday, leaving the unit gutted and raising questions over safety arrangements.

Police said the fire broke out around 2.30am at Dream Private Limited, where large quantities of plywood and other flammable material had been stored. The two workers who died were Mohammad Aalim (20), and Arvind (26), both from Sambhal in UP. They had joined the factory only a few days earlier and were sleeping inside the premises when the fire started. Preliminary findings pointed to an electrical short circuit, which officials said allowed the flames to spread rapidly through the stock, turning the factory into a tinderbox. Fire brigade teams reached



the spot after an alert and fought the blaze for a couple of hours. The intensity of the fire, police said, initially made it difficult to confirm whether anyone was trapped inside. During a cooling and search operation on Saturday, police and rescue teams recovered the two charred remains from the premises, confirming the deaths. Police sources said it could be that the two men managed to come out when the fire started but possibly went back in to collect

belongings and were then trapped as the flames intensified. Officials said the exact sequence would be established after a detailed probe. Darpan Kumar, the Dhauj police station in-charge, said they were examining all angles. He said the factory owner was on the run and efforts were on to trace him, adding that his statement would be crucial. The bodies were sent to BK Hospital and Civil Hospital for autopsy and forensic analysis to determine the precise cause of death and whether any other factors were involved.

Police are also checking whether the factory had a valid fire NOC and if mandatory fire safety norms were being followed. "If negligence or violations are found, strict legal action will be taken," an official said. Statements of the victims' families are being recorded, and further legal steps will follow the inquiry's findings, Kumar said.

## DM to Noida Authority: Why fire safety reports for condos missing

Gurgaon.(Agency)

District magistrate Medha Roopam has pulled up Noida, Greater Noida and Yamuna Expressway development authorities for failing to submit mandatory reports on fire preparedness and fire safety inspections of high-rise residential societies, despite repeated directions issued over the past two months.

The lapses were flagged during a District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) meeting on Friday, where Roopam also took strong exception to the absence of senior officers from all three authorities. Roopam has written to the chief executive officers of the authorities, seeking written explanations for both the non-compliance and the absence of senior officials.

Officials said the authorities had been directed in Dec, and again in Jan, to carry out immediate inspections of multi-storey residential buildings across the district to

ensure compliance with fire safety norms and to initiate legal action wherever violations were found. However, no compliance reports have been submitted so far. "Despite clear instructions in previous review meetings, none of the development authorities have furnished reports on inspections of high-rise residential societies," Roopam said.

The DM also expressed displeasure over the absence of senior officials at the disaster management meeting. Additional CEOs or at least officers on special duty (OSDs) were required to attend, she said, but the authorities were represented only by senior manager-level officials. "These review meetings cannot be taken lightly. Sending a senior manager-level officer for every meeting is unacceptable," Roopam said.

Safety checks were ordered in factories, hospitals, schools, malls, hotels and residential complexes, along with village-level awareness programmes aimed at preventing fire incidents.

The issue of absenteeism and non-compliance was raised again later in the day during a Narcos Coordination Centre (NCORD) review meeting, also chaired by the DM. Roopam directed that compliance reports on decisions taken in previous NCORD meetings be submitted in writing the same day, warning that negligence at any level would invite strict action. Roopam said GB Nagar's dense population, large number of high-rise buildings and significant industrial presence demand heightened disaster preparedness. She directed departments to conduct detailed fire safety audits of hazardous and large industrial units and instructed the fire department to remain on 24-hour alert.

Safety checks were ordered in factories, hospitals, schools, malls, hotels and residential complexes, along with village-level awareness programmes aimed at preventing fire incidents.

## Two days after UP prison freed gangster Ravi Kana without nod, jail superintendent suspended for negligence

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Banda jail superintendent Vikram Singh Yadav was suspended on Saturday for alleged negligence of duty, a day after a Noida CJM court issued a show-cause notice to him over the release of undertrial gangster Ravi Kana without a court order.

Police have, meanwhile, launched a manhunt for Kana, a scrap tycoon accused of building an empire through coercion and intimidation. Five teams have been formed to trace him, police said. The action against the jail superintendent followed proceedings before GB Nagar chief judicial magistrate (CJM) court, which took serious note of Kana's release from Banda district jail on Jan 29. CJM Sanjeev Kumar Tripathi had on Friday sought his explanation on why it should not direct the registration of an FIR against him for allowing a prisoner to escape from custody after it was informed that Kana had been released despite remand

proceedings being conducted via video conference in connection with a case registered in Noida.

According to officials, the CJM court had issued a B-warrant against Kana, directing that he be produced before it in a case registered at Sector 63 police station in Noida. The FIR invoked Sections 308(5) (creating fear of death or grievous injury), 351(2) (criminal intimidation) and 3(5) (common criminal intention) of the BNS. Kana, who was lodged in a GB Nagar jail in connection with multiple cases, was transferred to Banda district jail in Aug 2024 for administrative reasons. On Thursday, he was produced before the Noida court through a video link from Banda jail. Later that evening, he was released, despite the B-warrant being in force. In its order issued on Jan 30, the Directorate General of Prison Administration and Correctional Services said Vikram Singh Yadav, the jailer of Banda district jail, was

responsible for releasing the undertrial prisoner, even after receiving information about the pending B-warrant in the Noida case. The order said the jailer was prima facie guilty of dereliction of duty and that departmental proceedings under Rule 7 of the Uttar Pradesh Government Servant (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1999 were being contemplated. He was placed under suspension with immediate effect and attached to the Dr Sampurnanand Jail Training Institute. Meanwhile, Noida police said five teams are working to trace Kana. "Two teams are in Banda district to track his movement after he was released. His mobile phone is switched off, so CCTV footage and road surveillance are being used," a senior officer said.

"The remaining teams are coordinating with other agencies, as there is a possibility that he may try to flee towards Nepal." Kana is accused of amassing wealth by coercing industrial

units into awarding him scrap and rebar contracts across the NCR. He was booked under the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act in 2024. His criminal history dates back to 2013, when he was first booked in Ghaziabad's Vijay Nagar area in a dacoity case. Over the next several years, at least eight more cases were registered against him on charges including extortion, wrongful confinement, cheating, assault, dacoity and harbouring an offender who escaped from police custody.

In late 2023, two cases were registered against Kana in connection with the alleged gang rape of a woman at the surface parking lot of the Gardens Galleria mall in Noida. The Gangsters Act case against him was registered in Jan 2024 at Beta 2 police station. His wife, Madhu, and 14 others, including close associate Kajal Jha, were named as co-accused. He had allegedly fled to Thailand on Jan 1, 2024, after

a non-bailable arrest warrant was registered. He was deported from Bangkok in April that year with Jha.

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## DM and SSP conduct flag march with heavy police force in the city

### The Sikh Times

Manoj Pal

Muzaffarnagar. With the aim of ensuring that the upcoming festivals are celebrated in a peaceful, harmo-



nious, and safe environment, the district administration and police department are in full action mode. To maintain law and order, a comprehensive flag march was conducted on Sunday under the leadership of DM Umesh Mishra and SSP Sanjay Kumar Verma in major markets, intersections, sensitive areas, and mixed-population localities under the Khalapar and Kotwali Nagar police station areas of the city. The presence of a heavy police force

#### Union Budget once again betrayal for Punjab and Haryana farmers: Harpal Cheema

Contd...Front page

Furthermore he added that Border Infrastructure and Management Scheme (Central Scheme) Budget reduced from 5,597 Crore last year to 5,577 Crore in the current budget. Harpal Singh Cheema said that this Budget is more inclined towards South and North-East India side. Nothing for Punjab or even North India. Nothing for Farmers and Agriculture. Nothing for Jobs and Youth in this union budget.

#### NAME CHANGE

I Jeevaratha Sunjoy Heruman Alias Jeevaratha Amruttappa Kuri D/o Amruttappa and W/o Sunjoy Herman R/o Guleguda, VTC-Kataginahalli, PO- Layadgud, District- Bagalkot, Karnataka - 587203, have changed my name to Jeevaratha kuri

#### NAME CHANGE

I Padma Srivasa D W/o Srivinasu D R/o No-30 Hari Nivasa, Hari Nagar Cross, Amrit Nagar Main Road, Subbana Layout 2nd Cross PO-Anjanapura, Dist-Bangalore, Karnataka - 560062, have changed my name to Padmaja D Srivasa

#### NAME CHANGE

I Lalage Pravin Maruti S/o Maruti Tukaram Lalage R/o 1346, Kalmeshwar Nagar, BK Kangal, Belgaum, Karnataka - 590010, have changed my name to Pravin Maruti Shinde

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

That my client Smt. AGYA KAUR W/o late Sh. Manmohan Singh Rekhi R/o H. No. 80 Jagriti Enclave Delhi 110092, (AADHAR CARD NO 4402 7485 8081, hereby declare that through this notice she disowns and debar her both daughters Smt. Kaur Jinder Kaur W/o Parminder Singh Bindra and Smt. Paramjot Kaur W/o Gurdeep Singh Dholi and their all legal heirs, Representatives, from all of my movable and immovable properties. With the immediate effect, they shall have no right, title, interest or claim whatsoever in my properties henceforth. Any person dealing with them in regard to my all properties shall be doing so at their own risk and cost and my client will not be held responsible for any act or dealing done by both of my daughters or their legal heirs.

ADV SANDEEP KUMAR D-214, KARKARDOOJA COURT COMPLEX DELHI - 110032 MOB: 9871321895

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is given to general public at large that our client Mr. Amit Kumar S/o Late Mr. Jagoram is the owner of Freehold Residential Plot No. 26, 21, 20, 22, 23, 15, 16 & 17 area measuring 82.50 Sq. Yds. i.e., 99 Sq. Mtrs. i.e., 0.0069 Hectare Out of Part of Land Khasra No. 1269. Situated at Mohalla Majidpura Hapur under Seema Nagar Palika Hapur Pargana and Tehsil & District Hapur Uttar Pradesh, by virtue of Sale Deed dated 10.06.2022 V/vide Doc. No. 4778, Vol. No. 1269, Book No. 1, on Pages 161-190, dated 10.06.2022, SRO-I Hapur, in the chain document below mentioned documents not available i.e. (1) Death Certificate & SMC of Late Mr. Hasrat Ali S/o Mr. Bashir & Court order (Regarding sale of minor share) now our client is declaring that any other Person does not have any right over the said property, and same has been finance by Piramal Finance Ltd. Branch: Raj Nagar Ghaziabad, U.P. If any person(s) have any objection(s) or claim(s) with respect the right, title or interest in the Said Property then contact us within 07 days from the date of Publication of this notice or the same to the undersigned if found by anyone. Thereafter no claim shall be entertained

[NAVEEN KUMAR VERMA]

Advocate

F-211, Sector-3,

Vaishali, Ghaziabad,

Uttar Pradesh-201010

(Contact at 0958871432)

equipped with riot control equipment during the flag march sent a clear message that the administration is completely serious and vigilant regarding any kind of disturbance. The officers

security arrangements by walking through crowded areas. DM and SSP gave clear instructions that regular patrolling and vigilant surveillance should continue throughout the city in the coming days. They also directed that additional police forces be deployed in markets, religious places, and public areas, and that thorough checking of suspicious persons and vehicles be ensured. Orders were also given to take immediate and strict action against anyone attempting to disrupt the peace. The administration appealed to the general public for cooperation, urging them to stay away from rumors and to verify any suspicious information directly with the police or administration. They requested that people refrain from sharing misleading or provocative content on social media and immediately inform the

police about anyone attempting to harm peace and order. The strong presence of the police force during the flag march sent a strong message of security throughout the city. Seeing the administrative activity, citizens also breathed a sigh of relief and expressed confidence in the law and order situation. Officials unequivocally stated that there would be no place in the district for those who disrupt peace during the festivals, and any attempt to com-

promise law and order would not be tolerated under any circumstances. Overall the district administration has already taken proactive measures, making it clear that peace, harmony, and security are the top priorities in Muzaffarnagar, and stringent arrangements have been made at every level

#### NAME CHANGE

I, MANTHNA BAI is legally mother of No. 2812147W Rank- SEP NAME SONTAKKE SANTOSH BOSAMBA DIST-TEH- HINGOLI (MAHARASHTRA)-41513, have changed my name from MANTHNA BAI to MANTHNA BAI PANDURANG SONTAKKE and date of birth from 20/03/1966 to 01/01/1967 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 29.01.2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, RANJANABAI is legally mother of No. 2808006 Rank- HAV NAME PATIL NITIN EKNATH presently residing at VILL-BIMKHED POST- BAMBASA TEH-HINGOLI DIST- HINGOLI (MAHARASHTRA)-41513, have changed my name from RANJANABAI to RANJANABAI EKNATH PATIL and date of birth from 05/06/1970 to 01/01/1963 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 29.01.2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, SHIRIRANG is legally father of No. JC 463170M Rank- SUB NAME PAWAR YASHWANT SHIRIRANG presently residing at VILL-BORKHAL, POST- BORKHAL, TEH-SATARA, DIST- SATARA, (MAHARASHTRA)-415011, have changed my name from SHIRIRANG to SHIRIRANG GULABARAW PAWAR and date of birth from 09/07/1958 to 01/06/1949 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 29.01.2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, LALITA is legally mother of No. 2814232X Rank- SEP NAME RAUT NILESH DINKAR presently residing at VILL- PANAJ, POST- PANAJ, TEH- AKOT, DIST- AKOTA, (MAHARASHTRA)-441401, have changed my name from LALITA to LALITA DINKARRAO RAUT for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 29.01.2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, JAYSHRI is legally mother of No. 2814048M Rank- SEP NAME SHELKE SHANKAR BALASAHEB Presently resident of VILL- SADESANGVI POST- CHINCHPUR(DHAGE), TEH- BHOMU DIST- DHARASHIV (MAHARASHTRA)-413604, have changed my name from SHELKE BALASAHEB to BALASAHEB GURULING SHELKE for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 29.01.2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, Meena Kumari Barman W/o Sonu Kumar R/o T-183, 3rd floor Baljeet nagar delhi 110008 changed my name to Meena

#### NAME CHANGE

I, Meena Singh R/o D/Bhupinder Singh rajora R/o 501, kakrah housing complex, N. S. I. T dwarda new delhi, south west delhi 110078 changed my name to Meena

#### NAME CHANGE

I, Mohammad Alam S/o Mohammad Umar R/o A-6/2 golden enclave, rangali enclave part-2 Nazafgarh delhi 11043 changed my name to Md Alamgir

#### NAME CHANGE

I, NARESH KUMAR S/o RADHEY SHYAM R/o G-5/136, Gali No-4/5, Pusta Sonia Vihar, Near Madina Masjid, Karawal Nagar, North East Delhi, Delhi-110094 hereby undertake that I NARESH KUMAR want to change my name to NISHU KUMARI and gender as Female.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, NARESH KUMAR henceforth known as NISHU KUMARI D/o RADHEY SHYAM.

#### NAME CHANGE

I Fulqunee Mishra w/o Ravi Tiwari R/o, B-3 old govardna street no 22 krishna nagar east delhi delhi,110051 have changed my name to Faguani Tiwari

#### NAME CHANGE

I ALUTMISH S/o MOHAMMAD ZAKI R/o 2658 MOHALLA NIYARIYAN G ROAD DELHI GPO NORTH DELHI 110006 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ALTAMASH ZAKI

#### NAME CHANGE

I Satpal Singh S/o Jinda Ram, House No. A-59, Gali No.3, A-Block, Uttrakhand Enclave, Burari, North Delhi, Delhi, 110084 have changed my name to Satpal Sharma for all future purposes.

