



If police don't fire, should they take bullets?: CM Yogi defends police action

"People are questioning why the police fired. If the police don't fire, should they get shot instead?" Adityanath asked, defending the use of armed force when required. He said police personnel are equipped and trained to counter armed criminals and must act decisively in such situations.

Lucknow. (Agency)

zero-tolerance policy against crime, questioning criticism of police action against criminals and asking whether police should "take bullets" if they do not fire in response. Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Uttar Pradesh Pharma Conclave 1.0, the Chief Minister said strict and consistent enforcement of the policy had strengthened public safety, pointing to the peaceful conduct of major festivals and celebrations over the past nine years as evidence. He said firm police action was essential to maintain law and order and that criminals must be dealt with "in the



language they understand." "People are questioning why the police fired. If the police don't fire, should they get shot instead?" Adityanath asked, defending the use of armed force when required. He said police personnel are equipped and trained to counter armed criminals and must act decisively in such situations. The Chief Minister added that police action is initiated within the framework of the law, but in certain situations swift decisions become necessary when offenders ignore statutory warnings. "If a criminal has the freedom to fire a gun, then the police officers have also been given pistols so that they can counter criminals. They have been trained for this very purpose. They should deal with the criminals in the language they understand," the Chief Minister said.

Here's a traitor:

Rahul Gandhi jabs aide-turned-BJP minister Ravneet Bittu outside Parliament

Rahul Gandhi referred to former Congress MP Ravneet Singh Bittu as his "traitor friend," prompting a strong response from the BJP leader, who hit back by calling Gandhi a "desh ka dushman" (enemy of the nation).

New Delhi. (Agency)

A sharp war of words broke out between Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and his former aide and Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu in Parliament premises on Wednesday, as tensions flared ahead of the day's proceedings. The exchange occurred during an opposition protest before the session began.

Gandhi referred to Ravneet Bittu, a three-time MP from the Congress who joined the BJP ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, as his "traitor friend," drawing an immediate and pointed response from the BJP leader, who retorted by calling Gandhi a "desh ke dushman" (enemy of the nation).

As Bittu walked past protesting Congress MPs near the Makar Dwar, Gandhi was heard saying, "Here is a traitor walking right by. Look at the face."

Gandhi then appeared to extend his hand towards Bittu, adding, "Hello brother, my traitor friend. Don't worry, you will come back (to Congress)." Bittu declined to shake

hands and responded sharply, calling Gandhi a "desh ke dushman" (enemy of the nation), as the two leaders were seen briefly exchanging words. In response to the incident, the Union Minister said that when



he was in the Congress, its leaders considered themselves the "greatest patriots," but he now strongly disagrees with that view. Referring to the period of militancy in Punjab, he alleged that the Gandhi family was responsible for the turmoil and claimed that Sikhs were

targeted and killed during that time. Taking a swipe at his former colleagues, Bittu said that if he were still in the BJP earlier, they would have treated him with deference. Emphasising his Sikh identity, he

said he wore his turban with pride and reiterated that he considers the Gandhi family "enemies of the country," adding that he would never shake hands with them.

Today's war of words comes more than two years after Ravneet Bittu had sparked controversy with his remarks targeting Rahul Gandhi. In 2024, Bittu had criticised the Congress MP over his comments on Sikhs during a visit to the US and went so far as to call him "the number one terrorist of the country."

The Congress had strongly condemned the statement, describing Bittu's remarks as "bottom-tier" and saying his political career in the party, before he switched to the BJP, had been a "mess." The party had also demanded that the BJP immediately sack him over the comment.

Thieves chop off Rajasthan woman's legs to steal jewellery worth Rs 6.5 lakh

An elderly woman in Rajasthan was killed by robbers who slit her throat and chopped off her legs to steal silver and gold jewellery worth nearly Rs 14 lakh from her body. The silver ankle cuffs she was wearing were worth Rs 6.5 lakh.

Rajasthan. (Agency)

A 60-year-old woman was brutally killed in Rajasthan, with attackers slitting her throat and chopping off her legs to steal silver and gold ankle cuffs worth Rs 6.5 lakh and several other jewellery items that she was wearing. The body of the victim, Kamla Devi, was located by her son in the forest where she had gone at the time of the murder to graze goats, police said on Tuesday.



The incident happened in Kodyai village and came to light when Devi didn't return home by evening. Her family and other villagers got worried. After that, her son went into the forest to look for her and spotted the body, with the severed legs lying around, nearly three kilometres from the village.

The victim's family alleged that the gold pendant, earrings and a nose ring worth Rs 7.5 lakh were also stolen from her body. Police said the attackers killed Devi, removed all the jewellery from her body, and fled. Additional Superintendent of Police Neel Kamal Meena and other officers arrived at the scene soon after. No arrests have been made so far and police said efforts are on to catch the attackers.

India-US deal isn't just a trade deal. It adds muscle to India's China fight

New Delhi. (Agency)

President Donald Trump on Monday (February 2), said he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed on a broad India-US trade agreement. The announcement of the trade pact by Trump, which ends months of tensions, will boost Indian exports. It would position India as a key alternative to China in global supply chains. In effect, the deal, after coming into effect, would prove to be a booster shot for India, which is competing with China in its manufacturing and commercial space, say experts. Beyond just being a trade deal, the India-US FTA will give India a strategic edge, especially against China. US Vice President JD Vance

earlier said that the deal "aims to rebalance global trade". Washington has long held that global trade has been tilted towards China. As Vance said during his India visit in April 2025, "India and the US finalising the terms of references for the trade deal is a vital step and sets a roadmap for the final deal".

The announcement of the agreement, which slashed tariffs on Indian exports to the US down to 18% from 50%, is lower than rates on competitors. China continues to face tariffs of 47%, while Pakistan and Bangladesh are at 20%, and Vietnam and Indonesia hover around 19-20%.

While the 18% US tariff cut will translate into immediate gains for Indian exports, the



follow-up deal is expected to further position India as a strong manufacturing and exporting hub, especially as it is also slated to ink a free trade agreement with another major trading partner, the European Union

in 2026, and it will be operational by 2027.

The potential deal also revives the 'China-Plus-One' strategy, which is a business approach where companies diversify their manufacturing and supply chains away from sole dependency on China by expanding operations into other countries. And China's counterpart, India, is an attractive investment destination for companies looking for a safe bet. Entrepreneur and scholar at Takshashila Institute, Yusuf Unjhawala, said, "For export to the US, with the trade deal, India's tariff is at 18%. China's effective tariff rate is 47.5%.

CM Bhagwant Singh Mann to pay obeisance at Sri Khuralkar Sahib, offer prayers to Sri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj for peace, prosperity, harmony & brotherhood in Punjab

The Sikh Times

GARHSHANKAR / HOSHIARPUR, 4th February: The Bhagwant Mann Government on Wednesday infused Sri Khuralkar Sahib with devotion, resolve, and historic intent as it formally launched state-level celebrations of the 649th holy Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj, setting in motion a year-long, state-wide observance leading up to the landmark 650th Parkash Purab in 2027. From the sacred soil of Sri Khuralkar Sahib, revered as the birthplace of Sri Guru Ravidass Ji, the Bhagwant Mann Government signalled that the celebrations would extend far beyond a single congregation, carrying Guru Ji's timeless message of equality, harmony, and human dignity from this historic shrine to every village and household in Punjab. The three-day state-level event, marked by deep spiritual fervour and wide participation, will culminate on February 6 with the Bhog of Sri Akhand Path Sahib, when Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann will pay obeisance at Sri Khuralkar Sahib and offer

prayers for peace, prosperity, harmony, and brotherhood across the state. The commencement of the state-level celebrations witnessed the presence of a large number of revered saints and spiritual leaders, underscoring the spiritual and social significance of the occasion. Among those present were Sant Kewal (Tap Asthan Sri Khuralkar Sahib), President Sri Guru Nirmal Das Ji, National President Adi Dharm Mission Sant Satwinder Hira, Sant Dayal Nath Samundra, Sant Jagir Singh Nandachaur, Sant Dharmpal of Dham Chanan Puri Sahoura, Balkar Singh of Taggar Barara, Sant Ramesh Das of Sherpur, Sant Manpreet Das of Cheta, Sant Balwan Singh of Dhingrian, Satnam Singh of Pandori Sadhan, Sant Kuldeep Singh of Bassi Maroof, along with several other saints and spiritual figures. Several senior leaders and dignitaries also paid obeisance, including Cabinet Ministers Harpal Singh Cheema, Tarunpreet Singh Sond, Harjot Singh Bains, Dr Rajvot Singh, and Lal Chand Kataruchak,

Deputy Speaker Jai Krishan Singh Rouri, Chairman of the Punjab SC Commission Jasvir Singh Garhi; MLA Chabbewal Dr Ishank Kumar; Advisor to the Department of Culture and Tourism Deepak Bali; and other prominent personalities. Addressing the media after paying obeisance, Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said, "The Punjab Government has resolved to celebrate the 650th Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj in 2027 on an unprecedented and historic scale." Minister Harpal Singh Cheema stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, the Punjab government has already launched a year-long series of programmes beginning with the 649th Parkash Purab, aimed at taking the teachings of Guru Ravidass Ji to every household. He said, "The core objective of the year-long celebrations is to ensure that the life, philosophy, and message of Sri Guru Ravidass Ji reach every section of society. As part of this initiative, students across all schools, colleges, and educa-

tional institutions in Punjab will be sensitised to Sri Guru Ravidass Ji's teachings, ideals, and contribution to social reform." Minister Harpal Singh Cheema reiterated the Punjab Government's full commitment to propagating Guru Ji's teachings and said that special educational, cultural, and social programmes are being planned across the state throughout the year. Deputy Speaker Jai Krishan Singh Rouri highlighted the profound historical and spiritual importance of Sri Khuralkar Sahib, stating that congregations held at this sacred site play a crucial role in strengthening social unity and harmony. He said that the teachings of Sri Guru Ravidass Ji Maharaj give humanity a timeless message of equality, brotherhood, love, and collective welfare, and that the state-level event at Khuralkar Sahib would further reinforce these values in society. Cabinet Minister Tarunpreet Singh Sond stated, "Sri Khuralkar Sahib is a major centre of faith not only for devotees from Punjab but from across the country. Contd.....page 03

"Justice Crying Behind Closed Doors":

Mamata Banerjee To Chief Justice On SIR

New Delhi. (Agency)

A defiant Mamata Banerjee tore into

the Election Commission as the West Bengal Chief

Minister entered the Chief

Justice of India's chamber in

the Supreme Court this

afternoon to argue her

petition challenging the

Special Intensive Revision

(SIR) of voter rolls.

Justice is crying behind closed

doors, she thundered,

requesting five minutes to

present her case before CJI

Surya Kant. Take 15 minutes, the

CJI agreed. "Sir, the problem is...in

the end, we are not getting justice

to the ECI but still not getting any

reply. Justice is crying behind

closed doors," the chief

minister opened her

arguments, what went on

to become a full-blown

attack on the Election

Commission of India (ECI).

The bench acknowledged that

Banerjee's plea is

genuine and assured that

every issue has a

solution. The court also

issued a notice to the ECI

on Banerjee's petition.

Math doesn't add up: Manish Tewari

questions Trump's \$500 billion trade claim

New Delhi. (Agency)

Congress leader Manish Tewari has raised questions over a major claim made by US President Donald Trump, just hours after his announcement of a landmark US-India trade deal. In a post on X, the Rajya Sabha MP argued that the math behind Trump's claim "simply don't add up."

In remarks that have not yet been confirmed by the government, Trump said India had committed to purchasing more than 500 billion USD worth of American goods under a agreement. The government has so far not clarified the nature of any such commitment, prompting questions about its scale, timeline, and credibility.

In his post, Tewari pointed to official trade data to challenge the claim. According to publicly available figures, India's exports to the US in 2024 stood at approximately 79.4 billion USD, while imports from the US were around 39 billion USD. Against this backdrop, Tewari questioned how a figure as high as 500 billion USD could be realistically interpreted, particularly if it refers to Indian imports from the US. "To move from roughly 39 billion USD in imports to 500 billion USD would be an extraordinary leap," Tewari suggested, underscoring the scale of the gap between

current trade levels and the number being cited.

He further noted that India's total imports from all countries combined between April and December 2025 were about 730.8 billion USD. If the 500 billion USD figure were to represent imports from the US alone, it would imply that India is committing to sourcing nearly three-quarters of its total imports from a single country, a scenario Tewari indicated appears economically and strategically implausible.

The Congress leader called on the government

to clarify whether any such commitments have been made and, if so, in what form and over what timeframe. At current exchange rates, a 500 billion USD commitment would translate to roughly Rs 45.5 lakh crore, a figure that underscores the scale

of the claim. For perspective, that is close to 85 per cent of the government's total expenditure of about Rs 53.5 lakh crore projected in the Union Budget 2026.