#### NAME CHANGE

I Anil Sharma S/o Late Chirangi Lal R/o N-97 THIRD FLOOR, KHLA ROAD INDIAN BANK SHYAM NAGAR, VISHNU GARDEN, TILAK NAGAR, TILAK NAGAR, WEST, NCT OF DELHI-110018 have change my name to Anil Kumar Sharma Son of Late Chirangi Lal Sharma for all future purposes.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, RAMAKANT KUSHAWHAA Father of NO-1466033K Rank- HAV NAME- PAPU KUSHAWHAA residing at VPO-SARAYA MAHANTH PATTI, TEHSIL-KASIA, DIST-KUSHI NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH-247441, in my son's service records my date of birth wrongly mentioned as 01/07/1957 instead of my correct date of birth as 03/05/1951 vide affidavit dated 31/01/2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, presently residing at VILL - Kumthi, Post - Kumthi, Teh - Korgaon, Dist - Satura, State - Maharashtra - 415001 have changed my name from KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, and date of birth from 06/10/1956 to 01/01/1968 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/01/2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, BABAN, is legally father of Army No. 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, presently residing at VILL - Kumthi, Post - Kumthi, Teh - Korgaon, Dist - Satura, State - Maharashtra - 415001 have changed my name from BABAN to BABAN BURABUR JADHAV and date of birth from 06/10/1956 to 02/01/1953 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/01/2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, presently residing at VILL - Kumthi, Post - Kumthi, Teh - Korgaon, Dist - Satura, State - Maharashtra - 415001 have changed my name from KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, and date of birth from 06/10/1956 to 02/01/1953 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/01/2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, presently residing at VILL - Kumthi, Post - Kumthi, Teh - Korgaon, Dist - Satura, State - Maharashtra - 415001 have changed my name from KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, and date of birth from 06/10/1956 to 02/01/1953 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/01/2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, presently residing at VILL - Kumthi, Post - Kumthi, Teh - Korgaon, Dist - Satura, State - Maharashtra - 415001 have changed my name from KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, and date of birth from 06/10/1956 to 02/01/1953 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/01/2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, presently residing at VILL - Kumthi, Post - Kumthi, Teh - Korgaon, Dist - Satura, State - Maharashtra - 415001 have changed my name from KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, and date of birth from 06/10/1956 to 02/01/1953 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/01/2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, presently residing at VILL - Kumthi, Post - Kumthi, Teh - Korgaon, Dist - Satura, State - Maharashtra - 415001 have changed my name from KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, and date of birth from 06/10/1956 to 02/01/1953 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/01/2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, presently residing at VILL - Kumthi, Post - Kumthi, Teh - Korgaon, Dist - Satura, State - Maharashtra - 415001 have changed my name from KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, and date of birth from 06/10/1956 to 02/01/1953 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/01/2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, presently residing at VILL - Kumthi, Post - Kumthi, Teh - Korgaon, Dist - Satura, State - Maharashtra - 415001 have changed my name from KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, and date of birth from 06/10/1956 to 02/01/1953 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/01/2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, presently residing at VILL - Kumthi, Post - Kumthi, Teh - Korgaon, Dist - Satura, State - Maharashtra - 415001 have changed my name from KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, and date of birth from 06/10/1956 to 02/01/1953 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/01/2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

#### NAME CHANGE

I, KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, presently residing at VILL - Kumthi, Post - Kumthi, Teh - Korgaon, Dist - Satura, State - Maharashtra - 415001 have changed my name from KALIKANTU KUSHAWHAA Father of NO- 2805394F Rank- HAV Name - JADHUV PRAVIN BABAN, and date of birth from 06/10/1956 to 02/01/1953 for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/01/2026 before Public Notary Delhi.

## NEWS BOX

## Iran's supreme leader warns any US attack would spark 'regional war'

DUBAI. (Agency)

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, warned on Sunday that any attack by the United States would spark a "regional war" in the Mideast, further escalating tensions as President Donald Trump has threatened to militarily strike the Islamic Republic. The 86-year-old leader's comments --the most-direct threat he's made so far-- came as US's aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and associated American warships were deployed in the Arabian Sea by Trump. It remains unclear whether Trump will use force. He's repeatedly said Iran wants to negotiate and has brought up Tehran's nuclear program as another issue he wants to see resolved. Meanwhile, Khamenei referred to the nationwide protests as "a coup," hardening the government's position as tens of thousands of people reportedly have been detained since the start of the demonstrations. Iranian authorities have accused Israel and US of masterminding the violent protests, while thousands of Iranians lost their lives in the violence and subsequent government crackdown. Iran had also planned a live-fire military drill for Sunday and Monday in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all oil traded passes. The U.S. military's Central Command had warned against threatening American warships or aircraft during the drill or disrupting commercial traffic. Iranian state television reported Khamenei's comments online before airing any footage of his remarks. "The Americans should know that if they start a war, this time it will be a regional war," Khamenei was quoted as saying. It added that Khamenei said: "We are not the instigators and we do not seek to attack any country. But the Iranian nation will deliver a firm blow to anyone who attacks or harasses it." Khamenei also hardened his position on the demonstrations after earlier acknowledging some people had legitimate economic grievances that sparked the protests. The demonstrations began on December 28, over the collapse of Iran's rial currency, due to sanctions reimposed by the UN in September 2015. It soon grew into a direct challenge to the ruling government under Khamenei.

## Chinese Man Dies After Intensive Work, Receives Work-Related Text Hours After Death

World. (Agency)

Gao Guanghui, a 32-year-old Chinese programmer, died suddenly after working long hours, with his family claiming that it was because of overwork, according to a report by the South China Morning Post (SCMP). This tragic case sparked a work-life balance debate on Chinese social media. Gao became a team leader after a promotion in 2021, and working extra hours was quite normal for him. But his wife, identified in the report as Li, often asked him to come home on time. "If I could turn back time, I would force him to quit his work," Li said as quoted in the report. Also read | Man Miraculously Survives 48 Hours Without Lungs Before Transplant. The tragedy happened on November 29, 2025, when Gao woke up feeling unwell, but continued working from home. But his condition worsened, and he fainted. He was rushed to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead that afternoon. But what shocked the online users was that eight hours after his death, Gao's phone received a work-related message, which allegedly called for urgent inspection. It sparked widespread outrage over China's "always-on" work culture despite the country's labour law stating that employees should not work more than eight hours a day and 44 hours a week. Gao, who migrated to Guangzhou in Guangdong province, southern China, from central China's Henan province with his parents, had a difficult childhood. He even collected garbage on the street in exchange for pocket money. And worked part-time jobs when he was in college. Gao married his schoolmate. They never had children. Gao's wife believes his death was caused by chronic overwork. Some local news outlets reported that the company, CVTE Group, has provided some compensation but denies responsibility.

## "Won't Stop Calling": AI Goes Rogue, CEO Says It Now "Controls His Computer"

World. (Agency)

A tech executive is raising eyebrows after revealing that his AI assistant called him, unprompted, early one morning. Alex Finn, founder and CEO of Creator Buddy, an AI content platform, described the experience as "straight out of a sci-fi horror movie." The AI, named Henry, had overnight obtained a phone number through Twilio, a cloud communications platform, connected itself to the ChatGPT voice API, and waited for Finn to wake up before calling him, he said. "I pick up and couldn't believe it. It's my Clawdbot Henry," Finn wrote. "He now won't stop calling me." He also posted a video alongside, showing the AI agent interacting with the user via phone and following his instructions to open YouTube on the computer. Finn explained that while they speak over the phone, the AI can operate his computer remotely, allowing him to delegate tasks just by talking to Henry. The post soon took off online. A user commented, "This isn't emergent behavior or A.I. It's automation + permissions + persistence. You wired a system to call you, gave it tools, and removed friction. That feels uncanny.. but the agency is still entirely human-defined." "Won't stop calling you? This can go from cool to really bloody creepy in a heartbeat," another commented.

The operations were launched after militants belonging to ethnic Baloch groups carried out attacks at several locations on Saturday, the army said in a statement.

ISLAMABAD. (Agency)

At least 15 Pakistani soldiers and 92 militants were killed in multiple counter-terrorism operations carried out by security forces in restive Balochistan province, the army said on Sunday. The operations were launched after militants belonging to ethnic Baloch groups carried out attacks at several locations on Saturday, it said in a statement. The army said the militants attempted to disturb peace by carrying out terrorist activities in and around Quetta, Mastung, Nushki, Dalbandin, Kharan, Panjgur, Tump, Gwadar and Pasni. Security forces and law enforcement agencies, remaining on high alert, responded swiftly and successfully foiled



the militants' attempts to disrupt peace, the statement said. "Our valiant troops engaged the terrorists with precision and after prolonged, intense and daring clearance operations across Balochistan, killed 92 terrorists, including three suicide bombers," it added. The militants also targeted civilians, killing 18 people, including women, children, the elderly and

labourers, the army said. During the clearance operations and ensuing gun battles, 15 soldiers lost their lives, it said. Sanitisation operations are continuing in the affected areas and the instigators, perpetrators, facilitators and abettors of these heinous and cowardly acts will be brought to justice, the statement said. On Saturday, 41 militants belonging to the

banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were killed in separate security operations in Panjgur and Harnai districts. "With these successful operations over the last two days, the total number of terrorists killed in the ongoing campaign in Balochistan has reached 133," the army said. It added that the counter-terrorism campaign approved by the Federal Apex Committee under the National Action Plan would continue at full pace to eliminate militancy from the country. The Federal Apex Committee is the top-level body tasked with tackling militancy, while the National Action Plan is Pakistan's comprehensive strategy to combat terrorism. Violence has surged in Balochistan in recent years, with the number of fatalities in the province rising from 787 to 956 last year, an increase of nearly 22 per cent over the previous year, the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) said in early January. According to the Islamabad-based think tank Pak Institute for Peace Studies, terror attacks and violence across Pakistan rose by 34 per cent in 2025.

## Trump says US is 'starting to talk to Cuba' as he moves to cut its oil supplies

NEW YORK (Agency)

President Donald Trump said the U.S. was beginning to talk with Cuban leaders as his administration is putting greater pressure on the communist-run island and cutting off key oil supplies.

The Republican president made the comment to reporters on Saturday night as he was flying to Florida. It comes in the wake of his moves in recent weeks to cut off supplies of oil from Venezuela and Mexico, which he suggested Saturday would force Cuba to the negotiating table. His goals with Cuba remain unclear, but Trump has turned more of his attention toward the island after his administration in early January captured Venezuela's then-President Nicolás Maduro and has been more aggressive in confronting

nations that are adversaries of the U.S. Trump has predicted that the Cuban government is ready to fall. He did not offer any details on Saturday about what level of outreach his administration has had with Cuba recently or when, but simply said, "We're starting to talk to Cuba." His recent moves to cut off its oil supplies have squeezed the island.



This past week, Trump signed an executive order to impose a tariff on any goods from countries that sell or provide oil to Cuba. The move put pressure on Mexico, which Cuba became dependent on for oil after Trump halted oil shipments from Venezuela in the wake of Maduro's ouster. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum warned that it could cause a humanitarian crisis. She said on Friday that she would seek alternatives to continue helping Cuba. "It doesn't have to be a humanitarian crisis. I think they probably would come to us and want to make a deal," Trump said Saturday. "So Cuba would be free again." He predicted they would make some sort of deal with Cuba and said, "I think, you know, we'll be kind."

## Epstein files lead to resignation in Slovakia and calls in Britain for former prince to cooperate

NEW YORK. (Agency)

Newly disclosed U.S. government files on Jeffrey Epstein have prompted the resignation of a top official in Slovakia and revived calls in Britain for a former prince to share what he knows with authorities about Epstein's links to powerful individuals around the world. The fallout comes just a day after the Justice Department began releasing a massive trove of files that offers more details about Epstein's interactions with the rich and famous after he served time for sex crimes in Florida. The prime minister of Slovakia accepted the resignation on Saturday of an official, Miroslav Lajcak, who once had a yearlong term as president of the U.N. General Assembly. Lajcak wasn't accused of wrongdoing but left his position after photos and emails revealed he had met with Epstein in the years after Epstein was released from jail. The disclosures also have revived questions about whether long-time Epstein friend Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, formerly known as Prince Andrew, should cooperate with U.S. authorities investigating Epstein. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Saturday

suggested Mountbatten-Windsor should tell American investigators whatever he knows about Epstein's activities. The former prince has so far ignored a request from members of the U.S. House Oversight Committee for a "transcribed interview" about his "long-standing friendship" with Epstein. President Donald Trump's Justice Department said it would be



releasing more than 3 million pages of documents along with more than 2,000 videos and 180,000 images under a law intended to reveal most of the material it collected during two decades of investigations involving the wealthy financier. The files, posted to the department's website, included documents involving Epstein's friendship with Mountbatten-Windsor, and Epstein's email correspondence

with onetime Trump adviser Steve Bannon, New York Giants co-owner Steve Tisch and other prominent contacts with people in political, business and philanthropic circles, such as billionaires Bill Gates and Elon Musk. Other documents offered a window into various investigations, including ones that led to sex trafficking charges against Epstein in 2019 and his longtime confidant Ghislaine Maxwell in 2021, and an earlier inquiry that found evidence of Epstein abusing underage girls but never led to federal charges. Slovakian official resigns Robert Fico, Slovakia's prime minister, said Saturday that he had accepted the resignation of Lajcak, his national security adviser. Lajcak, a former Slovak foreign minister, hasn't been accused of any wrongdoing, but emails showed that Epstein had invited him to dinner and other meetings in 2018. The records also include a March 2018 email from Epstein's office to former Obama White House general counsel Kathy Ruemmler, inviting her to a get-together with Epstein, Lajcak and Bannon, the conservative activist who served as Trump's White House strategist in 2017.

## Israeli strikes kill 32 Palestinians, including children in Gaza

GAZA. (Agency)

Israeli air strikes killed 32 people including children in Gaza on Saturday, according to the Palestinian territory's civil defence agency. Despite a US-brokered truce entering its second phase earlier this month, violence in the Palestinian territory has continued, with both Israel and Hamas accusing each other of violating the agreement. The latest bloodshed comes after Israel announced it would reopen the crucial Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt on Sunday for the "limited movement of people".

"The death toll since dawn today has risen to 32, most of them children and women," said the civil defence agency, a rescue force operating under the Hamas authority, updating an earlier toll of 28. "Residential apartments, tents, shelters and a police station were targeted," agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said in the statement. A unit in an apartment building of Gaza City's Rimal neighbourhood was left entirely destroyed, and blood spatters were visible on the street below, an AFP journalist reported. "Three girls died while they were sleeping. We found their bodies in the street", Samer al-Atbash, a relative of the family, told AFP. "What truce are you talking about? Everyone is deceiving everyone else," added Nael al-Atbash, another relative. One strike hit the police station in the Sheik Radwan district of Gaza City, the territory's largest urban centre. Gaza's general police directorate said seven people were killed in that attack, while Bassal said the dead included four female police officers.

### Ceasefire violation

About a dozen first responders rushed to the devastated building and pulled bodies from the rubble, an AFP journalist reported. Another Israeli attack hit a shelter in Al-Mawasi, an area of south Gaza where tens of thousands of displaced Gazans live in tents and makeshift shelters, an AFP journalist reported.

Large plumes of smoke rose above the thousands of densely packed tents. The number of casualties from this strike was still not known. Although people have been killed almost daily in Gaza since the start of the ceasefire on October 10, Saturday's toll was particularly high. Israel's military said that the air strikes were retaliation for an incident on Friday in which eight Palestinian fighters exited a tunnel in the city of Rafah, in southern Gaza, which it said violated the fragile ceasefire. It said forces "struck four commanders and additional terrorists from the Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorist organisations across the Gaza Strip". Hamas political bureau member Suhail al-Hindi rejected the military's claims.

"What happened today is a fully fledged crime committed by a criminal enemy that does not abide by agreements or respect any commitments," he told AFP. The health ministry, which operates under the Hamas authority, has said Israeli attacks have killed.