The Budget 2026 presented on Sunday contains no reference to any large, multi-year procurement plan tied specifically to US imports. Nor do the budget documents outline allocations, borrowing projections, or a fiscal roadmap that would support public spending on that scale.

The potential deal also revives the 'China-Plus-One' strategy, which is a business approach where companies diversify their manufacturing and supply chains away from sole dependency on China by expanding operations into other countries. And China's counterpart, India, is an attractive investment destination for companies looking for a safe bet.

Entrepreneur and scholar at Takshashila Institute, Yusuf Unjhawala, said, "For export to the US, with the trade deal, India's tariff is at 18%. China's effective tariff rate is 47.5%.

Takshashila Institute, Yusuf Unjhawala, said, "For export to the US, with the trade deal, India's tariff is at 18%. China's effective tariff rate is 47.5%.

News box

GM, project manager of Gurgaon based company accused of Rs 43 lakh financial bungling

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Four people, including the general manager and a project manager of a company located in Centrum Plaza, Sector 53, have been accused of allegedly committing financial bungling of Rs 43 lakh in Gurgaon. An FIR was filed against Vaidehi Sharan Dixit and Buddhi Prakash Pandey, Urmila Pandey and Deeksha Shukla after Renu Gupta, director of the company, registered a complaint at the police station. The accused, who were employed with the company since 2019, were responsible for approving or making payments to the company clients and allegedly made payments into the accounts of their relatives instead. While Vaidehi worked as the project manager in the company, Buddhi was the general manager of the company owned by Gupta. "They were supposed to clear the bills and transfer the amount to the accounts of the company's clients. They allegedly started transferring money into the accounts of their relatives, including Urmila, who was never a client of the company", a police officer said. A few employees discovered Urmila's account in 2024 and disclosed it to Renu. After that, the accused allegedly had Urmila's account closed. "After they failed to give any explanation for transferring the money into account of their relatives, Gupta lodged a complaint, following which a case of cheating was registered", the officer added. The FIR was filed under relevant sections of the BNS.

62-year-old man dies by suicide at his office in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 62-year-old man died by suicide at his office in Sector 32 on Monday afternoon. The deceased, Ajay Bansal, was unwell for the past few years and suffered from knee and kidney-related ailments. He came to his office around 10am, and the incident took place around 12.30pm. According to the police, a staff member found him hanging when he went to check on him and alerted his family members. His daughter and son-in-law rushed to the spot and took him to Artemis Hospital in Wazirabad village, where doctors declared him dead during treatment. An officer said the case appeared to be a clear instance of suicide and no foul play was suspected at this stage. Police added that Bansal was under stress due to prolonged health issues. In another case, a 30-year-old woman died after jumping from the 20th floor of a residential society in Sector 52 on Tuesday evening. Police said the incident appeared to be a case of suicide. The deceased, Sandhya, a native of Jharkhand, worked as a domestic help and stayed in a flat at BPTP Terra society.

Excise officer held in Gurgaon for selling plot using fake documents

Noida.(Agency)

An excise officer, who allegedly sold a residential plot using forged allotment and conveyance deed documents, was arrested on Tuesday. Economic offences wing-I from Punjab's Zirakpur nabbed Sector 55 resident Saroj Devi (50). She is currently serving as deputy excise and taxation commissioner in Jhajjar's Bahadurgarh with a recent transfer to Narnaul in Mahendragarh district, police said. Police said forged allotment letters were created, on the basis of which a conveyance deed was registered in 2020, transferring ownership to Saroj Devi and her associate, Rajbala. A conveyance deed is a legally binding document that transfers property ownership from a seller to a buyer. Saroj Devi, an MPhil graduate, sold the plot and allegedly received Rs 1.7 crore as her share. "The fraud was executed in connivance with the employee of a real estate company," a police officer said. An FIR was registered under relevant sections at Sector 53 police station. The case came to light following a complaint received at Sector 53 police station on Feb 16, 2024. The complainant said his father booked a plot in Gurgaon Sector 54 through a real estate company and made all payments on time. An allotment letter was issued in 2004, followed by possession in 2005.

After the death of the allottee in 2013, the family applied for transfer of the plot in the names of the legal heirs. However, the transfer did not materialise. In 2023, the family discovered that construction work began on the plot.

Government to intensify checks to curb school bus rule violations

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The district administration has stepped up measures to ensure the safety of schoolchildren, announcing strict and regular inspections of school buses under Haryana's Safe Vehicle Policy. The move follows directions issued by the deputy commissioner to all sub-divisional magistrates to enforce compliance and take stringent action against violators. In Badshahpur subdivision, a coordinated inspection drive will be carried out by teams from the transport department, traffic police and education department. Officials said the checks were aimed at addressing long-standing concerns over lapses in safety and preventing accidents caused by negligence. "Buses ferrying students will be thoroughly examined for fitness certificates, valid permits, insurance, pollution under control certificates and payment of road tax. Authorities will also verify installation and proper functioning of speed governors, GPS tracking systems and CCTV cameras. Fire safety equipment, first-aid boxes and clearly marked emergency exits will be closely scrutinised" said Badshahpur SDM Sanjiv Singla.

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The plan to relocate the Kherki Daula toll plaza has run into rough weather, with villagers in Pachgaon rejecting National Highways Authority of India's (NHAI) proposal on the road infrastructure required for the shift. After the Kukrola site came under scrutiny, NHAI revisited Pachgaon and proposed the elevated U-turn as a revised option, stating it would address safety concerns and reduce conflict points on the highway while enabling the toll shift. In Jan, Union minister and local MP Rao Inderjit Singh asked NHAI to expedite the relocation. Following this, NHAI officials, along with the district administration, held a meeting with villagers in Pachgaon recently. A senior NHAI official said, "We met villagers and shared a proposal to construct an elevated U-turn facility to ensure safe cross-road movement and smoother traffic flow. This will also allow us the space required for setting up the toll

plaza. However, the villagers did not agree and are demanding a flyover at the junction as per the original plan. The situation remains unresolved and the decision on the site is awaited."

Residents argued that the Pachgaon junction already handles heavy traffic and needs a flyover to streamline movement and reduce accident risk. They opposed setting up a toll plaza there without grade separation and insisted that the flyover plan should be executed first. Residents also pointed out that the junction is a key connector for traffic moving between Rohtak, Jamalpur, Tauru and Nuh, and any disruption could affect both local and through movement. Pachgaon Chowk Committee president Hoshiyar Singh said, "We have not accepted NHAI's proposal. Our demand is clear that we need a flyover at the junction as originally planned. We don't have an objection to the toll plaza as such. If NHAI wants, it can even demolish the

existing pedestrian underpass and build the toll plaza, but the flyover should be constructed as planned."

The renewed deadlock came months after



identified as an alternative after NHAI dropped its earlier proposal to shift the toll to Pachgaon, around 13km from the current location, following strong local opposition in Aug. The toll plaza currently handles heavy daily traffic, including a large volume of commercial vehicles. Officials said while NHAI wants to finalise a viable site for the relocation, repeated objections at different locations have narrowed the options. The final decision on the relocation will now be taken at higher levels of the state govt, the officials said.

The relocation of the Kherki Daula toll plaza was under discussion for years, primarily to reduce congestion at the existing location and address long-standing complaints from residents of new sectors and commuters working in Manesar's industrial belt, for whom toll charges remain a sore point.

Niware SHO caught taking Rs 50,000 bribe to strike name off case, held



Noida.(Agency)

The SHO of Niware police station was arrested in his own office by a Meerut vigilance team for allegedly accepting a Rs 50,000 bribe to remove a former village pradhan's name from an FIR. Jaipal Singh Rawat was caught red-handed during a trap the officials had laid. Police said Rakesh Kumar, a former pradhan of Abupur village, had lodged a complaint, alleging that a "false case" was registered against him at Niware police station on Jan 2 on a complaint by Vijay Singh, who accused him of making indecent remarks against the chief minister and Prime Minister.

Kumar claimed he was not at the spot when the alleged remarks were made. He said he was at a State Bank of India branch at the time and that his location details and CCTV footage could establish his claim. He also told officials the complaint against him was the fallout of an old electoral rivalry within the village. Rawat allegedly threatened Kumar with arrest if he did not pay Rs 50,000. Kumar and his wife first approached senior officials, but when they did not get relief, he moved the Meerut vigilance unit on Monday. The complaint also alleged that on Feb 1, Rawat came to their house, conducted a raid and again issued threats of arrest. Vigilance officers set up a trap for Tuesday. Two team members entered the police station in plain clothes, wearing shawls, and kept watch while pretending to file a missing mobile phone complaint. When Kumar reached the SHO's office and handed over the Rs 50,000, the team moved in. Officials said Rawat put the wads of cash — sprayed with a chemical in a phenolphthalein test — in his pocket. As the vigilance team approached

Drain project to plug gaps, tackle flooding in new Gugaon sectors

Gurgaon.(Agency)

GMDA is set to construct a missing link of a stormwater drain along Sectors 62 and 65 to plug a gap in the drainage network in new sectors along the Southern Peripheral Road. Around 550 metres of drain will be built to connect an existing stormwater drain that was constructed by HSVP between 2014 and 2016, but was left incomplete due to litigation over a land dispute. Due to the missing section, the drain remained disconnected, causing waterlogging in the area. With the hurdle now clear, GMDA is planning to complete the drainage network in the vicinity. The tender for the project was floated, and the work is estimated to cost around Rs 2 crore. Once the project is allotted, it is expected to take about 6 months to complete.

At present, around 1,400–1,500 metres of stormwater drain already exists in the

area. With the new 550-metre stretch, the drain line will become continuous, allowing stormwater to flow as planned. The outfall from the drain will discharge into the Kost Nallah, which is further connected to the Badshahpur drain, forming the downstream route for stormwater disposal, the official said. GMDA officials said that the construction of the drain will be taken up after the tender process is completed. "The stormwater drain network was incomplete due to litigation. Now that the matter is resolved, we are taking up the project to complete the drainage system and reduce the risk of waterlogging. Bids were invited for the construction of the master stormwater drain along Sectors 62 and 65 to ensure proper drainage connectivity in the area," the GMDA official said. Last year in November, GMDA allotted the work for the

construction of the missing road along Sectors 62 and 65 after HSVP handed over possession of the land to the authority. The project is estimated to cost Rs 4.8 crore, with a completion deadline of November this year.

"Work on the 350-metre main carriageway portion is underway, while the 170-metre service road portion will be taken up after that," the GMDA official said. Meanwhile, the residents said that the development is long overdue. "Basic infrastructure like a proper stormwater drain or road connectivity is still missing, despite people living in this area for the last 9–10 years. Monsoon flooding is a challenge every year due to a lack of proper drainage connectivity. However, it's better late than never, and we hope the authority finally completes the work in a time-bound manner so the problem doesn't continue year after year," said Manu Gupta, a

Passport racket: SHO, 8 constables face inquiry for verification lapses

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

A departmental inquiry was set up against the station house officer (SHO) of Bhojpur police station and eight constables, most of them deputed at Faridnagar, Churiyala and Atrauli outposts (chowkis), even as the cops were sent to police lines for their alleged link with a passport racket busted earlier this week. The nexus was exposed after the Delhi passport office in Dec flagged 24 applications linked to the same address and mobile number. Police later found only two residents at the address, confirming 22 applications were fake.

On Tuesday, the police commissioner removed Bhojpur police station SHO Sachin Kumar and eight sub-inspectors, including chowki in-charges Rustam Singh (Faridnagar), Manoj Kumar (Churiyala), and Prashant Sansarwal (Atrauli), where all the fake passport addresses were located. The other

constables facing action are Ram Kumar, Mahendra Singh, Vikash Saini, Ankit Kumar and Aditya Gautam. So far, five people—Vivek Gandhi and Prakash Subba, two agents working outside the Delhi passport office; Arun Kumar, a postman at Modinagar post office; and Satwant Kaur (52) and Amandeep Singh, a mother-son duo from Tilak Nagar in west Delhi—were arrested for allegedly helping applicants secure genuine passports using forged documents by

bypassing checks. The mother-son duo, arrested in the case, were originally from Afghanistan, who allegedly obtained passports with fake documents last Dec, police said. ACP (Modinagar) Amit Saxena said police found that Kaur (52) came to India with her parents in 1990 and later settled in Delhi, where she lived with her son Amandeep (19) in a rented house in Tilak Nagar. Her passport expired in 2020, and a renewal attempt failed due to some missing documents. Police said Amandeep later met agent Vivek Gandhi outside the passport office, who allegedly offered to arrange fresh identity documents on a fake Ghaziabad address and apply for new passports. The racket charged Rs 1-1.5 lakh. In Dec last year, Kaur and her son received passports issued at a Bhojpur address. Kaur told police she wanted documents proving Indian residency to travel to Canada, where her husband lives.



Unusually high' scores: Teacher flags Class 12 pre-board paper leak in Haryana; YouTube channel under scanner for 90% match

Gurgaon.(Agency)

With Haryana's Class 12 board exams just three weeks away, a chemistry teacher has alleged a question paper leak after students she has taught for years posted unusually high scores in the ongoing pre-boards — including near-perfect performances in a paper widely seen as "tough". The teacher said nearly 80% of students answered all multiple-choice questions correctly in the chemistry paper held on Jan 30. "I have a fair idea about the capacity of each of my students. I was very surprised when almost all MCQs in chemistry were answered correctly by many of the students. It was a tough paper," she said, adding that no copying was reported at any centre.

The pattern did not hold up when students were questioned beyond the paper. "When I asked a few students to tell me the answers to the same questions by changing the value, they could not. They were also not able to recall the formula," the teacher said. Eventually, some of

the students referred to a YouTube channel that often uploaded question paper "suggestions". The teacher claimed she found large portions of the chemistry paper closely matched the content uploaded a day earlier on the Mahendergarh-based YouTube channel - Education Party - which has over one lakh subscribers and is run by a private tutor, Gautam Sharma. Further checks, she alleged, showed the English pre-board paper (Jan 28) and physics paper (Feb 2) also mirrored the same source, with nearly 90% of the questions matching.

Comments on the channel's videos added to the concern. Under the uploads, some wrote "same paper aaya tha, thank you sir (it was the same paper, thank you, sir)" and "sach mein, aaj physics ke paper mein the same exact questions aaya the. Sir, you are great. Thank you, sir (it's true, the physics paper had the exact questions)". The teacher said the reaction of students, taken together with the similarity in questions, pointed to a paper leak. "This is a clear sign of a paper leak. But that's not the end. The YouTuber has claimed he will produce even the main board exam papers if

his subscriber base increases". Contacted by TOI, the channel's owner, Gautam Sharma, denied any wrongdoing. "We only tell students about important questions that are likely to be asked in the exam," he said, claiming his was the number one channel for Haryana board exams. Education minister Mahipal Dhanda said the matter was being examined. "The YouTube channel is being probed. We will take all necessary action if the channel's owner is found guilty," he told TOI. Pre-board examinations are held simultaneously across Haryana, with question papers drafted by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT). The papers are sent from districts to blocks and then to schools, which receive them a day before the scheduled exam. According to rules, the papers are to be opened only at the examination centre on the day of the exam and in front of students. Prof Pawan Kumar Sharma, the chairperson of Haryana Board of Secondary Education, said he

had spoken to SCERT joint director Sunil Bajaj to verify whether there was a breach.

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NEWS BOX

Japan Ex-PM Shinzo Abe's Killer Appeals Sentence

Japan. (Agency)

The gunman convicted of shooting dead former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe in 2022 has appealed his life sentence, his lawyer told AFP Wednesday. Tetsuya Yamagami, 45, was found guilty two weeks ago at the Nara District Court and jailed for life for using a homemade gun to assassinate Abe during an outdoor campaign event. "Today, I filed the motion to appeal," court-appointed defence counsel Masaaki Furukawa told AFP. Furukawa said the move was "an opportunity to correct the unjust lower-court ruling". The lawyer declined to discuss Yamagami's intentions regarding the appeal, including whether he was seeking to fight the guilty verdict or reduce the sentence. The trial will now move to the Osaka High Court in the western commercial hub, Furukawa said, adding it was not immediately clear when the appeal will begin. Abe's shooting forced a reckoning in a country with little experience of gun violence, and ignited scrutiny of alleged ties between prominent conservative lawmakers and a secretive sect, the



Unification Church.

Yamagami's case drew some public sympathy as his defence team argued that the attack was triggered by his mother's blind donations to the Church that pushed his family into bankruptcy. Abe had spoken at events organised by some of the Church's groups. The sect supported his Liberal Democratic Party in elections.

Khawaja Asif Explains Why Pakistani Forces Are "Handicapped" In Balochistan

World. (Agency)

Khawaja Asif, the Defence Minister of Pakistan, has admitted that the Pakistani security forces were "handicapped" against Baloch rebels due to the sheer size of Balochistan province as they battle a fresh surge in militant violence. His remarks came days after Baloch rebels launched simultaneous attacks across multiple towns in the volatile province, killing at least 80 security personnel and destroying more than 30 government properties.

Addressing Pakistan's national assembly, Asif described the geographical challenges faced by troops in the country's largest yet least populated province amid the serious security situation after separatist forces launched coordinated attacks across at least 12 locations, triggering one of the deadliest security crises in recent years. Authorities have said at least 177 insurgents were killed in sweeping counter-terror operations across the province.

What Khawaja Asif Said

"Balochistan constitutes over 40 per cent of Pakistan geographically... To control it is much more difficult than a populated city, and it needs the deployment of massive forces. Our troops are deployed there and are in action against them (terrorists), but they are physically handicapped by guarding and patrolling such a big area," he said. According to Pakistani authorities, at least 33 civilians and 17 members of the security forces were killed in the weekend violence.

Nukes To Minerals: What Jaishankar, Rubio Discussed After India-US Deal

Washington. (Agency)

Foreign Minister S Jaishankar, who is in Washington, met US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and discussed formalising bilateral cooperation on critical minerals exploration, mining, and processing. According to Jaishankar, several facets of the India-US strategic partnership were covered during the discussions, including trade, energy, nuclear, defence, critical minerals and technology. In a post on X, the Foreign Minister said that both leaders agreed on the early meetings of various mechanisms to advance our shared interests.

According to a statement issued by Principal Deputy Spokesperson Tommy Pigott, Rubio and Jaishankar welcomed the India-US trade deal reached between President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The two leaders emphasised the importance of our democracies working together to unlock new economic opportunities and advance our shared energy security goals," the statement said.

"Secretary Rubio and Minister Jaishankar concluded their meeting by expressing their commitment to expanding bilateral and multilateral cooperation through the Quad. They acknowledged that a prosperous Indo-Pacific region remains vital to advancing our shared interests," the statement added. The meeting between Jaishankar and Rubio comes a day after Trump announced on Truth Social that India and the US agreed to a trade deal, under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Delhi from 25 to 18 per cent. Jaishankar is on a visit to the United States from February 2 to 4 and will participate in the Critical Minerals Ministerial convened by Rubio on Wednesday.

Jaishankar, Rubio welcome trade deal; discuss energy, nuclear, defence, critical minerals**Jaishankar is on a visit to the United States from February 2-4 and will participate in the Critical Minerals Ministerial being convened by Rubio.**

CAIRO. (Agency)

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio "welcomed" the trade deal reached between President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and discussed "formalising" bilateral cooperation on critical minerals exploration and mining during their meeting in Washington DC on Tuesday. Rubio held bilateral discussions with Jaishankar at the State Department, ahead of the inaugural Critical Minerals Ministerial meeting being convened by the US on Wednesday. "Delighted to meet US @SecRubio this afternoon. A wide ranging conversation that covered our bilateral cooperation agenda, regional and global

issues," Jaishankar posted on X after the meeting. "Facets of India-US Strategic Partnership discussed included trade, energy, nuclear, defence, critical minerals and technology. Agreed on the early meetings of various mechanisms to advance our shared interests," he wrote. A readout of the bilateral meeting provided by State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Tommy Pigott said that Rubio and Jaishankar "welcomed the trade deal reached between President Trump and Prime Minister Modi. The two leaders emphasised the importance of our democracies working together to unlock new economic opportunities and advance our shared energy security goals."

Pigott further said that Rubio and Jaishankar "discussed formalising bilateral cooperation on critical minerals exploration, mining and processing." Rubio and Jaishankar "concluded their meeting by expressing their commitment to expanding bilateral and multilateral cooperation through the Quad. They acknowledged that a prosperous Indo-Pacific region remains

vital to advancing our shared interests," the readout said, referring to the four-nation grouping of Australia, India, Japan and the US. In an X post, Rubio said he met with Jaishankar to "discuss our bilateral



cooperation on critical minerals exploration and work together to unlock new economic opportunities between our two countries. We also commended the trade deal between the United States and India." Jaishankar is on a visit to the United States from February 2-4 and will participate in the Critical Minerals Ministerial being convened by Rubio.

During the visit, he will also hold meetings with senior members of the US administration, the Ministry of External Affairs had said. The meeting between Jaishankar and Rubio came a day after

Trump announced on Truth Social that India and the US agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down reciprocal tariff on Delhi from 25 to 18 per cent. At the inaugural Critical Minerals Ministerial, the US will welcome delegations to advance collective efforts to strengthen and diversify critical minerals supply chains. "This historic gathering will create momentum for collaboration to secure these critical components vital to technological innovation, economic strength, and national security," the State Department has said. US Vice President J D Vance, Rubio, Special Assistant to the President of the United States and Senior Director for Global Supply Chains David Copley, and Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg will deliver opening remarks at the ministerial.

India to end purchases of Russian oil, commit \$500bn investment in US: White House

NEW YORK. (Agency)

The White House has hailed a new trade agreement with India, stating that the country has committed to no longer purchasing Russian oil, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also agreed to investments worth USD 500 billion across key American sectors.

The remarks were made by White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt on Tuesday. "The President struck another great trade deal with India. He spoke with Prime Minister Modi directly. They share a very good relationship," Leavitt told reporters.

"India is committed not only to no longer purchasing Russian oil, but also to buying oil from the United States, and potentially from Venezuela as well. This will have a direct benefit for the United States and the American people," she said. Leavitt added that Prime Minister Modi had also committed to USD 500 billion in investments in the United States, including in transportation, energy



and agricultural sectors.

"So this is another great trade deal thanks to President Trump," she said. Earlier, speaking to Fox News about the India-US trade deal, Leavitt said the two leaders had a "great call" on Monday, following which the bilateral agreement was announced. "When it comes to Prime Minister Modi, I know the President particularly enjoys their relationship and has a deep respect for the Prime Minister and for his country, India," she said. "They had a great call. It was very productive, and they struck a deal in which India agreed to stop purchasing Russian oil and to buy

more American oil, and potentially oil from Venezuela as well."

Leavitt added that Trump and his national security team are "now dictating" Venezuela's oil commerce and sales. "This directly benefits the American people. In addition, India has agreed to invest more in the United States following President Trump's call to action," she said. She further noted that India had committed to USD 500 billion in purchases of US energy, transportation and agricultural products. Leavitt said the US tariff on India would now stand at 18 per cent, while American exports to India would face zero tariffs, calling it "a great deal and a huge win for American workers, businesses and consumers".

The Trump administration had earlier imposed tariffs of up to 50 per cent on India, including a 25 per cent penalty linked to New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil.

How Saif Gaddafi, Son Of Libya's Ex-Dictator, Was Killed Inside His Home

World. (Agency)

Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, the most prominent son of the late Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi, has been killed in an attack carried out by four assailants, according to Saudi-owned publication Al Arabiya. The 53-year-old was killed in the town of Zintan, 136 kilometres (85 miles) southwest of the capital, Tripoli. Attackers shot Saif al-Islam in the garden of his residence before fleeing the scene on Tuesday evening, a source close to the Gaddafi family told the publication. Reports claimed gunmen disabled security cameras at Gaddafi's house and shot him after a confrontation. He was killed at around 2:30 am (local time).

Details about the circumstances of the incident that claimed his life have not been fully disclosed, but one of Saif al-Gaddafi's close associates described it as an "assassination." Abdullah Othman, who was a member of the political team (2020-2021) and one of Saif Gaddafi's political advisers, confirmed his death in a Facebook post.

"We belong to God, and to Him we return. The mujahid Saif al-Islam Gaddafi is in God's care," he wrote. Saif al-Islam has remained a prominent political figure since the collapse of his father's rule in a NATO-backed uprising in 2011. The Life and Times of Saif al-Islam Gaddafi/Saif al-Islam Gaddafi went from his notorious father's heir apparent to a decade of captivity and obscurity in a remote hill town before launching a presidential bid in Libya that helped derail an attempted election. Despite holding no official position, he was once seen as the most powerful figure in the oil-rich North African country after his autocrat father, Moammar Gaddafi, who ruled for more than four decades. Saif al-Islam shaped policy and mediated high-profile, sensitive diplomatic missions. He led talks on Libya abandoning its weapons of mass destruction and negotiated compensation for the families of those killed in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988.