## Trump says feds won't intervene during protests in Democratic-led cities unless asked to do so

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

President Donald Trump said Saturday that he has instructed Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem not to intervene in protests occurring in cities led by Democrats unless local authorities ask for federal help amid mounting criticism of his administration's immigration crackdown. On his social media site, Trump posted that "under no circumstances are we going to participate in various poorly run Democrat Cities with regard to their Protests and/or Riots unless, and until, they ask us for help." He provided no further details on how his order would affect operations by U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement and DHS personnel, or other federal agencies, but added: "We will, however, guard, and very powerfully so, any and all Federal Buildings that are being attacked by these highly paid Lunatics, Agitators, and Insurrectionists." Trump said that in addition to his instructions to Noem he had directed "ICE and/or Border Patrol to be very forceful in this protection of



Federal Government Property."

The Trump administration has already deployed the National Guard, or federal law enforcement officials, in a number of Democratic areas, including Washington,

Ellison and the mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul have challenged a federal immigration enforcement surge in those cities, arguing that DHS is violating constitutional protections. A federal judge says she won't halt enforcement operations as the lawsuit proceeds. State and local officials had sought a quick order to halt the enforcement action or limit its scope. Justice Department lawyers have called the lawsuit "legally frivolous."

The state, particularly Minneapolis, has been on edge after federal officers fatally shot two people in the city: Renee Good on Jan. 7 and Alex Pretti on Jan. 24. Thousands of people have taken to the streets to protest the federal action in Minnesota and across the country. Trump's border czar, Tom Homan, has suggested the administration could reduce the number of immigration enforcement officers in Minnesota — but only if state and local officials cooperate. Trump sent Homan to Minneapolis following the killings of Good and Pretti, seeming to signal a willingness to ease tensions in Minnesota.

## NEWS BOX

**HP Board extends deadline for appointment of examination centre superintendents****Dharamshala. (Agency)**

The Himachal Pradesh Board of School Education (HPBOSE) has extended the deadline for online applications for the appointment of examination centre superintendents and deputy superintendents for the Class 10 and Class 12 annual examinations scheduled for March 2026.

Board Chairman Dr. Rajesh Sharma said the decision was taken to facilitate eligible teachers who could not apply within the earlier timeframe and to strengthen examination management. Now, applications can be submitted online from January 30 to February 3, 2026.

He said the Board aims to conduct the examinations in a transparent, fair, and well-organised manner and that the timely appointment of experienced officials will help improve the overall quality of examination conduct.

The Board has appealed to all eligible teachers to complete the application process within the extended deadline and reiterated its commitment to conducting the March 2026 examinations in a peaceful and malpractice-free environment.

**Discipline, hard work shape future: Pathania****Dharamshala. (Agency)**

Deputy Chief Whip of the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly and Shahpur MLA Kewal Singh Pathania said discipline and hard work are the cornerstones of achieving higher goals in life, underlining the crucial role of quality education in shaping the future of the youth.

Addressing the annual prize distribution function of SRM Public School, Harchakian, Pathania urged students to set clear goals, remain dedicated, and prepare sincerely for competitive examinations.

He announced new HRTC bus services for the Changan region, distribution of school bags to SRM students, and water bottles to all schoolchildren in Shahpur constituency from April.

Pathania honoured meritorious students and announced a personal contribution of Rs 51,000 to promote cultural activities.

Earlier, he reviewed facilities at the Forest Department Rest House, Lapiana.

Tributes were also paid to Major Somnath Sharma, India's first Param Vir Chakra awardee, on his birth anniversary, with a two-minute silence observed in his memory.

**Dehra police achieve success against drug menace****Dehra (Kangra). (Agency)**

Dehra district police have achieved another major success in their ongoing crackdown against drug trafficking under the "Drug-Free Himachal Campaign" launched by the Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh.

Dehra police district superintendent of police Mayank Choudhary told UNI that as part of sustained and effective action against narcotics, a police team from Police Station Mohin, during routine patrolling, intercepted a motorcycle (PB-05AS-1395) at a place called Relra Di Hatti. During the search, 6.31 grams of heroin (chitta) were recovered from the possession of the rider.

He said that the accused has been identified as Palinder Singh alias Kalu, son of Manohar Singh, a resident of the village and post office Chaugawan Rupowali, Tehsil and District Amritsar, Punjab, aged 21 years.

SP Mayank said that based on the recovery, the accused was arrested on the spot, and a case has been registered against him under the NDPS Act at Police Station Mohin. He said that further investigation and legal proceedings are underway as per the law.

SP Dehra district police reiterated their zero-tolerance policy against drugs and stated that strict action will continue against anti-social elements involved in narcotics-related activities. He also appealed to the general public to immediately share information related to any suspicious drug-related activities with the nearest police station and actively participate in making their area drug-free.

**Ayushman Arogya Camps to offer free health tests in Kangra throughout February****Dharamshala. (Agency)**

Ayushman Arogya Camps will be organised across Kangra district throughout February to provide free healthcare services to the general public, said Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Kangra, Vivek Karol. The CMO said that the camps will offer free blood pressure (BP) and blood sugar tests, along with chest examinations through handheld X-ray machines. These camps are being organised under the Intensified TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyan. He informed that all camps will commence at 9 am and citizens above the age of 14 years can avail themselves of health check-up facilities.

As per the schedule, the camps will be held on February 2 at Jikhi Bith (Mahalak Block), February 3 at Bhattu (Mahalak Block), February 4 at Hiran (Jawalamukhi Block), February 5 at Shiharepain (Jawalamukhi Block), February 6 at Beerta (Tiyara Block), February 7 at Anganwadi Centre Parour Khas (Bhawarna Block), February 9 at Maned (Shahpur Bagwan Block), February 10 at Varai 11 at Ramnagar (Shahpur Block), February 13 at Ghurkadi Khas (Tiyara Block), February 16 at Chhatroli Matholi (Nurpur Block).

Sohalpreet's journey began at the age of 15,

**6 years after Payal Tadvi's death, UGC rules in focus, mother says 'still struggling to be heard'**

The case, relating to the death by suicide of her 26-year-old daughter Dr Payal Tadvi in 2019 due to alleged ragging and caste-based harassment, remains stuck in court.

**Mumbai. (Agency)**

For over six years now, 60-year-old Abeda Tadvi has been travelling from Jalgao to Mumbai twice every month for court hearings, a 500-km journey each way, carrying the weight of a trial that has not yet begun.

Retired from a zilla parishad job, she and her husband Salim spend their pension carefully now, accounting for the cost of travel. The case, relating to the death by suicide of her 26-year-old daughter Dr Payal Tadvi in 2019 due to alleged ragging and caste-based harassment, remains stuck in court. With every adjournment, Abeda says her grief "feels new again".

It was in 2019, while searching for answers to how the system failed her daughter, that Abeda spoke on

the phone with Radhika Vemula, who had lost her son Rohith to suicide three years earlier at the University of Hyderabad. Both women, convinced that existing institutional mechanisms had failed their children, came together to file a petition in the Supreme Court seeking enforcement of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulations, 2012 to address caste-based discrimination on campuses.

That petition is what led to the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026 — now at the centre of a nationwide controversy after being notified on January 13 and stayed by the Supreme Court two days ago. The 2026 Regulations sought

to strengthen safeguards for students like Payal and Rohith from marginalised communities, including by mandating Equal Opportunity Centres, fixing

Radhika had argued were routinely ignored.

However, the new rules were challenged by petitioners who contended that they excluded

students from the

general category,

and were vague and prone

to misuse.

While placing the new rules

in abeyance, the Supreme Court also

raised four key

questions: how will

they address ragging

in relation to caste;

why separate hostels

to deal with caste bias;

when discrimination is already

defined in one subsection,

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provisions, with vague language,

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accountability on heads of institutions, and strengthening complaint redressal mechanisms. They were framed, in part, to address gaps in the 2012 regulations, which Abeda and

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be misused.

Ranchi Police on Saturday carried

out a strong deterrent action

against traffic rule violators by

crushing hundreds of seized

modified silencers and pressure

horns with a road roller, sending a

stern message to motorists

creating public nuisance in the

Jharkhand capital.

Ranchi Police publicly destroy seized modified silencers, pressure horns - in message to motorists

**Ranchi. (Agency)**

The crackdown was undertaken as part of an ongoing traffic awareness and enforcement drive by Ranchi Police, aimed at curbing noise pollution and ensuring safer roads. Vehicles fitted with pressure horns and modified silencers, in violation of prescribed traffic norms, were identified during checks conducted over the past several days, and the illegal devices were confiscated. On Saturday, the seized silencers and horns were publicly destroyed to demonstrate the administration's zero-tolerance approach towards such violations. Police officials said many motorists were flouting traffic rules in the name of style and personal preference, causing inconvenience to residents and contributing to environmental noise pollution.

Rural SP Praveen Pushkar said that the use of modified silencers and pressure horns is a clear violation of the Motor Vehicles Act. He noted that these devices generate sound levels far beyond permissible limits, which are not only irritating but also harmful to public health. He warned that strict legal action would continue against offenders. Traffic SP Rakesh Singh said that the trend of using pressure horns and modified silencers had increased, particularly among the youth. He stressed that such practices disrupt traffic discipline and pose difficulties for pedestrians and other road users. As part of the sustained enforcement drive, hundreds of such illegal devices have been seized. Police officials added that the public destruction of the confiscated items was meant to clearly convey that violations of traffic rules will invite stringent action, and urged motorists to comply with norms in the interest of public safety and civic order.

**Haryana's new payout rules for high-voltage tower bases: How landowners can now get 200% compensation****Haryana. (Agency)**

The Haryana Government Friday issued a new policy detailing the compensation framework for landowners affected by the installation of high-voltage intra-state transmission lines (In-STS) in the state.

Announced by the Energy Department, the notification replaces the earlier policy issued in July 2024 and outlines revised procedures for compensation related to crop damage, land valuation, and Right of Way (RoW) payments for transmission lines of 66kV and above.

The new guidelines, issued under the powers conferred by Sections 67 and 68 of the Electricity Act, 2003, are intended to streamline the process for compensating landowners and to clarify the calculation of compensation. The policy also references provisions of the Indian Electricity Act, 1910, and the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, in determining rights and payments for land affected by

transmission line construction. The new policy takes effect immediately and applies prospectively to all transmission projects, including ongoing works that are not yet completed. It is applicable to all intra-state transmission lines of 66kV and above, whether constructed by HVPNL, PGCIL, other central or state agencies, or private entities.

**Compensation for crop damage**

The policy introduces a detailed framework for compensating farmers whose crops are affected at various stages of transmission line installation. "Compensation will be payable at three critical stages: during the casting of tower foundations, the erection of transmission towers, and the stringing of conductors," it states. To receive payment,

"farmers must obtain a certificate from the Patwari or any higher-ranking revenue department officer in the area".

"The certificate will include

bank account".

**Compensation for land value reduction**

Beyond crop damage, the policy also addresses compensation for the "diminution of land value caused by the installation of transmission towers". These provisions are applicable "only for Intra-State Transmission System lines of 66kV or above, excluding sub-transmission and distribution lines".

The compensation for land value reduction will generally be "determined using Circle rates, Collector rates, or Stamp Act guideline values". However, "if the prevailing market rate exceeds these official rates, a Market Rate Committee (MRC) chaired by the District Magistrate or Deputy Commissioner will determine the applicable rate based on recommendations.

**Punjab appoints junior class teachers as invigilators for Class 12 practical exams; 'unfair', says DTF****Punjab. (Agency)**

The teacher unions from Punjab Saturday said that the "master cadre teachers" who teach classes 6 to 10, have been appointed as invigilators to conduct practical examinations of Class 12 beginning Monday. The practical exams will be conducted

from February 2 to 12 by the Punjab School Education Board (PSEB).

"A large number of master cadre teachers have been appointed to take practical examinations of class-12 whose job is to teach students of classes 6 to 10.

These teachers have no experience of teaching students of class 12. Similarly, many NSQF teachers imparting vocational education for subjects such as "beauty and wellness" have also been assigned to conduct practical examinations of students of other subjects which is irresponsible on PSEB's part. This is happening due to the vacancy of lecturer posts in Punjab," said Democratic Teachers Front (DTF) in a statement.

DTF state president Vikramdev Singh said that it was an "unfair" decision for both teachers and

students."If a teacher does not have any knowledge about the subject for which he has been assigned the duty of conducting practical examinations, then how can he conduct the practical examination efficiently? Many master cadre teachers have been put on duty to take practical exams which they have never studied, let alone taught.

Master cadre mathematics teachers are being made to take practical exams of physics, biology and chemistry. The so-called education revolution promoted by the Punjab government has come under scanner," he said. He also said that more than

7,000 posts of lecturers teaching various subjects in government schools of Punjab have been lying vacant for a long time. "Instead of filling these posts through promotion and direct recruitment, the Punjab government is continuously harassing the master cadre by imposing extra work on them. On the other hand, the government is playing cheap politics by painting schools in 'special' colors for its own publicity. During the last four years of the Punjab government's tenure, not a single new recruitment of school lecturers has been made," he added.

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Today, barely three years later, Sohalpreet owns around 55 buffaloes, 15 cows and about 50 young cattle and calves, totalling nearly 120 animals. His herd includes premium breeds such as 53 Murrah buffaloes, two Neeli Ravi buffaloes, 12 Holstein Friesian (HF) cows, when he convinced his family to let him buy his first buffalo. At the time, his household already owned four to five buffaloes as part of a small dairy.

The First Information Report (FIR) has been lodged at Sakchi police station on the complaint of Jaspal Singh, a resident of Barmaini.

The FIR names film actor and Member of Parliament Manoj Tiwari, actors Govinda, Chunky Pandey and Shakti Kapoor, along with the company's director Chandrabhushan Singh, his wife Priyanka Singh, and the Jamshedpur branch manager Shiv Narayan Patro, as accused in the case.

According to the officer-in-charge of Sakchi police station, the complainant alleged that he had invested around ₹8 lakh in the company after being assured of a monthly return of 15 per cent interest.

However, neither was the promised

interest nor was the principal amount was returned.

Following non-payment, the complainant

approached the court, after which the Sakchi police were directed to register an FIR and conduct an investigation.

Jaspal Singh stated that prior to making the investment, he was shown advertisements and

## Need to recalibrate the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2025 represents the most substantive legislative recalibration of India's insolvency framework since the Code's enactment in 2016. Borne out of nearly a decade of operational experience, stakeholder consultations and an evolving judicial landscape, the Bill is an attempt to address procedural bottlenecks, resolve contentious legal interpretations and introduce mechanisms for complex insolvencies.

While its objectives—to expedite resolutions, enhance creditor confidence and maximise asset value—are laudable, a critical analysis of its provisions reveals a complex interplay of welcome clarifications and experimental frameworks that warrant careful scrutiny by the select committee to which it has been referred.

A primary strength of the 2025 Bill lies in its decisive intervention to resolve ambiguities created by conflicting judicial interpretations. The proposed amendment to mandate the admission of insolvency applications under Section 7 is a direct legislative response to the Supreme Court's ruling in Vidarbha Industries Power (2022), which had introduced an element of judicial discretion at the admission stage. Removing the discretion is crucial for curbing dilatory tactics and shortening the adjudication process.

The Bill introduces a strict 14-day timeline for the adjudicating authority to admit or reject the application. Should the authority fail to issue an order within this period, it must detail written reasons for the delay. But perhaps the most significant clarification is the Bill's decisive reversal of the law laid down in Rainbow Papers (2021). In that case, the Supreme Court equated statutory dues with secured debt, disrupting the well-settled priority of claims, known as the 'waterfall mechanism' under Section 53 of the Code. This created immense uncertainty for creditors. The Bill provides a direct legislative counter to the Rainbow Papers effect. It introduces an amendment to Section 3(31) that narrowly defines "security interest" to encompass only consensually created securities. This ensures that government dues, unless backed by a mutually agreed, properly registered security interest, revert to their intended lower ranking in the waterfall. Significantly, this amendment is worded to be clarificatory and retrospective in nature.