Determined to rid Libya of its pariah status, Saif al-Islam engaged with the West and championed himself as a reformer, calling for a constitution and respect for human rights. Educated at the London School of Economics and a fluent English speaker, he was once seen by many governments as the acceptable, Western-friendly face of Libya. But when a rebellion broke out against Gaddafi's long rule in 2011, Saif al-Islam immediately chose family and clan loyalties over his many friendships to become an architect of a brutal crackdown on rebels, whom he called rats. Speaking to news agency Reuters at the time of the revolt, he said, "We fight here in Libya, we die here in Libya." After rebels took over the capital, Tripoli, Saif al-Islam tried to flee to neighbouring Niger dressed as a Bedouin tribesman. The Abu Bakr Sadik Brigade militia captured him on a desert road and flew him to the western town of Zintan about one month after his father was hunted down and summarily shot dead.

Palestinians wait at border between Gaza and Egypt as uncertainty clouds reopening of Rafah crossing

KHAN YOUNIS. (Agency)

Palestinians gathered on both sides of Gaza's border with Egypt on Tuesday hoping to pass through the Rafah crossing, after its reopening the previous day was marred by delays, interrogations and uncertainty over who would be allowed to cross. On the Egyptian side were Palestinians who fled Gaza earlier in the Israel-Hamas war to seek medical treatment, according to Egypt's state-run Al-Qahera News television. On the Gaza side, Palestinians in need of medical care that is unavailable in Gaza gathered at a hospital before ambulances moved toward Rafah, hoping for word that they would be allowed to cross the other way. The office of the North Sinai governor confirmed Tuesday that an unknown number of patients and their companions had crossed from Gaza into Egypt. The bus with about 40 Palestinians that entered Gaza via Rafah on Tuesday arrived at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis early Wednesday morning, where a World Health Organization team arrived and a

entire day waiting. Though hailed as a step forward for the fragile ceasefire struck in October, it took more than 10 hours for only about a dozen returnees and a small group of medical evacuees to cross in each direction on the first day Rafah reopened. Three women who crossed into Gaza on Monday told The Associated Press on Tuesday that Israeli troops blindfolded and handcuffed them, then interrogated and threatened them, holding them for several hours before they were released. The numbers permitted to cross on Monday fell well short of the 50 people that officials had said would be allowed each way and barely began to address the needs of tens of thousands of Palestinians who are hoping to be evacuated for treatment or to return home. The import of humanitarian aid or goods through Rafah remains prohibited. Not a solution to the crisis' Evacuation efforts on Tuesday morning converged around a Red Crescent hospital in Khan Younis, where a World Health Organization team arrived and a



vehicle carrying patients and their relatives rolled in from another hospital. The group of WHO vehicles and Palestinian ambulances headed toward Rafah to await crossing. As the sick, wounded and displaced waited to cross in both directions, health officials said the small number allowed to exit so far paled beside Gaza's tremendous needs. Two years of fighting destroyed much of its medical infrastructure and left hospitals struggling to treat trauma injuries, amputations and

chronic conditions like cancer. In Gaza City, Shifa Hospital director Mohamed Abu Selmiya called the pace "crisis management, not a solution to the crisis," imploring Israel to permit the importing of medical supplies and equipment. He wrote on Facebook: "Denying the evacuation of patients and preventing the entry of medicines is a death sentence for them." U.N. and WHO officials said the trickle of patients allowed out and restrictions on bringing in desperately needed supplies are prolonging a disastrous situation in Gaza. "Rafah must function as a real humanitarian corridor so we can have a surge in aid deliveries," said Tom Fletcher, the U.N.'s top relief official. Palestinian Red Crescent spokesperson Raed al-Nims told AP that only 16 patients with chronic conditions or war wounds, accompanied by 40 relatives, were brought from Khan Younis to the Gaza side of Rafah on Tuesday — less than the 45 patients and wounded the Red Crescent was told would be allowed.

NEWS BOX

KIA saw highest single-day footfall of 1.4 lakh passengers on January 24

BENGALURU. (Agency)
The rush of travellers arriving and exiting Bengaluru via the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) on the last weekend of January was unprecedented. It was a long weekend beginning January 24 (Friday) until the Republic Day on January 26 (Monday). On January 24, the footfall on a single day broke the previous records at the airport, which witnessed a record footfall of around 1.4 lakh passengers. These include those who arrived into the city or left, domestic and international travellers included. The average daily footfall at KIA is around 1.2 lakh passengers.

"The rush was unprecedented. It was a challenge for the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), KIA and airline operators as the airport was on high alert between January 20 and January 30 on the occasion of Republic Day. It was teamwork at its best that day," said sources. The total number of passengers that travelled from Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 on January 24 was 83,494 and 55,593, respectively. "Higher passenger load meant pressure at every touch point. While being sensitive to the passengers, the standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the security protocol during the high alert period had to be strictly followed," added sources.

"The CISF personnel deployed at KIA along with the airport and airline operators worked in seamless collaboration and calm professionalism. Majority of the passenger load at T1 was handled by Digi Yatra. Around 40 to 50 per cent of passengers from T1 use the digital initiative coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Aviation for ease of travel," said sources.

Madras HC seeks CB-CID report on NHAI CCTV footage in Kavin murder case

MADURAI. (Agency)

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court has directed the Tirunelveli CB-CID to file a report on the CCTV footage submitted by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) in connection with the alleged 'honour killing' of techie C Kavin Selvaganesh in July last year. The Nagercoil Project Implementation Unit of NHAI had provided the footage to the court on Tuesday as per the directions issued by Justice L Victoria Gowri on January 21, while hearing the petitions by two accused persons K Saravanan and K Jayapal, who sought quashing of chargesheet filed against them by the CB-CID.

The prosecution alleged the accused had conspired with Surjith, who is Saravanan's son and Jayapal's cousin, and helped him in committing the murder. They said Saravanan and his wife met Surjith and arranged for him to go to Jayapal's quarry in Pappankulam, where the evidence was destroyed with Jayapal's aid.

The accused said place of occurrence was 20 km away from the quarry and there were over 20 CCTV cameras on the route. They said the probe agency failed to secure the footage which, if secured, would show if Saravanan and Jayapal met Surjith.

Saravanan said he handed over Surjith to police on the NH. Jayapal claimed he came to know about the incident only after Surjith, 'on his own', came to the quarry. To verify the claims, Justice Gowri directed NHAI to submit the footage recorded by CCTVs in the Tirunelveli-Seevalaperi stretch on July 27, 2025, the day of the murder. On Tuesday, NHAI handed over the footage to the court and the judge directed CB-CID to file a report in two weeks.

70-year-old woman on way to see son's body run over by lorry in Chennai

CHENNAI. (Agency)

A 70-year-old woman, who was on her way to see the body of her 52-year-old son, died after being hit by a lorry while crossing the road at Madurantakam in Chengalpattu in the early hours of Tuesday. According to police sources, the deceased was identified as Alamelu, a resident of Chithamur near Madurantakam in Chengalpattu.

Police sources said that the woman, who was in shock upon hearing of her son's passing, may have failed to notice the lorry while crossing the road.

Her elder son, Mani (52) and his wife were both employed in the postal department and have two children. Sources said Mani suffered a mild heart attack at his residence on Monday morning and was admitted to a private hospital near Melmaruvathur. After treatment, his condition reportedly stabilised. However, late on Monday night, he suffered a cardiac arrest and did not respond to treatment.

Alamelu, who lived about a kilometre away from Mani's house, had been rushing to the hospital with relatives when the incident happened, police said. While crossing the Tindivanam-Chennai NH-32 around midnight, she was hit by a lorry. No injuries were reported among the others accompanying her. She was immediately taken to a nearby private hospital, where she succumbed to her injuries. The Madurantakam police have registered an FIR and are examining CCTV footage to identify the lorry and its driver.

Three years on, mega Yeshwanthpur parking complex in Bengaluru yet to open doors

The complex is near the metro station, railway station, market yard and an industrial area.

BENGALURU. (Agency)
As Bengaluru struggles with an ever-growing number of vehicles and shrinking parking space, a solution, though not a complete answer, stands unused at the Yeshwanthpur Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) yard. A 10-storey parking complex, located in one of the city's busiest transit and commercial hubs, remains inoperative despite its completion in 2023. The reason: The cost of making the complex operational is much higher than the returns.

According to APMC officials, work on the complex was completed in October 2023 at a cost of nearly Rs 80 crore. Tenders have been invited thrice since then to start parking operations. Tenders were first invited in January 2024, but

did not attract a single bidder. Tenders were floated in July that year. Though certain conditions were revised, the firms, which

Contractors consistently flagged concerns over high investments and limited financial returns. It is mandatory for them to automate and digitise the operations. This invites significant expenditure on software and hardware, including cameras, boom barriers, sensors, number-plate recognition systems, and fully digitised entry, exit and payment infrastructure.

To address their concerns, an Expression of Interest was floated, seeking inputs on viable models such as fixed rent or revenue sharing. Two qualified responses were received and are now under examination by senior officials. APMC Additional Director and Secretary Doreswamy KC said the authorities are keen to operationalise the facility soon and may float tenders in the next few days, with revised annuity and profit-sharing clauses aimed at unlocking the long-idling asset.

The officials said the complex can accommodate 735 cars and 110 two-wheelers. About 40% of the parking zone is reserved for licensed traders functioning from the APMC market. The complex has 26 shops, which are in the process of being allotted to generate rental revenue.

The complex is near the metro station, railway station, market yard and an industrial area.



attended pre-bidding meetings, backed off. Tenders were called again in March last, following consultations with officials who had managed the Freedom Park parking facility. But no bidders came forward.

These costs, bidders argued, were difficult to recover due to capped parking fees approved by erstwhile BBMP -- Rs 25 for cars and Rs 15 for two-wheelers for one hour, with hourly slab-based increases thereafter, the officials said.

Sterilisation centres across state: Gujarat's 70 crore plan to end stray dog menace

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

Taking proactive measures under the Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023, the Gujarat government is setting up dog sterilisation centres in every municipal corporation, municipality, and municipal council in the state. Currently, such Animal Birth Control (ABC) centres for stray dogs are only available at eight municipal corporations -- two each at Ahmedabad and Vadodara, and one each at Surat, Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Jamnagar, Junagadh and Gandhinagar. The Centre notified the Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023, on March 10, 2023, to address the menace of stray dogs in municipal corporations and municipalities. For the implementation of these measures, the Urban Development and Urban Housing Department in January this year



constituted an eight-member committee that held its first meeting on January 30. "A review committee is hereby constituted to review the effective implementation of the guidelines and the Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023 of the Government of India with regard to the problem of stray animals and stray dogs in the

municipal corporations and municipality areas," the Government Resolution (GR) issued on January 9 states

"The decision to cover the entire state with sterilisation centres for stray dogs in each district, municipal corporation, municipality and nagarpalika will help in controlling the numbers.

These measures are in consonance with the Supreme Court guidelines on stray dogs pertaining to the ongoing hearing at the apex court," Komal Bhatt, joint secretary, Urban Development and Urban Housing Department, told. The scope of work for the review committee mainly includes three areas -- infrastructure development, including sterilisation centres, seizure of stray dogs, and daily expense of maintenance of such seized animals at these centres. At present, dog sterilisation in Gujarat is conducted at eight municipal corporations with the help of animal welfare NGOs, focusing on controlling the stray population under the ABC rules that provide for catching, surgery, and post-operative care.

Ahmedabad (city) District Education Officer Rohit Chaudhary issued two showcause notices to the management of the school reprimanding them and imposing a fine of Rs 10,000 for administrative lapses. Also, strict guidelines have been issued to all schools in the city to check the school bags of students periodically and regularly to prevent such fatal incidents in the future.

2021 Surat murder case: 6 witnesses who turned hostile, leading to acquittal of accused, get 1-month jail term

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

THE SURAT District and Sessions Court on Tuesday found six witnesses -- who had turned hostile during the course of a murder case trial, leading to the acquittal of the accused -- guilty and sentenced them to one month's imprisonment.

The case dates back to 2021. The Surat police arrested Dipesh alias Babu Kantariya in the murder (by stabbing) of one Kalu alias Kishan Baraiya, a resident of Bhagwan Nagar Society in Katargam, on November 5 that year. The police also submitted the chargesheet in a timely manner. The crime was the fallout of an argument between the two.

During the trial before the Additional Sessions Judge B K Avasiya, six witnesses turned hostile, and their depositions on oath before the judge were the opposite of what they had given to the police. Due to lack of evidence, the sessions court acquitted the accused, Dipesh, in January this year.

The sessions court subsequently issued notices to the six witnesses, asking why no legal action should be taken against them under CrPC 344, for helping the murder accused get acquitted. The witnesses are all residents of Surat. By January 22, 2026, all the notices had been received by six witnesses, and their replies had been submitted by their lawyers to the court. After hearing both the prosecution and the defence, the Surat district court (Fast Track Special Court), of Justice B K Avashiya, convicted

all six witnesses and sentenced them to one month's imprisonment each.