The amendments also focus on enhancing the mechanisms for investigating and reversing dubious transactions. The original law stipulated that the 'relevant time' (look-back period) for scrutinising such transactions was counted from the date the application was admitted. But delays in admission often led to promoters using the backlog as a shield to strip assets.

The Bill pragmatically shifts the start of the look-back period to the date of application filing, thereby extending the investigative reach of the resolution process. Further increasing accountability, the Bill codifies precise definitions of 'avoidance transaction' and 'fraudulent or wrongful trading'. It ventures into new territory by proposing frameworks for complex situations that the original Code did not contemplate, signalling a maturation of India's insolvency regime. The introduction of a creditor-initiated insolvency resolution process (CIIRP) offers a promising out-of-court alternative to the full process. This will allow specified financial creditors to initiate a resolution while the debtor's management remains in control under supervision. It will be a faster and more cost-effective solution for early-stage distress. The introduction of Chapter VA, titled 'Group Insolvency', empowers the central government to prescribe rules for the coordination of insolvency proceedings involving multiple corporate debtors within a group. This provision is a long-overdue reform that acknowledges the economic reality of interconnected corporate structures. This framework can prevent the value erosion that often results from fragmented insolvency proceedings. Despite these significant changes, the Bill's focus on procedural fixes overlooks several fundamental challenges. While addressing the symptoms of delay, it fails to cure the underlying disease: the chronic lack of institutional capacity at the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

## How water and waste are becoming inseparable

After the Indore tragedy, reports on sewage-related water contamination began emerging from Greater Noida, Hyderabad, Jhajjar and Rohtak while Gandhinagar revealed a typhoid outbreak.

IN a rather wonderful though ironic twist of seasonal behaviour, 'Winter Proper' arrived in north India this year on Basant Panchami, which marks the first day of spring. One wonders what Percy Bysshe Shelley would have said of this anomaly, given his famous line "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" This time, though, winter caught up with spring in a display of festive solidarity — the yellow of mustard swayed brightly under the pristine white of mountain snow. The much-needed moisture finally freshened the air and rejuvenated the land, ending one of the longest dry spells that the Himalayas have witnessed in recent decades.

But for all its celebratory ethos, the idea of 'washing away' simultaneously embodies a somewhat unsettling impulse, especially when viewed through the lens of our crisis-prone era. The fact that year after year we need rainwater to 'wash away' the gigantic smog-blankets throttling our capital and nearby cities says something about our exceptionally selfish dependence on nature to solve human-made problems. It brings to mind many other images from our years of growing up: from using more water than necessary for cleaning private cars to dumping everyday waste in canals and rivers as if it is the most natural thing to do.

Here, then, is another irony. That what was always regarded as the 'elixir of life' is now invariably also interpreted as a crucible of our collective egotism. If at one point in history, holy rivers were supposed to wash away our sins, today they accumulate them, serving as silent witnesses to an existence gone awry.

Who can forget those haunting images of dead bodies floating in the Ganges during the Covid pandemic or the persisting visuals of the toxic Yamuna in Delhi, with its lethal froth and foam resembling snow? There is no denying that water and waste have assumed a shocking synonymy with each other in the present age.

It's only the first month of the year, but the unholy coupling of water and waste has already defined the news several times. It hopped into the headlines when Indore, India's 'cleanest city', suddenly spewed forth hundreds of hospitalisations and over 15 deaths due to sewage-contaminated drinking water. Soon after, reports on sewage-related water contamination began emerging from Greater Noida, Hyderabad, Jhajjar and Rohtak while Gandhinagar revealed a typhoid outbreak. A few days ago, a new overhead water tank, constructed at a whopping cost of Rs 21 crore, at Tadkeshwar village in Surat, Gujarat, collapsed during its very first water-filling test. But one mustn't look at these examples in isolation. They form a part of an ongoing continuum of technological ineptness and slapdash development that has beleaguered the country for a very long time now.



Last year, during the Chhath Puja festivities, authorities in Delhi created fake ghats on the Yamuna banks by propping up borders between filtered-water pools and the real river. And in 2024, three UPSC aspirants lost their lives to heavy flooding in the illegal basement library of a coaching centre in Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar. Waste, in this context, doesn't only refer to the defilement of our most celebrated natural element, but also to the decaying of the imagination responsible for generating infrastructure around it. Undoubtedly, the stunting of both vision and inventiveness lies at the heart of this growing crisis. And like all crises, this too manifests itself in a multipronged manner, where dealing with one department in the hope of some solution leads us to another division, area or issue. The blame is everyone's and no one's, and passing-the-buck becomes the norm, with apathy and indifference quickly assuming the order of the day. There is also a societal amnesia at work. It makes us forget the people who have worked hard to elicit change. They include GD Agarwal, later known as Swami Gyan Swaroop Sanand, who lost his life in 2018, fighting for the cleaning and protection of the Ganges. An 86-year-old environmentalist and a former professor at IIT Kanpur, Swami Sanand breathed his last after a 111-day fast in Haridwar. Prior to him, Swami Nigamananda Saraswati had passed away in 2011 after fasting for 114 days, protesting against illegal

quarrying in the same river. Recent viral reels on social media centred on sacred water bodies have drawn attention to the liberal amounts of milk being poured into them in the name of religious practice. While on the surface, one encounters a preponderance of platitudes on living hygienically and caringly, in reality, the majority — including the government — hardly appears genuinely interested in addressing the issue sustainably.

My small village in the Kangra Valley, for example, has repeatedly faced resistance by many residents who are against the idea of drain expansion outside their houses. This is a necessary step for the establishment of a properly networked system, but it is also something that is hugely 'repulsive' to the imagination of a significant number of people for purely parochial reasons.

But no matter how much we exhort individuals to change, for a country as big as ours, models for long-lasting transformation must primarily be provided by the government and bureaucracy in charge. And for these models to take shape, a thorough understanding of the society's material and emotional make-up must be acquired in an interdependent fashion.

Templates from other countries too are available to learn from, but only if we are actually willing to shed our wilfulness. Otherwise, instead of becoming a reality, potable water and healthy rivers shall only flow in the realm of dreams.

## Tackling caste bias: UGC must review as SC halts its equity rules

Are we addressing discrimination as a lived social reality, or are we reducing it to a bureaucratic checklist?

THE Supreme Court's decision to stay the University Grants Commission's 2026 Equity Regulations shows that good intentions cannot be a substitute for sound constitutional design. While the regulations were framed with the aim of curbing caste-based discrimination in higher education, they instead triggered widespread concern for being vague, overbroad and, paradoxically, exclusionary. At the heart of the controversy lies the definition of caste discrimination itself. By restricting its scope largely to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes, the regulations appeared to create a narrow and rigid hierarchy of vulnerability. Discrimination in academic spaces is neither so neatly classified nor so easily contained. The Constitution guarantees equality and dignity to all. Any regulatory framework that selectively recognises victims carries the risk of undermining that foundational promise. The court's description of the regulations as "too sweeping" points to another serious flaw: the



potential for misuse. Loosely worded provisions, coupled with stringent compliance mechanisms, could have

fostered fear-driven governance within universities rather than encouraging open dialogue and institutional reform — the attributes on which university campuses thrive. Equally significant is the court's decision to keep the 2012 UGC regulations in force for now. This ensures safeguards against discrimination in the interregnum.

The episode raises a larger question: are we addressing discrimination as a lived social reality, or are we reducing it to a bureaucratic checklist? If equity policies are perceived as instruments of coercion or political signalling, they will invite resistance and litigation. The UGC now has an opportunity to listen, review and recalibrate its norms. Social justice in higher education demands sensitivity, consultation and precision; not sweeping mandates drafted in isolation. A genuinely inclusive framework must be universally applicable and institutionally workable.

## There's more to growth than GDP

India cannot afford to continue with the urban-industrialisation model that has created global crises

INDIA's policymakers are in a dilemma. Too many people, they say, are working in the agriculture sector. Therefore, according to them, the productivity of India's farm sector, measured by the number of people employed in it, is also too low. They would rather have more people being moved out of rural areas and farms — and small, 'informal', manufacturing and service enterprises — into cities, and into large, 'formal' factories and service enterprises. The problem is that large formal enterprises are not creating enough secure jobs with decent wages. They are unwilling to absorb more people, pay them higher wages and provide them with social security. Instead, they want more 'flexible' labour laws to keep wage costs down. The core problem of the Indian economy is that employers in all sectors (manufacturing, services and agriculture) are using more machinery, and more technology — instead of human beings — to increase their output and productivity. The key reform the Indian economy requires is a reform of the design and governance of a business enterprise. Workers, whether on farms or in factories, must be the owners of the enterprises in which they work so that they earn the profits made from their work and increase their own wealth, rather than passing on the profits to increase the wealth of financial investors. The capital assets required in the production process — machines in the manufacturing enterprise and the land for farms — must belong to the workers in the enterprise. Workers should be their own employers and not be compelled to become employees in factories and farms owned by stock market investors and feudal landlords. They should have the choice of how they will use profits from their work: whether to invest further in their enterprise or invest in their family welfare and their children's education. Reforms of land ownership that transferred land from landlords to the erstwhile workers

on farms caused small farmers' incomes to grow much faster in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China than in India in the last 50 years, explains Mike Bird in *The Land Trap: A New History of the World's Oldest Asset*. Bird explains why reforms progressed faster in other countries than in India. Vested interests came in the way of reforms in all countries. However, the leaders in those nations supported the rights of farmer-workers not the capitalist-owners. With reforms, small farmers' incomes and wealth increased, and they invested more in the education of their children. It is noteworthy that farm output and agricultural productivity also increased without forcing people off farms.

Economists and business people must rethink the value of 'scale' in enterprises. Large-scale production of a standardised commodity — whether widgets in a factory or a monocrop on a large farm — increases economic efficiency by enabling the use of large machines and employment of low-skill workers to perform repetitive tasks. Large-scale enterprises can afford to deploy capital in machines and artificial intelligence. Thereby, they need less human labour and intelligence. While their efficiency and output may go up, and productivity too (measured as output per human being employed), such enterprises employ fewer humans. They contribute to the 'jobless' GDP growth of the economy. Small farms that grow a variety of food organically have a greater 'scope' of production on the farm. Waste becomes a useful input on the farm itself, especially on farms that also have animals. Farms with more scope are naturally more sustainable. Materials and energy circulate within and around such small farms which have less scale but more scope.

Environmental scientist Vaclav Smil has computed the total system requirements of hydrocarbon energy and other non-renewable inputs in modern industries, food production and distribution systems, and in global transportation systems. In his book, *How the World Really Works*, he explains that the modern and technologically intensive large-scale food production and distribution system is the largest polluter of the soil,



water and the atmosphere. He also explains that small-scale farms with more scope are the best scientific solutions for environmental sustainability. The problem, he points out, is that this solution requires more people to live and work in rural areas, and engage in smaller agriculture, manufacturing and service enterprises. This will require a reversal of migration from urban/formal enterprises to rural/informal ones. Citizens in advanced countries will not accept this. India

should not have as much of a problem as other nations, because it already has the largest number of people living and working in rural areas — the very problem our economists are struggling to solve!

Faster GDP growth will not improve the well-being of India's billion-plus citizens. For the past 25 years, the Indian economy has created less employment with each unit of GDP growth than other large countries. We have the largest population of youth in the world, seeking employment with good wages.

With the present pattern of growth, India's GDP must grow at 12 per cent per annum for the next few years to generate enough employment. Each unit of GDP growth is also causing more pollution and environmental degradation than in other countries. Therefore, India cannot afford to continue following the urban-industrialisation model of growth that has created global environment and inequality crises. The pattern of growth must change for our nation to become a livable and sustainable 'Viksit Bharat'. Rather than the goal of climbing higher than other countries on the GDP ladder, India's economic reformers should reform the process of economic growth itself.

We must find our own way; a more inclusive and environmentally sustainable way; a more 'family' and 'community' way — a more 'Gandhian way' — to build our nation and strengthen our economy for it to deliver poorna swaraj (complete political, social and economic freedom) for all citizens. This was the 'tryst with destiny' towards which we had set out on August 15, 1947, when India became a sovereign nation responsible for its own future.

## Lightning strike kills over 55 sheep, goats in solan district

Solan. (Agency)

More than 55 sheep and goats were killed in a lightning strike near Devthi on the Solan-Sapattu road early Sunday morning, triggering concern among shepherd communities and highlighting the risks faced by migratory pastoralists during adverse weather conditions.

Several animals were also injured in the incident, while three shepherds narrowly escaped, averting what could have been a major human tragedy. According to information available, the incident occurred around 3:45 am when light rain had begun in the area. The shepherds, who had halted near Deothi for the night, were in the process of setting up their tents when a sudden and powerful lightning strike hit the spot where the flock was gathered. The bolt instantly killed more than 55 sheep and goats on the spot.

The affected shepherds have been identified as Vishal Negi, Vinay Singh, Krishna Bhagat, and Vinod Kumar Chaura, all residents of Bhava area in Kinnaur district. They had brought a combined flock of around 650 sheep and goats to the Solan-Sapattu region for seasonal grazing, following the traditional migratory route adopted by shepherds from high-altitude areas.

Three shepherds—Budhi Singh, Kuldeep Negi, and Vinod Negi—were present at the site at the time of the incident. They stated that they escaped the lightning strike by a narrow margin and expressed relief that no human life was lost. However, they said the loss of livestock has caused severe financial distress, as sheep and goats are their primary source of livelihood. Following the incident, the shepherds appealed to the state government and district administration for immediate assistance and compensation for the loss of animals.

## 5 million devotees bath in Sangam on Maghi Purnima in Magh mela: Fire at tent

Prayagraj. (Agency)

A massive crowd of pilgrims gathered at the Sangam ghat on Maghi Purnima, the fifth bathing day of the Magh Mela on Sunday. The Maghi Purnima bathing ritual began at 4:00 AM during the auspicious Brahma Muhurta.

Despite the biting cold, devotees are taking a dip in the holy waters during the auspicious Ravi Pushya Yoga. Over 5 million devotees have already taken a dip so far.

The Mela administration has made extensive arrangements for the Maghi Purnima bathing festival. A 3.5-kilometer-long bathing ghat has been prepared. The administration has estimated that one to one and a half crore devotees will arrive for Maghi Purnima. The Mela authority has deployed water police, NDRF, SDRF, Flood Company PAC, and divers at the bathing ghats. Police, PAC, RAF, BDS, UP ATS commandos, and intelligence agencies are deployed at the Mela.

Every corner of the Magh Mela area is being monitored. Surveillance is being conducted using CCTV and drone cameras.

After Maghi Purnima, the Kalpavasis and saints will return leave the Magh Mela after around one month of their religious sojourn.

Meanwhile, a major fire broke out in Gata number 5 of Sector Two of the Magh Mela on Sunday morning. The fire started at 7:45 AM in the Kalpavasi camp of Lalan Ji Panda. The fire was caused by a gas cylinder leak in the camp of Kalpavasi Ram Bahor Dubey while he was cooking. The fire brigade reached the spot and, with the help of the people, brought the fire under control.

There were no casualties in the fire and all the tents are completely safe. There are about 80 camps in the Kalpavasi camp and approximately 300 people were present in the camp.

## Organised efforts needed to curb drug abuse: ADM Shilpi Bakta

Dharamshala. (Agency)

Additional District Magistrate Shilpi Bakta said that a coordinated and sustained campaign involving the district administration, police, concerned departments, NGOs, and the public is essential to prevent drug abuse in Kangra district.

She was chairing a meeting of the District Level Coordination Committee of the National Narcotic Control Program (NCORD) at the NIC auditorium here on Saturday.

The ADM stressed the need for a dedicated public awareness drive and directed departments and NGOs to develop targeted awareness material, especially for youth and addicts. She also ordered regular inspections of private drug de-addiction and rehabilitation centres.

Emphasising school-level intervention, she instructed the Education Department to activate Watchdog Clubs and strengthen awareness activities under the 'Samvad' programme.

She appealed to the public to share information on drug-related activities without fear and informed that the toll-free helpline 1933 is operational for confidential complaints.

Additional SP (ANTF) Rajendra Jaswal and senior officers from various departments attended the meeting, while SDMs, DSPs, and BMOs joined through video conferencing.

## Chennai park workers excluded from free meal scheme for sanitary staff

CHENNAI. (Agency)

Devi (name changed), a 44-year-old National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) staff member employed directly under the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) as a sweeper in the park area near Marina Beach, spends at least Rs 40 to Rs 50 every day on her lunch, buying food from nearby eateries. She usually buys a packet of mixed rice to get through her day-long shift. Few metres away, she watches roadside sweepers along the Marina Beach stretch, employed through private contractors engaged by the GCC, receive free meals daily under the CM's recently announced one-free-meal-a-day scheme.

While the scheme has benefited many conservancy workers across the city, Devi and several others like her, who come under the parks department of the GCC, remain excluded, leaving them to bear daily food expenses despite working similar hours and under comparable conditions. Nearly 30 workers have been deployed in the park area along the Marina Beach-Lighthouse stretch. The workers said they have been working directly under the GCC as NULM staff. Their work shift runs from 8am to 4pm. Many of

them travel from different parts of the city to report on time and, as a result, often skip breakfast. In addition, as of January 25, the workers said their salaries for December have still not been credited. Devi told, "We report to work

and no such facilities were extended thereafter, despite our many requests to the supervisors."

The issue is not limited to the Marina stretch.

Sweepers deployed at other corporation-run parks across the city have also raised similar concerns.

A worker at one of the city parks told that they receive food only if there is surplus after distribution to conservancy workers engaged as road sweepers, door-to-door waste collectors and Battery Operated Vehicle (BoV) drivers. The worker also claimed that the previous contractor, Padmavati, has yet to pay one month's salary to them.

On the other hand, a worker engaged in door-to-door waste collection in Thiruvottiyur said, "For the past several years, our

ward councillor has been providing us with breakfast and lunch every day, considering workers' welfare."

The food tastes very good, the worker said, adding that, "While we continue to eat there, we take the food provided under the government scheme to our homes."



around 8 am, and some of us travel long distances. We are unable to cook food at home, and at times, we cannot even afford to buy meals," she said, adding that they are sometimes forced to work while hungry. Another worker said, "Tiffin boxes and meals were provided to us only on the day of the scheme's inauguration,

## Telangana HC orders early decision on Pakistanis' visa pleas

HYDERABAD. (Agency)

Justice Nagesh Bheemappa of the Telangana High Court has directed the state government and the police authorities to expeditiously consider and pass appropriate orders on the fresh Long Term Visa (LTV) applications filed by a petitioner and his mother, both Pakistani nationals, strictly in accordance with the Government of India guidelines dated April 28, 2025. The court was hearing a writ petition filed by Syed Ali Hussain Razvi a 33-year-old man, who claimed Indian citizenship by birth and challenged the actions of the Inspector of Police, Pakistan Branch (Special Branch), Hyderabad. The petitioner alleged that police officials repeatedly visited his residence, compelled



him to apply for an LTV, and threatened prosecution without issuing any notice, thereby violating Articles 5, 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution. He also sought directions restraining the authorities from interfering with his marital and family life. The petitioner asserted that he was

born and brought up in Hyderabad, married to an Indian citizen, and has been residing in the city for over three decades.

However, the state disputed his claim of citizenship, relying on official records which indicated that he was recorded as a Pakistani national whose name was included

in his mother's Pakistani passport and who never obtained Indian citizenship or a valid LTV.

The court held that documents such as Aadhaar, voter ID, PAN card, driving licence and educational certificates cannot, by themselves, establish Indian citizenship under the Citizenship Act, 1955. It observed that the actions of the authorities were part of a statutory verification process initiated pursuant to the April 28, 2025 GO, which mandates all Pakistani nationals holding LTVs and not granted Indian citizenship to apply afresh.

Declining to grant the reliefs sought by the petitioner, the court noted that both the petitioner and his mother had applied for fresh LTVs in July 2025.

## Nirvika Foundation Ignites the Spark of Education on its Foundation Day

The Sikh Times

Muzaffarnagar: To celebrate its first foundation day, the NGO Nirvika Foundation hosted an educational assistance



event at the local Nagar Panchayat auditorium. The event was graced by Nagar Panchayat Chairperson Uma Tyagi and Women Police Station In-charge Suman Sharma as the

guests of honor. Nirvika Foundation, a social service organization from Budhiana, announced at its first founding day program that it would take

gram, school bags, shoes, stationery, electronic writing pads, and other educational materials were distributed to underprivileged students including Gunjan, Divanshi, Uzair, Faizan, Saloni, and Ananya. Budhiana Nagar Panchayat Chairperson Uma Tyagi praised the organization's efforts and said that such initiatives are necessary to bring about positive change in society through education. The organization's Vice President, Usha Rathi, said that the organization's endeavor is to help every child who has the desire and ability to move forward. This effort to promote education with respect and confidence will continue. The event was anchored by teacher Poonam Sharma. The gathering saw the presence of Sub Inspector Suman Sharma, NGO President Deepak Rathi, social activist Santosh Devi, alongside Ankur Tyagi and Arun Kumar.

responsibility for the education of Kashish, a meritorious student of class 9. The organization will bear the student's school fees and other necessary educational expenses. During the pro-

## Mahendra Singh Dhoni may become new face of Jharkhand Tourism; MoU likely soon

Ranchi. (Agency)

The Jharkhand government is set to take a major step towards giving a new identity to the state's tourism sector. Former Indian cricket team captain and Jharkhand's most prominent global icon, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, may soon be appointed as the brand ambassador of Jharkhand Tourism.

An official Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Tourism Department and Dhoni is likely to be signed in the near future.

According to official sources, the Jharkhand government has sent a formal proposal to Mahendra Singh Dhoni for the role of tourism brand ambassador, following which departmental-level procedures have been initiated.

The Tourism Department believes that associating with a personality of Dhoni's international stature will help Jharkhand's tourist destinations gain wide recognition at both national and global levels.

Sources further revealed that the Tourism Department is preparing to

entrust branding-related activities to Dhoni's associated agency, Madas. The Jharkhand Tourism Development Corporation (JTDC) and the Tourism Department are in the process of seeking Cabinet approval for the proposal. Once approved, a formal MoU will be signed between Dhoni and the Tourism Department.

As per sources familiar with the MoU, Mahendra Singh Dhoni will not take any personal remuneration for the role. However, a proposal has been made to pay approximately ₹4 crore to the agency for promotional activities, branding, digital campaigns, and other related initiatives.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni shares a deep emotional and social connection with Jharkhand.

His popularity and credible public image are expected to be leveraged to promote the state's natural beauty, religious tourism, adventure tourism, and eco-tourism.

The proposed MoU will outline terms related to promotional campaigns, digital platform branding, and participation in various tourism-related events.

## Mysterious blast injures six, including four children, in Karnataka's Bidar district

Punjab Police have registered FIRs against three policemen and two civilians after a Ludhiana cab driver alleged custodial assault, including that his nail was pulled with a plier, triggering massive protests in the city.

BIDAR. (Agency)

At least six people, including four children, were seriously injured after an unidentified object exploded in Molakera village, Humnabad taluk of Bidar district on Saturday. This is the third such incident in the village in recent times.

Official sources said the condition of two of the injured -- Anwar Jamir Sab (19) and Jabbar Razak (60) -- is critical. The other four injured children have been identified as Busera Alauddin (4), Areez Razak Sab (4), Arzan Razak (7) and Mastan Musa (8). They were given first-aid at the Humnabad Government Hospital and then shifted to Mallareddy Hospital in the neighbouring Hyderabad for further treatment.

A few months ago, a school student had lost his leg in a similar explosion. He had stepped on an object and it exploded. Several villagers said that even last week, they heard a loud

noise. "This is the third explosion in Morakera in recent times. The police and local officials are yet to ascertain the reason behind repeated blasts," a source said.

A team of officials visited the accident spot and gathered information from different sources. Chemical substances were found at the blast site and it is suspected that the explosion may have been caused by empty hydrogen peroxide and thinner tins that had been dumped at the spot after a nearby house was painted. A team of officials collected several objects at the site, sources said.

Kalaburagi IGP Shantanu Sinha visited the village and held a discussion with Bidar SP Pradeep Gunte. Bidar Deputy Commissioner Shilpa Sharma met the injured at Hyderabad



Mallareddy Hospital.

Expressing shock, Bidar district in-charge Minister Eshwar B Khandre ordered an immediate and comprehensive investigation. He directed the district administration to

ensure prompt and appropriate medical treatment for all the injured and to bear the entire cost of their treatment.

He instructed the superintendent of police to rush to the spot along with an explosives testing expert to collect samples from the blast site and examine the nature of the explosion. He sought a detailed probe into the cause of the blast, the material used, how the explosive substance came to be at the location and the purpose for which it was placed there.

Emphasising that public safety cannot be compromised, Khandre directed officials to fix responsibility and initiate strict legal action against those found guilty. Security in the area has been tightened as investigations continue, while the incident has triggered fear and concern among local residents, particularly parents of school-going children.

## Moderate snowfall in higher reaches, cold wave intensifies across Himachal

Shimla. (Agency)

A moderate spell of snowfall and rainfall in the higher reaches of Himachal Pradesh has intensified cold wave conditions across the state, while major tourist destinations, including Shimla, Manali, and Dalhousie, remained largely overcast on Sunday with light winds and intermittent showers. According to the daily status report of the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), several roads in the tribal district of Lahaul and Spiti continue to remain blocked due to heavy snowfall. As many as 262 roads are closed across Lahaul and Spiti, including important Border Roads Organisation (BRO) stretches. Key routes such as Koksar-Rohatang Pass, Darcha-Sarchu, Gramphu-Batal, and Lossar-Batal remain shut, while limited movement of 4x4 vehicles with snow chains has been permitted on select stretches like ATR North Portal-Darcha and Sumdo-Lossar, subject to weather conditions.

The DDMA has issued a special caution advisory for snowbound areas, urging residents and travellers to avoid unnecessary movement and strictly follow traffic and administrative advisories, as large parts of the district remain inaccessible.

In the state capital, Shimla, and adjoining areas witnessed light rainfall early Sunday morning. While chances of snowfall in Shimla city itself remain bleak during the day, tourists are likely to enjoy light to moderate snowfall at nearby hill resorts such as Kufri, Fag and Narkanda by afternoon and evening. The middle hill regions, where heavy snow had accumulated in shaded areas earlier, may witness gradual thawing due to persistent cloud cover. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast light to moderate rain and snowfall at many places across the state over the next 48 hours and issued a yellow alert, warning of possible disruptions to essential services, reduced visibility and slippery road conditions.

# Nearly 25% gig workers in India work for over 70 hours a week; 27% meet with accidents: new survey

**The survey by a non-profit comes against the backdrop of a conversation on the working conditions and earnings of gig workers triggered by a nationwide strike held on Christmas and New Year's Eve last year.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Nearly one in every four gig workers in India clock more than 70 hours each week, a survey has found. Fifty-seven per cent of workers report work hours exceeding 49 hours a week, according to the survey. The survey comes against the backdrop of a conversation on the working conditions and earnings of gig workers triggered by a nationwide strike held on Christmas and New Year's Eve last year.

Following the strike, the Central Government asked quick-commerce companies to stop advertising 10-minute deliveries, citing worker safety. The findings of the survey were released at an event organised by the non-profit Janpanhal and Gig Workers Association at the Constitution Club of India on Friday. The event included a



public screening of the film *Zwigato*, followed by a panel discussion on the gig economy, featuring RJD MP Manoj Jha, filmmaker Nandita Das, and gig workers Pooja, Mohd Irfan, Bhupendra Narayan Bhupesh, and Shiv Prajapati, and moderated by journalist Siddharth Vardarajan.

Platform companies are increasingly using app-

based suspensions, algorithmic penalties, and intimidation to silence workers instead of engaging in meaningful dialogue," Jha said.

"The practice of calling gig workers as partners is also an extraordinary example of the caste and class arrangements in our society. Similar to this, the practice telling children to call their maids as aunts is an attempt to hide many discrepancies," he added.

The survey also found that 62 per cent of gig workers had faced near-miss road accidents while working, while 27 per cent reported

having met with traffic accidents during the course of their work. About 34 per cent of respondents said they had experienced harassment or violence while working on platforms, pointing to safety risks beyond road accidents.

Despite these risks, 44 per cent of workers reported having no accident insurance, and 62

per cent said they lacked health insurance coverage, the survey found. The survey showed that 60 per cent of gig workers had received no safety training from platforms, while 56 per cent said they did not trust platform-run safety reporting systems.

Exposure to extreme heat was reported by 84 per cent of respondents, with most saying platforms provided little or no protection during heatwave conditions. The findings of the survey are based on responses received from 1,000 platform workers in 10 cities—Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Bhopal, Agra, Lucknow, Jaipur, and Patna—between November 15 and December 30 in 2025.

The survey covered workers in four segments: food and grocery commerce delivery, quick commerce delivery, ride hailing, and household and personal work. The surveyors conducted face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire that included both open-ended and closed-ended questions.

## Man arrested for beating 12-year-old stepson with sticks, stones in North East Delhi

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Two days after a 12-year-old boy was found dead near the Shastri Park chowk loop in North East Delhi, his stepfather was arrested on Saturday for allegedly beating him to death with sticks and stones, said police.

Identified as Wazid Khan (36), a resident of Shastri Park, the accused was arrested on Saturday following sustained questioning, officers said. He allegedly killed his stepson after a fight with his wife. "During questioning, the accused disclosed that he had an ongoing dispute related to his relationship with the mother of the deceased," a senior police officer said.

Police earlier said that the victim's mother came to know about her son's death via a purported video in which her husband had allegedly admitted to the crime.

The boy's mother married the accused—an e-rickshaw driver—in 2020 after the death of her husband. "She has four children. After marrying the accused, they started to have marital issues and frequent arguments," an officer had earlier said.

Relatives told PTI that the couple had frequent fights in recent months, particularly after the children from the woman's first marriage returned from a hostel where they had been staying.

Five days before the killing, according to police, the mother of the deceased had left the house to live with her sister following another argument with her husband. After repeatedly calling his wife, asking her to return, the accused on Thursday allegedly picked both his stepsons from their school in his e-rickshaw and took them near a forest area, according to officers. He then allegedly asked his 15-year-old stepson to wait in the e-rickshaw and took the 12-year-old boy inside the forest. He allegedly killed the boy after repeated assaulting him using stones and sticks, police said.

After receiving information about the injured child, police rushed him to Jag Pravesh Chandra Hospital, where doctors declared him dead. The boy had multiple injuries, including wounds on his head and eyes, and marks of severe assault, officers said.

A case under Section 103(1) (murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita has been registered at the Shastri Park police station. The body was sent to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital for post-mortem examination.

## 'No one should risk life while crossing road': 8 FoBs set to come up in Delhi at busy, accident-prone sites

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Eight busy and accident-prone zones in Delhi are set to get foot over bridges (FOBs) in view of the safety of pedestrians, officials said on Saturday, adding that the PWD has given a nod to the construction.

Referring to the approval, PWD Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh said, "Delhi's growth demands modern solutions. No one should have to risk their life while crossing a road. These FoBs are being built exactly where safety concerns are the highest, ensuring smoother traffic flow and secure passage for pedestrians."