In the order, the court observed, "In a serious crime like murder, when important witnesses declare false facts on oath and the accused gets the benefit of it, then in such a situation, this behavior of the witnesses cannot be taken lightly and if taken lightly, then any person can arbitrarily state false facts in a court of law by taking oath, which is tantamount to a direct attack on the process of justice and such behavior can never be accepted. So, strict action should be taken against the witnesses who deliberately give false evidence. The faith of the general public in the process of justice will be able to survive, or else they will lose faith in the process of justice, and in such circumstances, it will become very serious and bad for the society protected by the law. Thus, in such circumstances, it is the sacred duty of this court to see that the court of justice does not remain a mute spectator in the face of such deliberate wrongdoing and strictly punishes such witnesses."

The court also observed, "Considering all the above facts and circumstances, the defence raised by the witnesses that they are ignorant of the law and that they are poor cannot be accepted. And thus, in the interest of justice, it is deemed necessary to pass an order against these witnesses, so that an example can be set..."

Can't bargain on escort charges for parole, don't go if you can't pay: Bombay HC to Abu Salem

Mumbai. (Agency)

The HC on Tuesday said that Abu Salem, convicted in the 1993 Mumbai blasts case, who has sought emergency parole citing his elder brother's death, "cannot bargain" on payment of escort charges. This came after Salem's lawyer said that he was unable to pay escort charges of over Rs. 1 lakh if granted 4-day parole.

A bench comprising of Justices Ajey S Gadkari and Shyam C Chandak was hearing plea by Salem, who was arrested on November 24, 2005, and was convicted in the 1993 blasts case in September 2017. He was also convicted in Portugal for travelling on a fake passport.

The state government's prison authorities had submitted that Salem could at most be released on a two-day parole with police escort (charges to be paid by him) to visit Saraimir village in Uttar Pradesh's Azamgarh district, a "culturally sensitive" area, to meet his family following the death of his elder brother, Abu Hakim Ansari, in

November last year. The HC on January 28 had sought response from advocate Farhana Shah representing Salem, who was extradited from Portugal in 2005, as to whether he can pay escort charges if granted 4-day parole.

Shah had then argued that Salem was "not in a position to pay 'very high' escort charges" due to his financial considerations and so many years in custody. On Tuesday, Shah told the HC that her client cannot pay beyond Rs. 1 lakh towards escort charges while the estimated charges were of nearly 17.76 lakh and he should be granted urgent relief since several days had passed since his brother's death.

She also claimed that Salem was earlier allowed to visit his native place in Azamgarh district in Uttar Pradesh to attend his mother's funeral in 2007 without any demand of payment of escort charges. She claimed that escort of 25 police personnel will be provided while the petitioner may actually need 10 such personnel.

Bombay High Court forms high powered committee to monitor air pollution control in Mumbai region

Mumbai. (Agency)

The Bombay High Court has constituted a high-powered committee comprising former Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court Amjad A Sayed and retired Bombay High Court Justice Anuja Prabhudessai to monitor and supervise compliance with earlier court directives aimed at curbing air pollution in Mumbai and Navi Mumbai.

Justice Sayed served as a judge of the Bombay High Court for 15 years before being elevated as Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court in 2023.

The committee was formed following observations by a bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam A Ankhad, which noted that air pollution had not declined and that there was "insufficient monitoring" by civic authorities. The bench took the decision on January 29, while the detailed order was made available on

Tuesday. The High Court has been hearing a suo motu public interest litigation along with other petitions initiated after taking note of multiple media reports, including The Indian Express series Death by Breath, which highlighted an "alarming scenario" of air pollution beginning in November 2023.

The committee will examine reports submitted by municipal commissioners and officials of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation and the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board.

It will also consider the findings of an advocates committee earlier appointed by the High Court to inspect construction sites in Mumbai and make recommendations to authorities. The court directed that the committee's

recommendations should cover "immediate, medium term and longterm measures to combat and prevent air pollution in Mumbai



and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, including advising them on the formulation of a Graded Response Action Plan for

Mumbai and Navi Mumbai."

The High Court said the committee may submit a preliminary report by March 5, followed by monthly reports, and may also suggest "additional measures to ensure effective compliance and reduction of pollution."

The bench further stated that the committee "may seek inputs, as and when required," from Virendra Sethi, Emeritus Fellow in Environmental Science and Engineering at IIT Bombay, and Dr Indu Khosla, a pediatric pulmonologist, and "may consult any other expert body if necessary." The order also allows the committee to hold physical or virtual meetings once a week initially, depending on the volume of work, and to conduct site visits or convene meetings at appropriate locations.

Student 'puts naphthalene balls' in classmate's water bottle, education dept orders probe

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

DAYS AFTER a Class VI student of a private school in the Maninagar area of Ahmedabad allegedly put naphthalene balls in a classmate's water bottle, the state education department has ordered a probe even as the District Education Officer (DEO), Ahmedabad (city), has reprimanded the school management and imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on Tuesday.

The alleged incident happened on January 28, during a break between classes. The other student tried to drink the water but sensed an unusual odour. Purported CCTV footage of the incident surfaced online on Tuesday.

"School authorities took the student to a hospital as a precautionary measure. Since he was fine, he came to school the next day. While the DEO has sought an explanation from the school, we have also initiated an inquiry and sought a report," State Education Minister Pradyumna Vaja told mediapersons in Gandhinagar on Tuesday.

In a statement, the principal said, "We called both the students and their parents to the school. The student admitted that he put the chemical balls into his classmate's water bottle. The father of the student who put the ball said that he is involved in the kite business, so it is possible that the child brought some chemical balls from home. The student has been sent on leave."

School authorities also indicated that the incident was possibly the fallout of an earlier argument between both the students. The school has now started checking bags of the students.

Ahmedabad (city) District Education Officer Rohit Chaudhary issued two showcause notices to the management of the school reprimanding them and imposing a fine of Rs 10,000 for administrative lapses. Also, strict guidelines have been issued to all schools in the city to check the school bags of students periodically and regularly to prevent such fatal incidents in the future.

Fill the gaps budget, no big bang here

The producers of castor oil cake must be pleased. No. It is not the kind which might help futures and options players. Units located in special economic zones—which produce castor cakes from indigenous seeds on indigenous machinery—are exempted from customs duty if the output is used in the domestic market. The exemption enables the viability of export units and expands the availability of fertilisers in the domestic market for producers. Budget 2026 is defined by a plethora of such surgical steps. Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's ninth essay has landed between hype and hope. The budget has quelled the chorus of hype, the serenade of brass band balladeers calling for a 1991 moment. It has also cheesed off stock market punters who hoped for booster shots, and the hike in security transaction tax has worsened the business model of the get-poor-quickly motley crowd of futures and options traders. The fact is that the government, in 2025, created the impulse for consumption demand—the recast of the income tax in February, followed by the recalibration of GST rates in October. The question in the run-up to the budget was how the government would address the persistent slide of the rupee vis-a-vis the dollar, how it could stop the sell-off by foreign portfolio investors and the tepid state of foreign direct investment. Nothing clarifies strategy like a crisis, and given the history of crisis-led transformation, the expectation was for big-bang steps. Budget 2026 has chosen to play it safe, eschewing the let's-do-something itch that afflicts governments. It has stuck to its tested thesis and a fiscally prudent path. The budget aims to limit the gap between government income and expenditure to 4.3 percent of GDP, implying gross government borrowing of around ₹17 lakh crore. The government will spend over ₹3,800 crore every day or ₹160 crore every hour on interest payments. The basic approach of the government over the past five years—in the face of reluctant private investment—has been to maintain momentum of growth by topping up the spend on physical infrastructure—the allocation for the year has been upped from ₹11.2 lakh crore to ₹12.2 lakh crore and allocation for defence modernisation has been ramped up to around ₹2.5 lakh crore. Seven new high-speed rail corridors—allocations and timelines for which are yet to be revealed—could enable connectivity and boost growth. There is also a not-so-clear idea of city clusters as economic regions with an allocation of ₹5,000 crore for five years. The question is: Can the government avoid what happened to the smart city programme?

The budget reflects an attempt to backstop economic growth and investment with interventions. Fish caught by an Indian vessel in the exclusive economic zone on the high seas, when landed in a foreign port, will be treated as an export. The time period for exporting the final product has been extended from the existing six months to one year for exporters of leather or textile garments. The entire value of biogas used in blended CNG is exempt from excise. Limits for duty-free imports of specified inputs used for processing seafood for export are hiked. Basic customs duty on specified parts used in making microwave ovens is being exempted to deepen value addition. It has chosen to address the cogs of growth by unveiling a glut of schemes—each targeting an arthroscopic approach, dealing with the specificity of a nudge rather than mega-ton propulsion. It has sought to tap into the gold rush of data centres by offering a tax holiday until 2047 to any foreign company that provides cloud services to global customers using data centres in India. It creates a new fund of ₹10,000 crore for five years to boost biopharma manufacturing. Given the global race for rare earths, the budget proposes to support the mineral-rich states of Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu in establishing dedicated rare earth corridors to promote mining, processing, research and manufacturing. To promote the manufacture of chemicals, the budget moots supporting states in establishing three dedicated chemical parks via a plug-and-play model. The outlay for electronics component manufacturing increased to ₹40,000 crore and ₹10,000 crore for container manufacturing.

THE most interesting data points from the Union Budget 2026-27, hidden in plain sight, are the income tax (I-T) collection numbers. Last year, the government expected to collect about ₹14.4 lakh crore in 'taxes on income'. Some, including me, had argued back then that this was an overly optimistic projection, given that the Finance Minister had raised the I-T thresholds and the number of I-T payers would fall sharply because of that. The counterargument given by others was that India's economy was on the verge of a revival, and that would lead to big salary hikes, and push more people across the income tax threshold. As it turns out, we were right. The revised estimate for I-T collections for 2025-26 is now just ₹13.1 lakh crore. That's about 9 per cent less than what the Budget had estimated. More importantly, I-T collections grew by just 6.2 per cent in this fiscal year, compared to 2024-25. Compare that to the 18.2 per cent and 25.4 per cent growth seen in the previous two financial years. This is especially significant when we compare it to nominal GDP growth. In 2025-26, I-T collections underperformed nominal GDP by 1.8 percentage points. In 2024-25, I-T collections outperformed nominal GDP growth by 8.4 percentage points, and in 2023-24, the growth in I-T collections was a whopping 13.3 percentage points higher than nominal GDP growth. You don't need a clearer piece of evidence to show that India's upper middle class is in deep trouble. Let me break this down a little more. I am going to assume that those with a pre-tax monthly income between ₹1.5 lakh and ₹3.5 lakh are 'upper middle class'. The bulk of these people would be middle managers in the corporate sector, while some would be self-employed professionals. They account for roughly 9 per cent of those who file income tax returns and contribute about 35 per cent of the total I-T collections.

Above them come the affluent, the rich and the super rich. These include senior managers, especially those in the C-suite, top-level lawyers, doctors and other professionals, startup founders and big entrepreneurs. They make up just 1.5 per cent of those who file tax returns, but account for over 50 per cent of the income tax collected by the Centre. Now, all jobs and recruitment surveys and reports tell us that 2025 has been a great year for top honchos in India Inc, and also for people running startups. This means they must have paid much higher income tax than they did last year. Despite this, if the total income tax collections have increased by just 6.2 per cent, it can only mean that the 'upper middle class' taxpayers have paid less tax than in 2024-25. This only adds to what we know anecdotally, that thousands of middle managers in India have lost their jobs, or taken pay cuts to survive.

Periods, with dignity: SC makes menstrual health a right

The Tribune Editorial: The emphasis on schools is critical. Adolescence is when menstrual stigma bites hardest and when the absence of facilities can derail education.

THE Supreme Court's recognition of menstrual health as a fundamental right under Article 21 is a long-overdue affirmation that dignity, health and equality are indivisible. By directing states to provide free, biodegradable sanitary pads in schools and to set up menstrual hygiene corners stocked with pads and innerwear, the court has pushed menstrual health out of the shadows of stigma and into the realm of enforceable rights. Menstruation has long been treated as a private inconvenience. The consequences are stark: poor access to hygiene products, unsafe alternatives, infections, absenteeism and dropouts among adolescent girls, particularly in government schools. By framing menstrual health as intrinsic to the right to life and personal dignity, the court has reframed the debate. The emphasis on schools is critical. Adolescence is when menstrual stigma bites hardest and when the absence of facilities can derail education. Hygiene corners institutionalise privacy and preparedness, while free access to sanitary napkins



recognises that affordability should not determine attendance. The insistence on biodegradable products also

aligns public health with environmental responsibility.

Yet, the SC ruling's impact will depend on execution. Many states already run pad distribution schemes, but coverage is uneven and quality inconsistent. Budgetary allocations, supply-chain reliability and monitoring mechanisms will determine whether the directive translates into real change. Teacher sensitisation, counsellor support and curriculum integration are equally vital to dismantle taboos and ensure girls are not shamed for a biological reality. Menstrual health also extends beyond schools. Migrant workers, homeless women and those in institutions and public places remain vulnerable. The judgment opens the door to a broader policy framework, across all life stages. The task is to ensure that the promise on this everyday reality of women is delivered with dignity.