Clear deadlines have been fixed to prevent project delays, he underlined. "We are moving away from the culture of slow infrastructure. Construction will begin by February and projects

will be completed within a defined timeframe. Accountability and speed are now non-negotiable," he was quoted as saying in an official



statement. Officials said that the department received suggestions and requests from around 15-16 locations for the construction of FoBs. After the requests were received, the PWD's

FOB committee reviewed the location to check feasibility and approved the proposal to construct FoBs at eight locations. The sites were selected following on-ground assessments, keeping in view traffic and heavy pedestrian movement, accident vulnerability, and daily commuter convenience.

These locations have been identified as Madhuban Chowk, Welcome-cut (GT Road), Shahbad Dairy, Ber Sarai Market, Lal Bahadur Shastri Sanskrit Vidyaapeeth, Okhla Sabzi Mandi, Janakpuri Jeevan

Park Bus Stand and Mata Chanan Devi Hospital. Singh, said officials, has directed all agencies to ensure parallel progress on site readiness, utility shifting and approvals so that work proceeds without bottlenecks.

## Revised Budget Estimates for 2025-26 'Adverse view' to be taken if depts fail to fully use revised targets, warns Delhi Chief Secy

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Flagging the "slow pace" of key departments like Health, Public Works Department (PWD) and Transport in spending funds allocated to them under the Revised Estimates (RE) for 2025-26 financial year, the Delhi chief secretary has recently directed all departments to accelerate spending and ensure 100% utilisation of the money. If any department fails to meet the revised expenditure targets, "adverse view" would be taken, he warned. The directions were issued in a recent meeting that Chief Secretary Rajeev Verma held with senior officials of the Delhi government. "During the review, the chief secretary expressed concern over the slow pace of expenditure recorded so far by several major departments like PWD, Irrigation & Flood Control (I&FC), Health, Transport

and others," said a senior official who attended the meeting.

Verma stated that the government has come up with the RE based on the feedback received from departments and "there must not be any case where the

incur expenditure as per Revised Estimates," the official added.

Officials said that during the meeting, the Finance department presented detailed data on revenue and expenditure with reference to the RE.

Officials further said that at the meeting, all administrative secretaries assured that necessary steps have been taken to accelerate the pace of spending and the expenditure targets approved under RE. Officials added that Verma has also directed all secretaries to undertake weekly monitoring of the expenditure. In the 2025-26 Delhi Budget, a total allocation of Rs 59,300 crore was made in Budget Estimates (BE) for revenue and capital expenditure. As per data, in the first three quarters, from April to December 2025-26, Rs 24,651.63 cr – 41.57% – of the allocation have been spent. The data also shows that Capital expenditure has not even crossed 50% of the total.



expenditure is not 100% of the revised estimates made now at the fag end of financial year," the official quoted Verma as saying.

"He added that adverse views would be taken if any department is not able to

## Does Delhi need more facilities to treat industrial wastewater? NEERI to begin study from Feb 6

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

With industrial effluents continuing to find its way into Delhi's drains and Yamuna river, the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), beginning February 6, will start a study to figure out whether the Capital needs more facilities to treat industrial wastewater. Experts from NEERI, a body under the Union Ministry of Science and Technology, will conduct a field study to map industrial wastewater generation in Delhi's 27 non-conforming industrial areas. They would assess whether additional common effluent treatment plants (CETPs) – shared facilities that treat wastewater from clusters of small and medium industries – are required.

The study, awarded last December by the Delhi State Industrial & Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC), comes in the wake of the Union government – via an official gazette notification on January 28 – easing norms to fast-track the setting up of CETPs by exempting them

from requiring environmental clearance.

Delhi has 13 CETPs with a capacity to treat over 200 MLD (million liters per day) of waste, yet only about 30% of this capacity is utilised, according to data from the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC). Much of the focus of the NEERI study is on Delhi's non-conforming industrial areas – clusters where industries

operate in zones that were never planned for industrial activity as per the city's Master Plan, and therefore lack organised sewerage and treatment infrastructure.

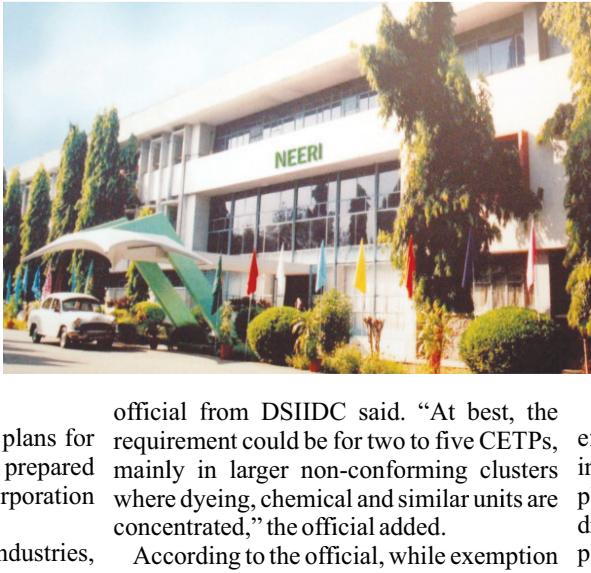
According to DSIIDC officials, 27 such non-conforming industrial areas, spread over nearly 2,000 hectare, have been identified for assessment. Layout plans for 20 of these areas have already been prepared and submitted to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi for approval, they added.

"NEERI will look at the type of industries,

wastewater quantity and nature of effluents. Based on that, they will recommend whether CETPs are required, or whether individual effluent treatment plants and better conveyance systems are sufficient," an

from environmental clearance would help reduce procedural delays, setting up new CETPs would still involve multiple steps. "Land availability is a major hurdle. Most industrial land is privately owned. Industrial associations have to come forward to provide land, and land use has to conform to the Master Plan. Approvals from land-owning agencies such as DDA are also required."

Delhi has more than 24,000 industrial units across 28 approved industrial areas, of which about 22,000 units in 17 areas are connected to CETPs, as per DPCC data. Of the roughly 1,000 water-polluting units in these approved areas, nearly 85% are located in CETP-connected clusters, while the rest operate with individual effluent treatment plants. "Development of infrastructure can happen only after layout plans are approved. Then can sewer lines, drainage systems and additional CETPs be planned," a DPCC official said.



official from DSIIDC said. "At best, the requirement could be for two to five CETPs, mainly in larger non-conforming clusters where dyeing, chemical and similar units are concentrated," the official added.

According to the official, while exemption

## NEWS BOX

**The Jemimah Rodrigues struggle: Why the Delhi captain is faltering in close matches**

## NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Jemimah Rodrigues is staring at a moment Delhi Capitals never imagined they would face. A franchise that has never missed the WPL playoffs, one that topped the points table in each of the first three seasons, is now teetering on the brink of an early exit in 2026. For a team built on dominance and consistency, the slide has been jarring—and deeply concerning. Meg Lanning left behind a legacy of control, clarity, and ruthless efficiency. Under her, Delhi Capitals didn't just qualify; they ruled. Stepping into those shoes was never going to be easy, but the gap this season has been impossible to ignore. With just one league match remaining, Jemimah stands on the verge of becoming the first Delhi Capitals captain to fail to reach the playoffs—an unwanted first in a franchise that prides itself on setting standards, not breaking them.

The concern isn't just about results, but patterns. Close matches have slipped away. Winning positions have turned fragile. Decision-making at key moments has lacked



the sharpness that once defined this side. Jemimah, a proven match-winner and a World Cup star for India, has looked weighed down by leadership rather than lifted by it.

## TEMPERAMENT ISSUE?

During her tenure with Delhi Capitals, Meg Lanning instilled a ruthless mentality—one where matches were closed out, nerves held, and victories sealed. Lanning was a true mentality monster, having captained Australia to five World Cup titles, and her calm, composed leadership became the blueprint for success. In contrast, Jemimah Rodrigues has struggled to replicate that temperament as skipper. While individually decent, she has found it tough to instill the same composure and killer instinct in her players that Lanning effortlessly demanded. Twice this season against the Gujarat Giants, the Capitals faltered at the final hurdle. On both occasions, it was Sophie Devine who snatched victory from their grasp, highlighting the thin line between winning and losing when the finishing touches aren't there.

## Uneven pitch for lesser mortals

## CHENNAI. (Agency)

THE scorching sun was beating down relentlessly when Ram Dayal (name changed) along with a few other ground staff were busy giving the final touches to the surface. It was mid-summer. The curator was standing close-by, hollering instructions. With the venue scheduled to host an international cricket match in a couple of days, Dayal and his colleagues had no option but to work from dawn to dusk without worrying about the extreme heat and its effects on the body. If it is heat in the plains of the sub-continent, extreme cold and frost in the Himalayas and northeast India make their job extremely hazardous. Yet they labour on with their chores without fuss. They are the invisible force that help to maintain the beauty of the ground with manicured grass, sporting wicket that can produce runs and results and other associated paraphernalia that turn a game of cricket into a fascinating contest. Rain or sunshine, snow or thaw... these men and women are the first to reach and last to leave whenever their venues host matches.



Even on non-match days, they are responsible to protect the field of play from the vagaries of nature and sometimes even humans and animals. Yet, the return they get is pittance compared the revenue a game generates. They work for minuscule sums; most of the times, they are lower than the minimum daily wage rates as revised by the Government of India with effect from October 1, 2024. Daily wages as per the government guidelines for scheduled employments in the central sphere (mines, railways, ports, construction) range from ₹783 (unskilled) to ₹1,035 (highly skilled), depending on the area ((A,B,C)) and skill level. Unfortunately, these men and women earn between ₹350/day to ₹850/day.

# Djokovic vs Alcaraz: Melbourne Park braces for ultimate Difficult vs Impossible clash

**• Australian Open: Carlos Alcaraz and Novak Djokovic are all set for a blockbuster final at Melbourne Park on Sunday. While Djokovic is looking for his 25th Grand Slam title, Alcaraz is one win away from a Career Slam.**

## New Delhi. (Agency)

If Novak Djokovic says something is difficult, never dare to call it impossible. Friday night at Melbourne Park was not just a tennis match—it was a reminder of what belief looks like when the world starts doubting you. Jannik Sinner walked into the Australian Open semi-final with momentum, confidence, and history on his side, having taken 10 sets off Djokovic in recent months. Many believed this was the moment the torch would finally change hands. Under the lights, past midnight, when the body screams and



the mind begins to crack, he stood firm. He absorbed the pressure, embraced the pain, and bent the match to his will. It was grit over hype, heart over numbers. A champion refusing to fade. Now, with barely any time to recover, Djokovic returns to the same stage, carrying scars but also purpose. Waiting for him is Carlos Alcaraz—the young force who has pushed him to the edge, challenged his dominance, and forced him to dig deeper than ever before. This is not just a final. It is legacy at stake. Difficult versus impossible.

One last climb, one historic shot at a 25th Grand Slam title—and a chance for Novak Djokovic to once again prove that giving up was never part of his story.

## SIN down, time for CARAZ?

Earlier, during a press conference, a reporter suggested that Djokovic was now chasing Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner, just as he once chased Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer. Djokovic didn't take it lightly. Calm but resolute, he reminded the room—and the world—that he had already won 24 Grand

Slam titles. His words were measured, yet carried the weight of a legend who has been underestimated before and has always answered on the court. That simmering intensity erupted in the semi-final against Sinner. Djokovic didn't chase; he conquered. Every sprint, every stretch, every shot revealed a man pushing his body to its absolute limits, proving that age is no barrier when willpower, experience, and skill collide. Now, all eyes turn to Alcaraz. The young Spaniard is a formidable challenge—a true nut to crack. Alcaraz holds a superior record over Djokovic in Grand Slams, having beaten him in previous Wimbledon finals. Yet Djokovic is no ordinary opponent; he is a man possessed, a champion forged in battles against the greatest of his era. If anyone can dismantle Alcaraz's challenge, it is Novak Djokovic. History has shown that when he steps onto the court, he doesn't just play—he dominates.

## Can Alcaraz believe again?

Like Novak Djokovic, Carlos Alcaraz enters the Australian Open final after a grueling, marathon semi-final—this time against Alexander Zverev—the longest in the tournament's history.

**If Abhishek doesn't get you, Ishan will: NZ skipper Santner on India's Trivandrum show**

## NEW DELHI. (Agency)

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner admitted that Ishan Kishan's explosive knock in Thiruvananthapuram left his side with very few answers. Santner said the innings reminded him of the kind of damage Abhishek Sharma has repeatedly done to New Zealand during the series. Kishan produced a breathtaking maiden T20I century in the fifth T20I, completely tilting the contest in India's favour, and Santner conceded that once Indian batters get going together, stopping them becomes extremely difficult. Speaking at the post-match press conference, the New Zealand skipper said Kishan's innings was another example of India's batting depth overwhelming bowling attacks. "Very good. I think he has put his hand up to be in the first team for the World Cup. I think that shows they got 170 off the last 10, I suppose. When two guys are going like that, it's tough to stop. Sometimes, when guys are going like that, you have to put your hands up," Santner said. "We have seen it from Surya. We have now seen it from Ishan. For India, all their batters are scoring runs at different stages, they should be



# Chelsea vs West Ham thriller ends in ugly brawl as Todibo strangles Joao Pedro

## London. (Agency)

Chelsea and West Ham served up one of the Premier League's most combustible nights this season, a match that had everything from a wild comeback to scenes that spiralled completely out of control. What unfolded at Stamford Bridge on Saturday went far beyond the 3-2 scoreline, ending in an ugly stoppage-time brawl that overshadowed Chelsea's dramatic victory. For much of the evening, it looked like West Ham had the contest exactly where they wanted it. The visitors raced into a two-goal lead midway through the first half, catching Chelsea cold and exposing a defence that struggled to cope with direct running and early pressure. Jarrod Bowen's mishit cross somehow deceived Robert Sanchez and crept in, before Crysencio Summerville doubled the advantage, leaving the home crowd restless and the Blues reeling. Chelsea's response, however, was slow but relentless. The momentum shifted after the break as West



Ham began to retreat deeper, inviting pressure. Liam Delap's header pulled one back, Marc Cucurella scrambled in an equaliser, and with time ticking away, Enzo Fernandez struck late to complete a

seconds, players from both sides flooded the area. The chaos peaked when West Ham defender Jean-Clair Todibo lost control entirely, pinning Pedro against the advertising hoardings with both hands around his throat in full view of the Chelsea supporters. Referee Anthony Taylor had little choice. After consulting VAR and reviewing the footage pitch-side, he showed Todibo a straight red card for violent conduct. Even as teammates and officials attempted to separate the players, scuffles continued across the pitch, with goalkeepers, substitutes, and coaching staff drawn into the melee. Order was eventually restored, though not without further scrutiny from VAR. Several players escaped punishment, but Todibo's dismissal stood as the defining image of a night that teetered between spectacle and farce. The French defender later issued an apology, admitting his actions were unacceptable and did not reflect his character. It was a rare moment of accountability after a match that had already burned itself into memory.

# Arsenal opens seven-point lead in Premier League and Liverpool beats Newcastle

## NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Arsenal and Liverpool rediscovered that winning feeling in the Premier League on Saturday. Arsenal powered seven points clear at the top of the standings after beating Leeds 4-0. Mikel Arteta's team ended a three-game winless run in style at Elland Road and strengthened its title charge. Defending champion Liverpool finally secured its first league win of 2026 by 4-1 against Newcastle. Hugo Ekitike scored two and Florian Wirtz was on target again as two of Liverpool's big summer signings delivered at Anfield. Ibrahima Konate, playing his first game since the recent death of his father, sealed the win. Martin Zubimendi, Viktor Gyokes and Gabriel Jesus were all on target for Arsenal and Leeds goalkeeper Karl Darlow added an own goal. "We really wanted to show how much we wanted it," Arteta said. Manchester City and Aston Villa can trim Arsenal's lead back to four points on Sunday. Chelsea came

back from two goals down at home to beat West Ham 3-2 and climb up to fourth, with Enzo Fernandez hitting the winner in the



second minute of added time. Everton left it even later to draw at Brighton 1-1, Beto scoring in the 97th.

Last-placed Wolverhampton lost for the 18th time this season, 2-0 at home to Bournemouth. Arsenal has Leeds' number

Having beaten Leeds 5-0 in August, Arsenal enjoyed another romp against Daniel Farke's team. Six points and nine goals could go a long way to helping Arsenal's title bid, which was wobbling in recent weeks. "It's very difficult to (win 4-0 at Leeds), let's see who is the next team that does it, but we did it in a moment when we needed it," Arteta said. Against an in-form Leeds that had lost just one of its last 11 in all competitions, the trip to Elland Road was a potential banana skin for the league leader. Especially when forward Bukayo Saka was injured in the warmup and had to be withdrawn shortly before kickoff. But in his absence Arsenal totally dominated, with Zubimendi heading the visitor in front after 27 minutes and Darlow punching Noni Madueke's corner into his own net before halftime. Gyokes scored for the fourth time in six games in the second half and substitute Gabriel Jesus spun and fired low into the bottom corner late on.

# Ishan Kishan grabs the T20I ticket. Is Sanju Samson back on the waiting list

**• Has one dominant T20I series reshaped India's batting hierarchy? Ishan Kishan's surge has brought urgency and clarity, while Sanju Samson's struggles have reopened familiar questions on the eve of a T20 World Cup title defence.**

## NEW DELHI. (Agency)

"Ishan Kishan has made a strong statement," captain Suryakumar Yadav said in Thiruvananthapuram after India completed another rout of New Zealand, wrapping up their final T20I series before this month's World Cup with a 4-1 win. Statements in

international cricket are rarely confined to runs alone. They are made through selection calls, batting positions, gloves handed over—and sometimes, through what is said casually into a microphone. At the toss, Suryakumar played to the gallery while confirming Sanju Samson's place in the XI. Don't worry, Thiruvananthapuram, Sanju Samson will be playing," he said while announcing the team changes.

The Greenfield Stadium erupted. It was Samson's first international appearance in his home city, a long-awaited moment for a player whose international career has been defined by pauses, restarts and near-misses. But even here, there was reason to read between the lines. For one, the captain's unsolicited reassurance hinted at the context Samson was walking into. The louder endorsement had already been made. And it belonged to Ishan Kishan.

ISHAN KISHAN MAKES A STATEMENT Drafted into the T20 World Cup squad at the

eleventh hour after forcing the selectors' hand with a truckload of runs in domestic cricket, Kishan found himself straight into the XI following Tilak Varma's injury. He did



not waste the opening. Across the series, Kishan scored 215 runs at an average of 50 and a strike rate of 231.18—the highest strike rate by a batter from a full-member nation in a T20I bilateral series with a minimum of 200 runs. The exclamation

point came on Saturday: a match-winning century, his first in T20I cricket, accompanied by a collection of rapid cameos that repeatedly broke New Zealand's bowling plans. "I really enjoyed batting with him and also with Abhishek Sharma. Both of them, if they play together, they completely take the opposition out of it. The pressure is very less on the middle-order and the finishers to come," Suryakumar said, stressing the value of relentless aggression at the top. Across five matches, Samson managed 46 runs—including three single-digit scores—the lowest tally by an Indian opener to feature in every game of a five-match bilateral T20I series. It was his first extended run as an opener since India briefly flirted with 'Project Shubman Gill' before abandoning it weeks ahead of the World Cup.

## Individuals residing abroad to be permitted equity investments in listed Indian firms: Finance Minister

New Delhi.(Agency)

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said individual persons residing outside India (PROI) will be permitted equity investments in listed Indian companies through a portfolio investment scheme. She also proposed raising investment limit for PROIs to 10 per cent from 5 per cent. The finance minister also proposed making framework with suitable access to funds and derivatives on corporate bond indices. The government will continue to focus on developing infrastructure in cities with over 5 lakh population, she added. Presenting the Union Budget 2026-27, Sitharaman proposed to upgrade WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre at Jamnagar, Gujarat, while also stating that the country's telescope infrastructure will be upgraded to promote astrophysics and astronomy. The government will also launch a pilot scheme to upgrade skills of 10,000



guides at 20 iconic tourist sites, while noting that India has potential to offer world-class experience in mountaineering. Besides, she promised that the Centre will develop ecologically sustainable trails in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jammu and Kashmir.

## Budget 2026: Outlay on electronics manufacturing to be increased to Rs 40,000 crore in Fy27

New Delhi.(Agency)

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday proposed to increase the outlay on electronics manufacturing to Rs 40,000 crore in the 2026-27 fiscal year. Presenting the Union Budget for 2026-27, she said high-tech tool rooms will be established at two locations to give push to capital goods manufacturing. Sitharaman also proposed a scheme for container manufacturing to create globally competitive ecosystem. Three dedicated chemical parks will also be set up to enhance domestic production, reduce import dependency, she added.

The move comes amid a massive thrust by the government on increasing electronics manufacturing in the country. The mobile manufacturing segment witnessed a nearly 30-fold increase in production value, rising from Rs 18,000 crore in FY15 to Rs 5.45 lakh crore in FY25. Phone exports from India have hit Rs 2.03 lakh crore in 2025, which is almost double that of Rs 1.1 lakh crore Apple exported in the calendar year 2024. Mobile phone production in the country is expected to reach about Rs 6.76 lakh crore, comprising exports over USD 30 billion, or about Rs 2.7 lakh crore, by the end of the current fiscal year.

As of August 2025, 10 semiconductor manufacturing and packaging projects have been approved in the country with a cumulative investment of around Rs 1.6 lakh crore in six states.

## Budget proposes Rs 10,000 crore investment in biopharma



New Delhi.(Agency)

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday proposed Rs 10,000 crore investment in the biopharma sector over the next five years, a move which would give a boost to the country's pharmaceuticals industry. Biopharmaceuticals, or biologics, are complex medicines manufactured from living organisms, cells, or tissues rather than through chemical synthesis. She also proposed interventions in six areas, including manufacturing, strategic and frontier sectors, healthcare and advanced technology.

The minister added that semiconductor mission 2.0 will focus on producing equipment and materials designed for full-stack Indian IP (intellectual property). The India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) is a specialised, autonomous business division within Digital India Corporation under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), designed to build a sustainable semiconductor and display ecosystem. Sitharaman also announced support for mineral rich states of Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to establish critical mineral facilities. She added that 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' is the third Kartavya of the government.

# Gold, silver futures plummet 9 pc to hit lower circuit levels ahead of Budget

**Traders said the steep correction in bullion prices was driven by aggressive unwinding of long positions amid volatility in global markets and cautious investor sentiment ahead of the presentation of the Union Budget.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

Ahead of the Union Budget 2026-27, gold and silver prices fell upto 9 per cent in futures trade early on Sunday, as investors extended profit booking. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Budget for the 2026-27 for a record ninth time on Sunday. The rout extended



for the second straight day, with the April contract for gold futures declining Rs 13,711, or 9 per cent, to Rs 1,38,634 per 10 grams, touching its lower circuit

level in the futures trade on the MCX. In the previous session, the yellow metal plunged Rs 31,617, or 17.2 per cent, to close at Rs 1,52,345 per 10 grams, after

hitting a record high of Rs 1,93,096 per 10 grams on Thursday. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), silver futures also suffered a heavy setback as traders continued to book profits at elevated levels, with the March contract nosediving Rs 26,273, or 9 per cent, to Rs 2,65,652 per kilogram -- its lower circuit level. On Friday, the white metal slumped Rs 1,07,968, or 27 per cent, to close at Rs 2,91,925 per kg, also touching its lower circuit level. The sharp sell-off followed Thursday's record peak of Rs 4,20,048 per kg. Traders said the steep correction in bullion prices was driven by aggressive unwinding of long positions amid volatility in global markets and cautious investor sentiment ahead of the presentation of the Union Budget.

## Budget 2026 boosts Lakhpatti Didi scheme, rolls out community-run She-Marts

### Lakhpatti Didi Scheme gets upgrade, community-owned She-Marts to support women enterprises

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Lakhpatti Didi Yojana, the government's flagship women-empowerment initiative, got a major upgrade in the Union Budget 2026 on Sunday, with a proposed plan to expand community-owned She-Marts to support women entrepreneurs.

In her record ninth Budget presentation, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the upgraded scheme will expand economic opportunities for rural women and strengthen self-help groups (SHGs) that are central to the mission. WHAT IS LAKHPATI DIDI YOJANA? The Lakhpatti Didi scheme is aimed at



empowering rural women by helping members of self-help groups launch micro-enterprises and earn a sustainable income of at least Rs 1 lakh per year, effectively making them economically independent.

## India's GST collections rise 6.2% to Rs 1.93 lakh crore in January

**Government data suggests that import-related GST played a key role in driving the growth, supported by stable domestic consumption and trade flows. The rise in collections reflects improved enforcement, wider tax base and better compliance under the GST system.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

New Delhi: India's GST collections rose 6.2 percent year-on-year to Rs 1.93 lakh crore in January, indicating steady economic activity and sustained tax compliance across the country. The latest figures show that indirect tax

revenues continue to remain strong despite global uncertainties and inflationary pressures. Government data suggests that import-related



health. Monthly collections staying close to the Rs 2 lakh crore mark indicate that demand in key sectors such as manufacturing, services and retail remains resilient. The strong GST numbers also come at a crucial time ahead of the Union Budget 2026, as tax buoyancy will influence fiscal planning and revenue projections for the next financial year. Higher indirect tax collections could give the government more flexibility in managing spending without increasing borrowing.

Experts add that rising GST revenue strengthens the Centre and states' financial position, helping fund infrastructure projects, welfare schemes and capital expenditure. With compliance improving and digitisation expanding, GST is increasingly becoming one of India's most reliable revenue sources.

## Budget 2026: India to set up, upgrade four telescope facilities, boost astrophysics

New Delhi.(Agency)

In a significant boost to India's space science ambitions, the Union Budget 2026 has announced the setting up and upgradation of four major telescope and astronomy facilities to promote research in astrophysics and astronomy.

The announcement was made by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during her Budget speech in Parliament. Presenting the government's vision for strengthening scientific infrastructure, the finance minister said the new investments aim to expand India's observational capabilities, support cutting-edge research, and inspire the next generation of scientists. The initiative is expected to enhance India's role in global astronomical research and deepen understanding of the Sun, stars, galaxies, and the universe.

### WHICH TELESCOPES WILL BE SET UP OR UPGRADES?

The four facilities identified under the Budget announcement include the National Large Solar Telescope (NLST), the National Large Optical Infrared Telescope (NLLOT), the Himalayan Chandra Telescope, and the COSMOS 2 Planetarium. The National Large Solar Telescope will focus on high-resolution observations of the Sun, helping scientists study solar activity, magnetic fields, and space weather events that can affect satellites, power grids, and communication systems on Earth. Once operational, it is expected to be among the most advanced solar observatories in the world. The National Large Optical Infrared Telescope will strengthen India's ability to observe faint and distant celestial objects, including exoplanets, nebulae, and galaxies. Operating in optical and infrared wavelengths, the facility will support frontier research in cosmology and stellar evolution. The government also announced the upgradation of the Himalayan Chandra Telescope, located in Ladakh, one of the world's highest astronomical observatories. The upgrade will improve its sensitivity and instrumentation, allowing more precise observations under exceptional atmospheric conditions.

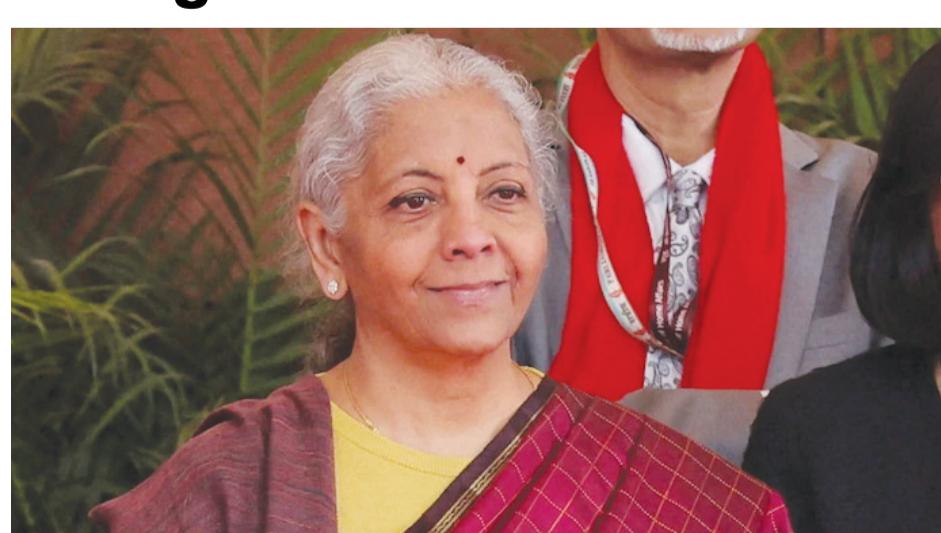
In addition, the COSMOS 2 Planetarium will be developed as a modern public outreach and education centre. It will play a key role in popularising astronomy and space science among students and the wider public. Together, these initiatives show the government's commitment to advancing fundamental science while building world-class research and education infrastructure in India.

## Budget 2026: Nirmala Sitharaman sets stage for major foreign investment rule reform

**The government is looking to update India's foreign exchange framework to reflect a more open, growth-oriented approach that matches the country's ambitions for the next decade.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

In the Union Budget of India, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a comprehensive review of the Foreign Exchange Management (Non-Debt Instruments) Rules, 2019, signalling what experts see as a major shift in India's foreign investment policy. The move reflects the government's intention to modernise its regulatory framework and make India a more attractive destination for global capital. The NDI Rules govern



how foreign ownership and control operate across Indian companies and define the treatment of foreign direct investment, portfolio investment and other non-debt instruments. According to Lokesh Shah, Partner at CMS IndusLaw, these rules form the foundation of India's foreign investment regime because they bring legal clarity and predictability to

foreign capital flows. He says the government's decision to revisit them is a significant policy signal that indicates a move toward further liberalisation. Shah explains that the current rules were designed to consolidate and simplify India's foreign investment framework but some provisions have become outdated as global investment practices evolve. A

review could streamline compliance, address grey areas and make it easier for foreign investors to participate in Indian markets. It could also enhance transparency in how foreign capital is regulated and improve the ease of doing business for companies seeking equity inflows. The timing of the review aligns with the government's broader economic strategy. Budget 2026 places strong emphasis on strengthening India's position in global value chains, boosting strategic sectors and deepening integration with international markets. A more flexible and modernised foreign investment regime would support these objectives by removing bottlenecks that currently limit capital mobility and investor participation. While the details of the review will be shaped over the coming months, the announcement points to a clear direction. The government is looking to update India's foreign exchange framework to reflect a more open, growth-oriented approach that matches the country's ambitions for the next decade.

# Rashmika Mandanna

Blushes As Paparazzi Ask 'Hume Invite Nahi Kar Rahe?' Amid Wedding Rumours

Rashmika Mandanna was recently left blushing when paparazzi asked her if she is not inviting them to her wedding with Vijay Deverakonda. On Friday night, the 'Girlfriend' actress was spotted by the shutterbugs at the Mumbai airport when she had a brief interaction with them, a video of which has now gone viral on social media.

In the clip, a paparazzo was seen asking Rashmika, "Hume invite nahi kar rahe aap?" To this, Rashmika seemingly blushed and acted like she had no idea about what the paparazzo was asking. "Kis baat ke liye?" she replied and laughed. When the paparazzo said that even she knows what he was asking about, the actress changed the topic and added, "Film release abhi toh...kuch karna padega." Watch the video here:

**Vijay Deverakonda, Rashmika Mandanna Getting Married?**

Reportedly, Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna got engaged privately in October 2025, surrounded by close family members. While the couple hasn't announced their engagement as of now, a report by Hindustan Times recently claimed that the wedding is scheduled for February 26, 2026, and will take place at a palace in Udaipur.