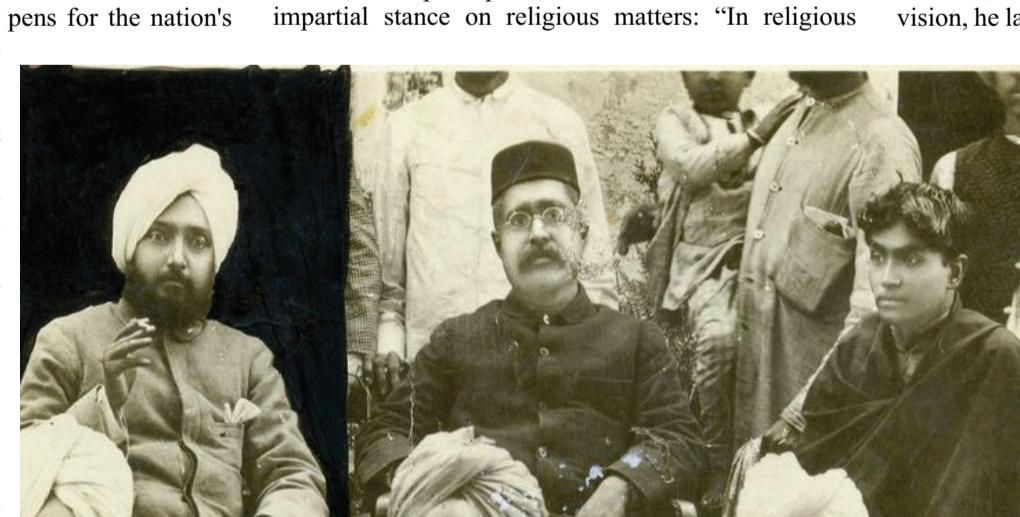
The visionary man behind The Tribune

Publishing The Tribune in English was a truly courageous act

SARDAR DYAL SINGH MAJITHIA (1848-1898) was born in Varanasi in a prominent and wealthy family from Majitha village in Amritsar district of Punjab. During the 19th century, this village was notable for the fact that Maharaja Ranjit Singh had included 16 generals from three families from the village in his army between 1800 and 1849. Dyal Singh, a distinguished son of this influential village, was a philanthropist and national hero dedicated to equality, freedom, fraternity, liberalism and humanity. He was an editor, journalist, educationist, economist, writer, prominent Congress leader, Brahmo Samajist, rationalist, eloquent speaker and a man of exemplary character. Dyal Singh has left behind a legacy that inspires pride in all. According to BK Nehru, distinguished Indian civil servant, diplomat and former President of The Tribune Trust, Dyal Singh did for North India what Raja Ram Mohan Roy, founder of the Brahmo Samaj, accomplished for Bengal in the early 19th century—leading it from the darkness of ignorance into the light of modernity. Influenced by the ideas of Surendranath Banerjee, Rai Bahadur Mulraj and JC Bose, Dyal Singh founded The Tribune to give a voice to the Indian populace and raise public awareness. The first edition of the paper was published in Lahore on February 2, 1881. It had 12 pages, priced at four annas (25 paise) per copy. The Tribune was a weekly newspaper and was issued every Saturday. Sitalchandra Mukherjee was its first editor. He was editing his newspaper 'The Indian People' from Allahabad and agreed to manage The Tribune and send editorials and articles from there. Sitalchandra Mukherjee was appointed as the editor in Lahore. KP Chatterjee used to do the cutting-and-pasting work. Surendranath Banerjee has written: "I pursued him to start a newspaper at Lahore. I purchased for him at Calcutta the first press for The Tribune

newspaper, and to me, he entrusted the duty of selecting the first editor. I recommended late Sitala Kanta Chatterjee of Dacca (now in Bangladesh) for the post. His successful career as the first editor amply justified my choice." (A Nation in Making, Published 1931). Dyal Singh's courage, keen insight and unwavering dedication to his purpose placed him at the forefront of those who used their wonderful pens for the nation's benefit. The founders and managers of The Tribune believed in working solely for the public good, recognising that welfare could be promoted more effectively through moderation and restraint than through harsh attacks or extremist rhetoric.

The editorial in the first issue, titled 'About Ourselves', explained the reasons and the policy of the paper. Dyal Singh wrote: "The projectors and conductors of The Tribune have no pet theories to maintain, nor any personal interests to serve through the medium of this journal. They profess simply to act for the public weal and they are conscious that the public weal is more advanced by the charity and moderation than by rancour and hard words. Our appearance in the field of journalism is to meet a crying want of this part of India namely, an English journal for representation of native opinion... The aim of The Tribune will be, as its name imports, fairly and temperately to advocate the cause of masses. In this column we shall seek to represent the public opinion of India, specially of upper India."



The main objective of The Tribune in the vision of the founder was to act as the people's mouthpiece and be the voice of the voiceless. Dyal Singh was aware that the Indian society is multi-religious and multi-cultural in character. Therefore, for the cause of social harmony, national unity and progress, he underlined secularism as a fundamental principle. The first editorial took an impartial stance on religious matters: "In religious

matters, we shall maintain a strictly neutral position." This vision of the founder is relevant today, when communal ideologies are demolishing the basic structure of society. Religion is being used to mobilise mass hysteria against minorities and generate vote banks to win elections. At the time the paper was founded, more people in Punjab were educated in the Urdu and Persian languages. According to the Public Service Commission Report (1886-1887), there were 16,939 English-educated

Indians in Madras, 3,200 in Bengal and only 1,944 in Punjab. Publishing The Tribune newspaper in English was, thus, a truly courageous act.

Punjab University, Lahore, was established in 1882 due to the tireless efforts of Dyal Singh Majithia. He envisioned that it should be like the universities in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and London. To promote this vision, he launched a movement, publishing nearly two dozen articles in The Tribune. As a result of his relentless dedication, English was adopted as the medium of instruction, which he viewed as being a crucial key to societal and national development.

After the Partition, the newspaper moved from Lahore to Shimla, then to Ambala and, finally, to Chandigarh. On August 15, 1978, on the occasion of Independence Day, the Dainik Tribune (in Hindi) and Punjabi Tribune (in Punjabi) editions were launched. All three editions of The Tribune are published by The Tribune Trust.

The Tribune has achieved significant growth by prioritising the representation of indigenous public opinion over commercial profits. As a leading newspaper of North India, it publishes editorials and articles with a focus on public welfare issues. Its core ideals include advocating for the rights of marginalised groups, women's rights, gender equality, secularism and unity in diversity. These ideals are reflected across its English, Hindi and Punjabi publications. Indeed, all three editions of The Tribune are a valuable legacy of Dyal Singh Majithia.

Tripura to set up international Skill Centre

Agartala. (Agency)

Tripura Chief Minister, Dr Manik Saha, announced plans to establish an International Skill Centre and a Foreign Language School to create more global job opportunities for the state's youth. During the Third Regional Workshop under NITI Aayog's State Support Mission, here, Dr Saha emphasized that governance aims to improve citizens' quality of life and ensure development reaches underserved areas, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision.

Dr Saha highlighted the collaborative model between the Centre and states under NITI Aayog's State Support Mission, empowering states to strengthen their State Institutes of Transformation for policy creation, outcome assessment, and cross-sector coordination.

He stressed the importance of NITI Aayog's regional workshops as platforms for exchanging ideas, fostering peer learning, and addressing common challenges collectively, signaling NITI Aayog's trust in the region's evolving policy framework and Tripura's readiness to contribute to national reforms.

The Chief Minister praised the Tripura Institute for Transformation (TIFT) as a driving force behind governance reforms and a vital link between policy intentions and their on-ground execution, citing its effective handling of governance challenges and guidance to government departments in policy initiatives.

He mentioned that the proposed international skill centre and foreign language school would enhance the employability of Tripura's youth in global job markets, reducing the need to leave the state for opportunities by facilitating better communication and access.

Poshandoot scheme helps 39 malnourished children recover in Nashik

Nashik. (Agency)

The 'Poshandoot' (Nutrition Ambassador) scheme, launched in the district on August 15, 2025, by the Zilla Parishad Health Department under the concept of Chief Executive Officer Omkar Pawar, is showing positive results in the fight against malnutrition.

Due to the effective implementation of this scheme, 39 severely malnourished children have moved into the normal category.

The incidence of malnourished children is higher in the tribal-dominated areas of Peth, Surgana, Trimbakeshwar, and other parts of the district. Under the Posbandoot scheme, implemented with the cooperation of the Zilla Parishad's Health Department and the Women and Child Development Department, Class I and Class II officers at the district and taluka levels have adopted severely malnourished children and are regularly following up on their nutrition, health, and hygiene. After each officer adopted a child, personal attention is being given to improving the child's health. For this purpose, Child Development Project Officers have been appointed as the principal officers at the taluka level.

By the end of November, out of a total of 208 severely malnourished children in Nashik district, 39 children have moved into the normal category, and 45 children have moved into the moderately malnourished category. Chief Executive Officer Omkar Pawar stated that this is a major success of the scheme.

India's first ever credit course in 'Trekking and Rock Climbing' conducted at Amrutvahini College, Sangamner

Ahilyanagar. (Agency)

With the objective of promoting holistic personality development alongside engineering education, Amrutvahini College of Engineering, Sangamner has successfully implemented a course in Trekking and Rock Climbing in the Sahyadri ranges.

Conducted in collaboration with Guardian Giripremi Institute of Mountaineering (GGIM), Pune, the course titled "Introduction to Sahyadri Trekking and Rock Climbing" is India's first officially recognized credit-based course in this domain. A total of 122 students successfully completed the course.

In line with the multidisciplinary approach envisioned under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, this initiative marks the first instance in the country where adventure sports have been formally integrated into an engineering curriculum as academic credits.

The programme was conceptualized under the visionary leadership of the Principal, Dr. M. A. Venkatesh, with the aim of inculcating confidence, leadership qualities, team spirit, and environmental sensitivity among students. The initiative was supported and encouraged by the management, Balasaheb Thorat (Chairman), Dr. Sudhir Tambe (Trustee), Sharayu Deshmukh (Trustee) and Anil Shinde (CEO), said a release today.

The curriculum maintained a balanced blend of theoretical and practical training. The theory sessions covered the history, geography and geology of the Sahyadri mountain ranges, fort architecture, basic mountaineering terminology, outdoor ethics, and mountain manners. The practical training was conducted on the college campus and at the nearby Khandgaon Rock Quarry, where students received hands-on training in rock climbing, rappelling, jumaring, mountaineering knots, and the safe use of climbing equipment.

Reviving a custom after 124 years, 13-year-old Nabha scion reclaims his turban, royal legacy

The 'dastaarbandi' of former Nabha ruler's descendant ignites debate as some question the relevance of "Raja-Maharaja ceremonies" in a democratic setup

Ludhiana. (Agency)

"It feels like home here," says Kunwar Abhyuday Pratap Singh Nabha. The home is the Hira Mahal, the ancestral property of Nabha's erstwhile ruler, Maharaja Ripudaman Singh. Abhyuday is Ripudaman's great-great-grandson.

Fresh of a 'dastaarbandi' (turban-tying) ceremony, which saw a confluence of — and the revival of a Sikh royal tradition after 124 years — the 13-year-old's words and thoughts are lucid and clear. "My grandmother (Rajmata Uma Singh Nabha) used to tell me stories about palaces, kings and the olden days. I read and researched about my lineage. I am proud of being a Sikh. We cannot let our history die," Abhyuday tells.

A day earlier, his 'dastaarbandi' was solemnized with full religious sanctity and traditional rituals. Clad in royal heirloom and jewels, Abhyuday also took an elephant ride as

he bowed in front of Sri Guru Granth Sahib to embrace the "dastaar" (turban). The event was attended by several eminent personalities

Tarunpreet Singh Sond, SGPC president Harjinder Singh Dhami; Punjab Vidhan Sabha speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan, and taksali

Acaki leader Prof Prem Singh Chandumajra among others. On Tuesday, Haryana Chief Minister Nayan Singh Saini, who is leading BJP's outreach in Punjab, also reached the palace in Nabha to meet the family.

As the flags of the disbanded "Nabha estate" fluttered and the pre-colonial era Hira Mahal came back to life, the ceremony evoked mixed response with many hailing the teenager's decision to embrace turban even as critics questioned the relevance of "Raja-Maharaja ceremonies" in a democratic setup.