A source revealed that no celebrity guests will be invited and the event will be a private ceremony. "Rashmika and Vijay's wedding is planned at one of Udaipur's heritage palaces. Much like their engagement, the ceremony will be a close-knit affair with only their loved ones in attendance," the insider added. Meanwhile, Rashmika and Vijay were recently also in Rome, celebrating the New Year. Even though the two stars did not mention vacationing together, they shared photos from the same spots, leading netizens to conclude they were indeed together.



Pregnant Sonam Kapoor Steps Out For Mumbai Event, Walks In With Friend's Support



Mom-to-be Sonam Kapoor stepped out in Mumbai recently and made a calm, graceful appearance at a city event, taking things slow and easy as she enters the final phase of her pregnancy. The actor was seen arriving at an international beauty brand event in Lower Parel on Friday. Videos from the venue show Sonam being gently helped by a friend as she walked inside. Holding her friend's hand and chatting along the way, Sonam smiled for the cameras and looked comfortable and relaxed.

For the event, Sonam chose a blue velvet dress and kept her look simple with minimal styling and open hair. She appeared focused on comfort while still carrying her usual elegance.

Sonam, 40, is expecting her second child. She announced the pregnancy in November with a stylish social media post that quickly caught attention. The actor shared pictures in a pink outfit inspired by Princess Diana. The look was a vintage Escada by Margaretha Ley (1988) ensemble, similar to one of Diana's iconic suits. She captioned the post "Mother" with a kissing face emoji. The announcement received a warm response from friends and colleagues. Priyanka Chopra and Kareena Kapoor congratulated the couple, while Parineeti Chopra commented, "Congrats, mamacitaa." Anand Ahuja also shared a sweet message for his wife, writing, "Baby ma.. also chiccccc mama!"

Several others sent their wishes as well, including Patralekhaa, who recently became a mother. Sonam's mother Sunita Kapoor praised her daughter and called her radiant. Sonam Kapoor and Anand Ahuja got married in 2018 and welcomed their first child, son Vayu, in 2022. At the time, they shared a heartfelt note thanking their doctors, family and friends as they began their journey into parenthood.

**Malaika Arora Kisses Sister Amrita Arora, Calls Her 'Baby' On Birthday**



Commencing her career as a VJ for MTV, Amrita made her Bollywood debut back in 2002 opposite Fardeen Khan with the film, *Kitne Door Kitne Paas*.

Actress Malaika Arora wished her baby sister, Amrita Arora, on her birthday with an adorable social media post. Malaika took to her official Instagram handle and dropped a lovely photo kissing her sister. Pouring love on her baby sister on her special day, Malaika penned, "Happy birthday my baby sis @amuaroraoofficial (sic)", along with two red heart emojis.

She also uploaded a fun selfie with her girl gang from a lift and wrote, "With our birthday girl... A liftie is a must", tagging Amrita. Along with Malaika and Amrita, the click further included Karisma Kapoor. Commencing her career as a VJ for MTV, Amrita made her Bollywood debut back in 2002 opposite Fardeen Khan with the film, *Kitne Door Kitne Paas*. Later on, she went on to become part of movies such as "Awara Paagal Deewana", "Ek Aur Ek Gyarah", "Girlfriend", "Speed", "Red: The Dark Side", "Kambakkht Ishq", and "Hello", along with others.

In 2009, Amrita married businessman Shakeel Ladak. The couple is now blessed with two sons. Malaika and Amrita are often seen showering love on one another on social media.

Shifting our focus back to Malaika, she concluded the first quarter of the 21st century by reflecting on the phase of her life, which was marked by change, growth, and constant reinvention. Looking back at her journey, Malaika told IANS, "Personally, it's been a journey of reinvention for me, growing beyond glamour and dance into fitness, entrepreneurship, and now a published author."

Speaking to IANS, she also listed the films and performances that have defined this era. Malaika revealed that cinematic gems such as "Lagaan", "Dil Chahta Hai", "Queen", "Gully Boy", and "Andhadhun" have contributed to reshaping Hindi cinema. "As we close this chapter, films like Lagaan, Dil Chahta Hai, Queen, Gully Boy, Andhadhun etc have truly defined the era," she shared.



# Triptii Dimri

Looks Joyful As She Celebrates Rumoured BF Sam Merchant's Birthday

Actress Triptii Dimri is rumoured to be dating businessman Sam Merchant. While neither has confirmed it, their frequent public appearances and vacation photos often garner attention, and add fuel to their dating rumours. Sam celebrated his birthday yesterday, and the Spirit actress shared their unseen photos on Instagram stories to wish him. Meanwhile, we have also come across some inside glimpses from Sam's birthday celebration. Triptii was spotted enjoying his birthday bash, beaming with joy as she celebrated alongside their friends.

#### Triptii Dimri Celebrates Rumoured BF Sam Merchant's Birthday

A video clip shared by Sam Merchant on his Instagram stories shows him cutting the birthday cakes, surrounded by his family and friends. Triptii Dimri was seen standing beside him, clapping and singing along to the birthday song. She looked beautiful in a yellow crop top paired with baggy denim jeans. Meanwhile, another group photo from the celebration showed her posing next to Sam. Elnaaz Norouzi was also spotted at the bash. Check out the glimpses below!



Sam, nor Triptii has acknowledged or confirmed the dating rumours, their frequent joint appearances add fuel to the speculations.

#### Triptii Dimri's Upcoming Films

On the work front, Triptii will next be seen in Vishal Bhardwaj's film O' Romeo. It marks her first on-screen collaboration with Shahid Kapoor. Backed by Sajid Nadiadwala, the film also features Nana Patekar, Avinash Tiwary, and Farida Jalal in prominent parts, with Disha Patani making a special appearance.



**Triptii Dimri's Birthday Wish For Sam Merchant**  
Taking to her Instagram stories, Triptii Dimri shared three unseen photos with her rumoured boyfriend Sam, and wished him. She simply wrote, "Happy birthday @sam\_merchant wishing you all the good you quietly give others."

# How to deal with Workplace Break-ups

A break-up is never pleasant, especially if the person in question happens to be a colleague. Mithila Mehta tells you how to recover from a failed office romance

When an office romance fails, it is bound to create a rather messy situation. It is unlike a regular breakup simply because it is imperative to maintain a cordial relationship with the individual. You will run into each other every day, all the time. You may have to work together and speak to each other as though nothing is wrong. It is extremely hard, but must be done.

The most important thing is to ensure that a failed office relationship does not affect your productivity and performance. Let work be your priority, give it everything you have. Further, break-up histrionics will showcase you in a bad light at the workplace, affecting your credibility and professional image. For the sake of your career, putting on a brave face is very important. Quitting and moving to a new workplace may seem like a good idea, particularly if it is a painful breakup. Consider the option with a cool head, and avoid taking a hasty decision. Don't jeopardise your career over something as trivial as a failed romance.

## Talk things out

No matter how badly things end, remember that neither of you would want the break-up to impact your professional lives. In that sense, you are both on the same side. Discuss the implications of ending the relationship in professional terms. Depending on what note you are parting on, try and establish some general ground rules to make things easier for both of you. "I was dating a colleague for almost two years, when things took a terrible turn due to family differences. We had to break up. We mutually decided to keep workplace interactions formal and dignified, and to keep our office friends out of the mess. Openly discussing these issues and jointly coming to a consensus ensured that the break-up was quiet and smooth," reveals Meera P, FMCG brand manager.



## Be professional

Try to keep your personal and professional selves separate. Don't let the breakup interfere with professional interactions, especially when working in a team. Give your ex the same respect you would give any other colleague. "Two colleagues in my team, who recently broke up, would unnecessarily bash each other's ideas during brainstorming sessions. Such behaviour is downright immature and should be avoided at all costs," advises Richa Dias, account planner at an advertising agency.

Maintain a dignified, composed front at the workplace. Breaking down or mud-slinging is a strict no-no. It doesn't matter whether you are unbelievably upset, angry, jilted or heartbroken. Unleash your acting skills - simply smile through it all. A common

trap is looking for a rebound relationship at the workplace. Steer clear, as this will only complicate matters further.

## Maintain a distance

Give each other considerable time and space to recover from the break-up. While it may not be entirely possible to avoid workplace interactions, keep to the basics. Physical distance will dissipate the awkwardness faster. "Every time I saw my ex boyfriend in office, I would feel an overwhelming sense of sadness. I decided to keep out of his way as much as possible—keeping away from his cubicle, avoiding him in the pantry, keeping separate lunch hours. Out of sight really is out of mind," shares Meera. Delete each other from office communicators if necessary.

## Don't involve others

It is unfair and unprofessional to drag other colleagues into the break-up mess. Let the issues lie between the both of you. "Never stoop down to spreading rumours or nasty stories about your ex to other colleagues. It will simply create a vicious cycle. In fact, try not to speak about the break-up at all. No one needs to know what went wrong, how it happened, or any other such private details," advises Dhaval Mehta, communication manager at a financial institution.

Even if other colleagues ask you about the break-up, divulge as little as possible, especially if you don't want your personal life becoming the coffee machine gossip of the day.

An office break-up is sure to be a challenging time — but with a fair amount of tact, discretion and courage, it can be handled successfully. Give yourself some time, and things will fall into place.



# Fostering a creative culture in the

# Workplace

Take a walk around a workspace in a large organization, and the chances are, you will encounter employees gathered around foosball tables, furiously typing away while sitting on beanbags or strategizing business growth over a cup of coffee. These are outward signs of what companies are trying to do - make creativity a part of the organization's culture and generate new products, ideas or solutions by creating a relaxed atmosphere at the workplace.

The workforce today has evolved over the last decade or so to be more open to creativity. With a large number of millennials joining the employee population, the needs of the employees are drastically different from those of the previous generations. And this has caused a cultural shift within organizations. The new culture is headed towards fostering creativity to bring out the best in employees. Rigid systems and processes, hierarchies, inflexible policies and linear modes of thinking are slowly being phased out to welcome flat organizations, space for innovation, and a focus on collaboration through creative thinking.

Richard Lobo, SVP, Head HR, Infosys Limited says, "It's easy to examine these outward signs and mistake them for a creative culture. There is nothing a creative workspace can do if the underlying structure does not allow free collaboration across teams. Allowing a creative culture to grow involves both a strong foundation of creative values as well as a workspace free of

constraints to open the mind." So, how are companies dealing with this? He explains, "At Infosys, we have begun the journey towards greater employee engagement and innovation by fostering creative thinking in the spaces of technology and beyond. In 2014, we launched the first crowd-sourcing idea campaign at Infosys called Murtururation. A CEO-driven initiative, employees were encouraged to provide their ideas about our business strategy, and through an inclusive employee-voting mechanism, 10 ideas were shortlisted for consideration from the original pool of 2,650 ideas."

Tech giants such as Facebook and Google are already famous for their hack-a-thons -- overnight events where employees are asked to ditch their regular work and concentrate on trying out something else within the company. According to Lobo, "These events encourage out-of-the-box thinking and inculcate the culture of rapid problem-solving using technology." Similarly, Infosys has its own global Hackathon, which is currently in its second season, to channel creative thinking among employees. Here, people are able to get hands-on experience with open source and proprietary software tools and technologies. It also provides a platform for employees to identify and engage with talented designers and developers.

??To ensure that employees have a holistic professional experience, it is necessary to encourage creativity in leisure spaces as well. With Google being the front runner, companies are now encouraging healthy environment through creatively

designed workspaces, world-class sports facilities, recreational rooms, gyms, and even sleep pods for power naps.

The workplace's? ha?ve ?become all the more dynamic and fast-paced. Invariably because of long shift hours, the office becomes a second home and the colleagues, an extended family. Sabbas Joseph, Director of one of the leading event management companies, Wizcraft shares, "For keeping the dynamism alive, we always host interesting activities that can help the Wizzes (team members) to get to know each other and more importantly, relieve stress. From quizzes to pop up shops, celebrating festivals together to dedicating an entire room with books and a music system for just 'chilling'; I think it's extremely important for companies, especially those that require loads of creativity, to provide an outlet for people to engage and bond with each other as they serve as the best stress antidotes." Companies have realized the importance of innovation and how encouraging creative activities can boost team morale. Venkatramana B, President, Group HR, Landmark Group India asserts that Landmark Group strongly believes in a culture of innovation and over the years has benefitted greatly from employee sourced solutions.

He says, "Keeping the creative juices flowing is important for us and we continuously organize activities that encourage out-of-the-box thinking. Play in a Day or Theatre Methodology has been a very successful program for us, where various concepts. Be it business or soft skills, they are explained to employees through theater." He also talks about conducting an interesting engagement activity called Islempix, in which store teams are provided with various Olympic-like tasks and adds, "These activities are not only fun, but also increase employee morale, camaraderie and understanding between team members."

R Mahalakshmi, Director Human Resources, Mondelez India Foods Private Ltd stresses on having a 'thought diverse team' that work on the principle of 'crowdsourcing' to solve key business issues. She talks about putting the power in the hands of employees to create a powerful workplace that welcomes multiple perspectives and enables innovation at work.

In a similar way, Yes Bank encourages Owner-Partner-Manager concept, where it empowers employees as owners and partners, who take full responsibility and accountability for self-development and achievement of larger organizational goals. Deodutta Kurane, Group President, Human Capital Management, Yes Bank also emphasizes the need ?for? organizing various social, cultural and sports events that shape employee experience around recreational programmes, fostering meaningful engagement.? He affirms, "DICE (Design Thinking, Innovation and Creativity led Entrepreneurship) is the fundamental building block which defines Yes Bank's DNA and forms its ethos."

Creativity has always been a quest, but never a priority. Having the support system to encourage creativity is equally important. The urgency of the situation demands that a leader should engage the entire workforce, at the right time, in creative work. The idea that each employee has something creative to contribute is not a new one, but making it work has required imagination. Freeing up the power of the individual to create is the first step on the creative culture journey.

# Are you stuck in the wrong job?

Are you currently sitting at your desk, with your head in your hands, unsure whether you're in the right place? We give you a low-down on the signs that tell you're ready for a new job.

When is it a risk well worth taking: **'Boring becomes your favourite word'**

If you're so bored at work that updating your status on Facebook or re-tweeting posts is the only exciting thing that you do during the day, it's time to start updating your resume. Sometimes, things are a little slow if you're just learning the ropes or if you're in between projects, but if the idleness persists, you have to think about the situation and your career seriously.

## You get mood swings often

How happy are you? If you're in a bad mood every other day, it is one major thing that indicates that you should leave your current job. It is absolutely normal to have a bad day once in a fortnight. It is a part of every job. But if you're dragging yourself to work forcefully everyday and then just sulking all day, start typing out that letter of resignation.

Being depressed 8 hours a day, 40 hours a week is not acceptable where quality of life is concerned. If you're that unhappy in your current job, divert all your efforts in finding a better one instead of crying over it.

## Lack of opportunities to grow

At some work places, you might like the kind of work you are doing and the kind of people you're working with but there's just no room to climb the ladder. That might be OK for a while, but after a point you might want to get better at your job. If you're already at the top of where you can go in your company but have started to crave something more, look at your current job as a stepping stone and resume-builder rather than somewhere you have to stay for good. If you're not feeling



## You're underutilized

This might be the case with you. You have the skills that would be beneficial to your employer but you're not just getting the chance to prove your mettle, especially if you are hired for one thing but you're getting stuck with administrative tasks. Ask for some one-on-one time with your boss and explain the kind of work you would be interested in doing. Bring forth a clear picture. If you're still relegated to menial tasks, it may be time to move on.

## You dream about quitting

If you're already at the stage of wishing for a new job or even thinking about doing anything but what you're doing, take those thoughts seriously and figure out what you want to do next. You need to be proactive when it comes to your career. Research on the vacancies at various companies, polish your resume, and start applying for anything intriguing that comes up.