According to the royal family, it was after a gap of two generations that a Nabha royal has decided to grow "kesh" (unshorn hair). The family insiders said that it was after a gap of 124 years that an "akhand path" (recital of Gurbani for three consecutive days) was held at the palace for the ceremony.



including Radha Soami Satsang Beas head Gurinder Singh Dhillon, Punjab Assembly Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan, Punjab Cabinet Ministers Gurmeet Singh Khudan and

NFR Strengthens Rail Safety and Efficiency Through Modern Detection Technologies

The Sikh Times

Maligaon, 04th February: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has taken significant steps to enhance train safety and improve operational efficiency across its network through the commissioning of advanced monitoring and inspection systems. To strengthen rolling stock safety, a total of 30 Hot Box Detectors have been successfully commissioned at strategic locations across the NFR network. These detectors continuously monitor the temperature of axle box bearings of running trains and help in early detection of overheating conditions, commonly known as "hot box" incidents, thereby preventing potential derailments and service disruptions. In addition, 43 more Hot Box Detectors are currently under procurement, which will further augment the safety monitoring framework of NFR. Further improving freight

train reliability, three Automatic

tems automatically detect wheel



Train Examination Systems (ATES) have been installed at New Jalpaiguri (NJP). These sys-

critical data before trains enter examination depots, ATES enables maintenance staff to plan timely repairs and rectifications, significantly reducing inspection time and ensuring smoother and more reliable freight operations. In another important initiative, one test rakes consisting of five wagons fitted with test weights has been commissioned in Rangia (RNY) Division for the testing and calibration of Electronic In-Motion Weigh Bridges. At present, 15 in-motion weigh bridges are functional across NFR and the test wagon will help ensure the accuracy and reliability of weight measurements during train operations. These initiatives reflect Northeast Frontier Railway's continued commitment to adopting modern technology for enhanced safety, efficient maintenance practices and dependable train operations across the region.

Muzaffarnagar Resolves to Become Child Marriage-Free; 14 Complaints Registered at Women's Commission Public Hearing

The Sikh Times

Manoj Pal

Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh State Women's Commission member Sapna Kashyap held a public hearing and review meeting on Wednesday regarding issues related to women in the district. A total of 14 complaints were registered during the hearing, in the presence of officials from various departments, and these were forwarded to the respective departments for action. The public hearing, held at the Public Works Department's inspection building, addressed problems faced by complainants related to domestic disputes, harassment, maintenance, health, and labor issues. Officials were instructed to resolve the cases within a stipulated time, and the progress of previously pending cases was also reviewed. During the meeting, emphasis was placed on raising awareness about the ongoing 100-day campaign

against child marriage. Citizens were urged to inform the administration about any instances of child marriage in their vicinity and to cooperate in making the

several departments, including the Women's Welfare Department, Police Department, Health Department, Labor Department, Supply Department,

district free from this social evil. Following the public hearing, the member inspected the District Women's Hospital. Cleanliness, patient facilities, availability of medicines, and staff arrangements were reviewed. Instructions were given for improvements in certain areas. Officials and representatives from

Basic Education Department, and Jail Department, participated in the program. Finally, the District Probation Officer thanked all the officials and attendees. The main objective of the meeting was stated to be the swift resolution of women's problems and strengthening public awareness against social evils like child marriage.

HPV vaccination and regular screening can prevent cervical cancer: Expert

Kangra. (Agency)

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer affecting Indian women, with nearly 1.3 lakh women diagnosed every year. Most women are diagnosed in advanced stages, leading to high death rates. Cervical cancer occurs in the cells of the cervix, which is the lower part of the uterus, and most cases are reported in the age group of 35-60 years, explains Dr Shweta Tahlan, senior consultant, Gyna Oncosurgery, Fortis Hospital, Mohali. The majority of cervical cancers are caused by persistent infection by high-risk strains of human papilloma virus, and a precancer stage usually precedes the invasive cancer stage. HPV vaccination provides the primary prevention against this deadly disease, and timely vaccination gives lifelong protection. The recommended age to get vaccinated is between 9 and 26 years, although it can also be given to women up to 45 years old. The HPV vaccine is safe, effective, widely available and

affordable, recommended by all medical organisations.

"Screening tests provide secondary prevention, and it is done by testing cervical smears for abnormal cells (Pap smear & LBC) and presence of HPV (HPV testing). The test is painless and is done in the OPD itself. This helps us detect and cure women in the precancer stage itself (before cancer is formed). Screening test is recommended for all women over the age of 25 years," says Dr Tahlan.

Symptoms of cervical cancer are postcoital vaginal bleeding, persistent vaginal discharge which can be foul-smelling or blood-stained, postmenopausal vaginal bleeding, continuous or intermenstrual bleeding, lower abdomen pain or discomfort, urinary troubles and severe backache. Women in early stages are treated effectively by radical surgery and women diagnosed in advanced stages are treated with radiotherapy, chemotherapy and immunotherapy.

Haryana STF steers away 121 youths from organised crime through counselling

DGP says investigations conducted through technical surveillance and field-level monitoring revealed how gangster networks deliberately target vulnerable youths, and a key aspect of the initiative was the involvement of family members and respected members of society in the counselling process

Chandigarh. (Agency)

The Haryana Police on Tuesday claimed to have identified and counselled 121 youths, who were found to be in contact with major criminal gangs, thereby saving them from becoming part of organised crime networks.

"These youths were found to be in contact with major criminal gangs of Haryana through various means.

During counselling sessions, they were informed about the legal, social and familial consequences of a criminal lifestyle. Real-life examples of jailed gang members were shared, highlighting the suffering of their families, economic hardship and the breakdown of social structures caused by crime," DGP Ajay Singh said.

The action is part of preventative strategy by the state police's Special Task Force (STF), which has launched a "decisive offensive" against the spread of organised crime and gangster networks. "This initiative reflects

the far-sighted policy of Haryana Police aimed not only at law enforcement but also at ensuring social security," the DGP said, adding "one of the biggest challenges today is to guide youths at the crucial juncture where they can either become partners in nation-building or fall into the trap of crime".

He said the timely identification of 121 youths by the STF and keeping them away from organised crime through counselling is not merely police action, but a visionary step towards safeguarding society. The fight against gangster culture, violence and glorification of crime is a responsibility shared by police, families and society, he added.

Apart from the STF, the Cyber Police and district-level police units are also playing a significant role in similar preventive and corrective activities, he said. Singh added

that Haryana Police's objective is not only to punish criminals but also to save those who are on the verge of going astray.

"The Haryana Police operates a multi-layered, technology-based surveillance system to identify youths who come into contact with or under the influence of gangsters through social media," he said.

The information about youths who could be at risk emerges during interrogation of arrested accused in criminal cases and routine analysis of available digital evidence. Active criminal profiles on social media and the patterns of activities associated with them are also monitored simultaneously to assess which youths are likely to be negatively influenced.

Notorious contract killer Banarasi Yadav killed in STF encounter in Varanasi

Varanasi. (Agency)

Notorious contract killer Banarasi Yadav, accused of carrying out a high-profile murder for a contract amount, was killed in an encounter with the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) late Tuesday night.

Acting on specific intelligence inputs, the STF team cordoned off Banarasi Yadav on Choubepur Road. An inspector warned him to surrender, but Banarasi allegedly opened indiscriminate fire instead. Two bullets narrowly missed police constables, who escaped unhurt. The STF then retaliated.

According to police, Banarasi and the STF personnel came face-to-face, during which around five rounds were fired. Two bullets hit Banarasi Yadav, causing him to collapse.

He was rushed to a hospital in a critical condition, where doctors declared him dead. Police recovered two pistols and live cartridges from his possession.

Banarasi Yadav was a resident of Karanda in Ghazipur district and was considered one of the most dreaded and cunning shooters of eastern Uttar Pradesh. He carried a reward of Rs 1 lakh on his head in connection with the murder of coloniser Mahendra Gautam, who was killed five months ago over a land dispute.

The murder was allegedly carried out for a contract of Rs 5 lakh, linked to a dispute over land worth around Rs 50 crore. Police investigations revealed that Banarasi Yadav executed the killing along with two associates.

In the case, police had earlier arrested the main conspirator, Yogendra Yadav, along with three others: Sampurnanand Shukla, Chandana Shukla, and Shyamprakash Rajbhar.

Banarasi Yadav was known for never using mobile phones, frequently changing locations, and altering his appearance to evade arrest. Despite being known by name to the police, his photograph and exact identity remained elusive for a long time, allowing him to commit several crimes without being caught.

Delhi used only 14% of NCAP funds to fight air pollution since 2019, lags far behind NCR cities

The disclosure came a day after the Union Budget was presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with an allocation of Rs 1,091 crore under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's "Control of Pollution" scheme for 2026-27.

New Delhi.(Agency)
Delhi has utilised only 14% of the funds so far — Rs 14.1 crore of Rs 99.77 crore — released under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) since 2019 even as the neighbouring cities in the National Capital Region (NCR), such as Ghaziabad and Meerut, have spent more than 80% of their funds. This city wise data was provided by Union Minister of State for Environment Kirti Vardhan Singh in a written reply to the Lok Sabha on Monday. The disclosure came a day after the Union Budget was presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with an allocation of Rs 1,091 crore under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's "Control of Pollution" scheme for 2026-27. Notably, the budget allocation under one scheme does not represent the entirety of pollution-related funding in Delhi-NCR, which is spread across multiple programmes and institutions.

What is NCAP?

Launched in January 2019, the NCAP is the Centre's framework for improving air quality in

130 cities. It sets city-specific targets for reducing particulate matter pollution, with an overall goal of achieving up to a 40% reduction in PM10 levels, or meeting national standards, by 2025-26. The programme is not implemented through a single funding source. Funds have been released based on performance, with large cities or the million-plus cities such as Delhi receiving grants through the Finance Commission, and smaller cities funded directly by the Environment Ministry. The programme also relies on coordination across multiple ministries, with a nationwide action plan linked to schemes run by departments handling transport, energy, urban development, industry and agriculture. According to Anumita Roychowdhury, Executive Director, Centre for Science and Environment, "A convergence approach is needed... This means clearly identifying and augmenting financial allocations across multiple ministries." Meanwhile, the "Control of Pollution" scheme, administered by the Environment Ministry

since 2018-19, is intended to support pollution control across air, water and noise. A Parliamentary Standing Committee report published last March shows that the Budget Estimate for the 2025-26 financial year for the

a Revised Estimate of Rs 858 crore for 2024-25, actual expenditure up to January 31, 2025, was only Rs 7.22 crore.

The Ministry said spending was held up because formal approval to extend the scheme had not been granted.

Other channels

Pollution-related funding in Delhi-NCR also flows through other channels, such as the Commission for Air Quality Management, which has been allocated under the Union Budget, Rs 35.26 crore for the year 2026-27, largely for administrative and coordination functions, and funds generated through court and tribunal orders under the polluter pays principle, such as environmental compensation imposed by the National Green Tribunal. Another distinct funding stream for air pollution control in Delhi-NCR is the Environment Protection Charge (EPC), which operates separately from Union Budget allocations and NCAP funding, and applies to diesel cars and SUVs with engine capacity of 2,000 cc and above sold or registered in Delhi and the NCR.



scheme was Rs 853.9 crore. NCAP is one of the sub-components under this scheme. The Parliamentary Committee previously flagged serious concerns over the overall utilisation of funds under the "Control of Pollution" scheme. In its report on the Environment Ministry's demands for grants, the panel noted that against

Minor accused of man's murder in Delhi, went unknowingly to police

New Delhi.(Agency)
A minor who allegedly killed a 39-year-old man several days ago unknowingly walked into Mandir Marg police station on Monday just as police had zeroed in on his face in CCTV footage, a senior officer said on Tuesday.

The 17-year-old had gone to report the theft of a mobile phone. According to police, the minor had attacked the deceased after he allegedly tried to force himself on the minor. On Monday evening, Gulabi Bagh police received information about a body at the Railway Colony in Subzi Mandi. The deceased was identified as Sandeep Kumar Malviya, who had allegedly gone missing on January 25. The body had injury marks on the face and neck, police said. Sandeep's family had come to know that he had rented a room in Railway Colony that he would sometimes



visit. It is here that the body was found, police said.

Police found CCTV footage of the deceased travelling in an auto-rickshaw with a younger person. It appeared that the two had met in Paharganj. The image of the younger individual was shared with Mandir Marg police station.

Police were surprised to find the minor at the station itself. He was apprehended, police said. "The 17-year old said that the deceased had allegedly taken him to a room in Railway Colony and asked him for sexual favours," Additional DCP(North), Sumit Jha said.

"The boy hit the deceased on the forehead with a gas cylinder and slashed his neck with a broken piece of glass. He took Rs 2,000, a credit card and mobile phone of the deceased, locked the room, and escaped," the officer said. According to police, the minor withdrew Rs 4,000 from an ATM in Ghaziabad, and bought a new mobile phone worth Rs 14,000.

Man faints on road in Outer Delhi, dies after being left unattended as passerby tries to rob him

New Delhi.(Agency)
A man who collapsed on a road in Outer Delhi's Ranholi area early Saturday died hours later, after CCTV footage revealed that a passerby allegedly attempted to steal from him instead of seeking help, police said. The incident took place around 4 am in West Delhi's Vikas Nagar. According to police, the man fell unconscious on the roadside and remained there unattended for several hours.

Preliminary assessment of the CCTV footage suggests that he may have suffered a medical emergency such as a heart attack or seizure, though the exact cause of death will be determined after the post-mortem examination, police said.

Police said the identity of the deceased is yet to be established. According to police, footage from nearby cameras shows two men arriving at the spot on a scooter soon after the man fell. One of them, seated at the rear, got off and allegedly picked up the victim's mobile phone, police said.

Police said that he later returned and searched the man's pockets, but appeared to find nothing of value. Moments later, the suspect seemed to notice a CCTV camera in the vicinity, after which he hurriedly left the scene along with the scooter driver, police said.

The unconscious man continued to lie on the road until around 8 am, when local residents noticed him and alerted the police. By the time authorities reached the spot, he was found dead, police said. The body was sent for post-mortem examination, and a case of theft has been registered. "We are scanning CCTV footage from the surrounding area and following other leads to identify and apprehend the suspects," a senior police officer said. Further investigation is underway.

City gig workers protest as part of nationwide stir, demand govt action

Protesting workers demanded urgent government intervention against what they described as rampant exploitation by digital platform companies.

New Delhi.(Agency)
Women took lead in a protest organised by the Gig and Platform Service Workers' Union (GIPSWU) at Jantar Mantar on Tuesday. Protesting workers demanded urgent government intervention against what they described as rampant exploitation by digital platform companies. In Delhi, the workers associated with platforms such as Zomato, Swiggy, Urban Company, Zepto, Blinkit, Instamart, and Amazon participated in the protest. They demanded recognition of gig and platform workers as workers under labour laws. Their demands included enforcement of minimum wages and social security

measures and protection from arbitrary algorithmic control. Following the protest, a memorandum of demands was submitted to the PM's Office and to

that the union had been struggling for over six years for the enactment of a separate law for gig and platform workers, asserting that exploitation would not stop unless a dedicated legislation was enacted.

Several women workers narrated incidents of harassment and insecurity.

Anjali, a gig worker, said she was assaulted by a customer, but instead of taking action, the company blocked her ID, cutting off her livelihood.

Another worker Mamta alleged that despite filing a complaint of sexual harassment, no action was taken by the platform, forcing her to continue working under fear.



the state chief ministers. GIPSWU president Seema Singh said that when she raised complaints against her work conditions, she was threatened with legal notices. She said

Citing Kafka, Delhi HC orders release of former PBG man convicted of rape

New Delhi.(Agency)

Turning to The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka, the Delhi High Court has ordered early release of Harpreet Singh, a former member of the President's Bodyguard who was sentenced to life imprisonment, along with colleague Satender Singh, for the gangrape of a college student at the Buddha Jayanti Park in the Capital in 2003.

Describing the Sentence Review Board's decision-making process as "fundamentally flawed", Justice Neena Bansal Krishna, in her order on January 30, observed that the convict, Harpreet Singh, "has been trapped by the State in the frozen image of his past criminality".

The bench said the SRB's decision to not grant Harpreet early release in 2024 and its subsequent approval on January 30, observed that the convict, Harpreet Singh, "has been trapped by the State in the frozen image of his past criminality".

Harpreet, represented by advocate Sumer Boparai, had submitted that he is a

reformed individual, who has been placed on the commendation roll, awarded certificates of recognition on at least three occasions, participated in various activities, and worked in a

mechanically reiterating the heinousness of the original offence, as a constant and permanent bar to release, has refused to acknowledge that the Petitioner has successfully undergone a reverse metamorphosis: shedding the propensity for crime and earning his place back in humanity, through 25 years of exemplary conduct and discipline."

"The Petitioner's journey, from being a public servant who fell into crime to a prisoner who earned 21 years of clean conduct and multiple commendations — demonstrates that the reformatory objective of his sentence has been fulfilled."

"While Kafka's protagonist was ultimately destroyed by the alienation of those who could not see past his shell, the Constitution of India, anchored in the Reformatory Theory, forbids the State from condemning a prisoner to such eternal alienation, when the objective of correction has been achieved," the order stated.



diligent and disciplined manner while in prison. Turning to Kafka, Justice Krishna said, "Much like Gregor Samsa, the Petitioner has been trapped by the State in the frozen image of his past criminality — viewed perpetually as the gigantic insect of 2003, rather than the reformed individual of 2025. The SRB, by

Delhi Cabinet nod to free LPG cylinder scheme



New Delhi.(Agency)

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday said that the Delhi Cabinet has given approval to a scheme under which free LPG cylinders will be provided to beneficiaries on Holi and Diwali, adding that Rs 242 crore has been allocated for its implementation. The scheme was among the key promises made by the BJP ahead of the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections.

Under the scheme households with valid ration cards will receive an amount of Rs 853, the cost of an LPG cylinder in their bank accounts through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) ahead of Holi, Gupta explained. "Beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) will be provided assistance of Rs 553 per cylinder after adjusting the central government's subsidy of Rs 300 per cylinder," she added. "I want to congratulate my sisters and the families. We made a promise of providing one free LPG cylinder each on Holi and Diwali in our (election) manifesto. Today, we passed that scheme and sanctioned Rs 242 crore for it," she said.

Stating that all households with ration cards will be eligible for the scheme, if they are currently using PNG pipelines, Gupta said: "The assistance will be provided on two occasions — Holi and Diwali — irrespective of whether the cylinder is refilled that month or not."

The estimated annual expenditure on the scheme will be around Rs 242.77 crore, and adjustments will be based on changes in price of cylinders, government subsidy, and number of beneficiaries, said officials. "This scheme not only aims at providing financial assistance, but also ensures relief during the festive season. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and through the PMUY, the Centre has provided clean fuel, better health and respectable life to people. The Delhi government's scheme is an extension of the same visionary thinking," the CM said. Gupta also said that the BJP government is fulfilling all its poll promises in a phased manner.

Meanwhile, speaking about the party's promise of providing LPG cylinders to women from poor families for Rs 500, an official said: "For this, we need an updated data of eligible candidates and set an eligibility criteria... The work on this project is underway... It will be soon implemented," said officials.

FIR in Jalandhar row: Kapil Mishra writes to Speaker over breach of privilege

The Minister stated that the complaint filed by Iqbal Singh and the subsequent actions taken by the Punjab Police demonstrate disregard for the constitutional safeguard provided under Article 361A.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Delhi Cabinet Minister Kapil Mishra on Tuesday submitted a written complaint to Speaker of the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Vijender Gupta, seeking protection of legislative privilege in connection with the registration of an FIR by the Punjab Police on the Assembly proceedings dated January 6. In his letter, the Minister stated that the complaint filed by Iqbal Singh and the subsequent actions taken by the Punjab Police, including the registration of a criminal case, demonstrate disregard for the constitutional safeguard provided under Article 361A.

He said that these actions amounted to a serious breach of the privileges of the House and constituted interference with the functioning and authority of the

Legislature. The minister has requested the doctored video clip of the Assembly and that allegations of deliberate doctoring were levelled against him. He said that the registration of the FIR received wide media coverage and that copies of relevant news reports were enclosed with his letter.



Mishra has maintained that the video clip shared by him was a faithful and accurate reproduction of the proceedings of the Delhi Legislative Assembly and was therefore fully protected under Article 361A.

He argued that the initiation of criminal proceedings in connection with such publication undermines the privileges of an elected Member and amounts to an attempt to browbeat and subdue him in the discharge of his legislative duties.

NEWS BOX

Boycott India, forget Super 8s: Why rain is Pakistan's biggest foe in Colombo

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Pakistan are set to boycott their group-stage match against India in the T20 World Cup 2026, but the move could prove detrimental to their own campaign. Pakistan, who are scheduled to play all their matches in Sri Lanka, might also have to contend with unpredictable weather during the tournament. The Saim Ayub-led side is set to play four group-stage matches in Sri Lanka, one of which they are already boycotting. Of the remaining three matches, two are expected to face possible rain interruptions, which could seriously hurt their chances of qualifying for the next round. Weather in Colombo has historically been unpredictable and, if even one of those two matches is washed out, Pakistan could fall behind not only in terms of points, but also Net Run Rate as well. As per AccuWeather, Pakistan's opening game against the Netherlands could see nearly a 64 per cent chance of rainfall, largely during the second half of the match. This could result in no play in the latter



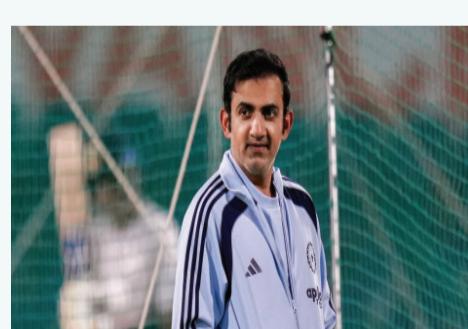
stages, potentially leading to a washout. The two matches that have zero per cent chance of rainfall are the fixtures against USA and India on February 10 and 15 respectively. Pakistan lost to USA on the tricky Dallas in the previous edition of the tournament, which played a major role in their early exit.

The Pakistan government has already announced its decision to boycott the February 15 game against India. However, no official written communication has yet been submitted to the International Cricket Council. Pakistan's final group-stage match against Namibia has a 25 per cent chance of rain, meaning the game is expected to go ahead with minimal disruption. Pakistan's biggest concern will be managing their Net Run Rate in the remaining matches, given their decision to boycott India. The unpredictability of rain could make that task significantly harder. How Badly Will Pakistan's NRR be Affected.

Gautam Gambhir ignores question on Pakistan's T20 World Cup boycott vs India

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

India head coach Gautam Gambhir avoided a question on Pakistan's boycott stance against India ahead of the T20 World Cup 2026, choosing not to comment on the sensitive issue. Gambhir was approached by reporters at the airport while departing for Mumbai, where the Indian team is set to play its first warm-up fixture against South Africa. The Indian coach first thanked the media personnel for their best wishes for the Indian team ahead of the tournament. When asked about Pakistan's refusal to play India in the upcoming World Cup, Gambhir ignored the question and continued walking without offering a response. The Pakistan government has granted its cricket team permission to participate in the tournament, but has denied approval for the side to take the field against India. The decision has triggered widespread debate, given the



financial and sporting significance of an India-Pakistan encounter at a global event. The International Cricket Council (ICC) is yet to receive official communication from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) regarding the alleged boycott. However, the governing body has already warned of serious implications should the fixture not go ahead as scheduled. India, meanwhile, appear focused on their on-field preparations. The team will take on South Africa in a warm-up match as they gear up for the tournament, which begins on February 7. India and Pakistan have been drawn in the same group, alongside Namibia, the Netherlands and the USA, with their highly anticipated clash scheduled for February 15 in Colombo. Ahead of the tournament, the two sides will also feature in warm-up matches on Wednesday, February 4, with India set to face South Africa and Pakistan taking on Ireland.

Can India defend T20 World Cup? MS Dhoni gives his verdict on Suryakumar's team

MS Dhoni believes India are primed for a historic T20 World Cup title defence at home. The former captain, however, warns that dew and toss conditions could still decide crunch matches.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Former India captain MS Dhoni has backed India to make history at the T20 World Cup 2026, calling Suryakumar Yadav's side the most complete and dangerous team in the tournament, while also flagging dew as the one factor that could complicate matters. Speaking at a public event, Dhoni said India have everything in place for a first-ever successful T20 World Cup title defence, but stressed that managing conditions, especially dew, will be key if they are to go all the way. "It's one of the most dangerous teams," Dhoni said when asked about India's chances of retaining the title. "You know,



they would have already started batting or bowling. But what all is needed in a good team? Everything is there." Dhoni pointed out that experience and role clarity set this Indian side apart, particularly in a format where pressure situations arrive quickly and repeatedly. "They have the experience. Especially when it comes to this format, the experience is vast. They have played under



pressure. Whoever is playing whatever roles they are playing in the team, they have been in that situation for a considerable period of time," he added.

What Dhoni warned India about in T20 World Cup

While Dhoni was careful not to jinx India's campaign, he admitted that external conditions could still swing games in a short

tournament. What worries me? Again, I hate dew. Dew changes a lot of things. So, even when I was playing, something that really scared me was dew. Where the toss becomes crucial and all of that," Dhoni said.

According to him, India's strength lies in their consistency across conditions, provided the playing field remains reasonably balanced.

"If we are playing 10 matches with some of the best teams, we will come out as winners more often than not, if the conditions remain neutral," he noted.

Are India T20 World Cup favourites?

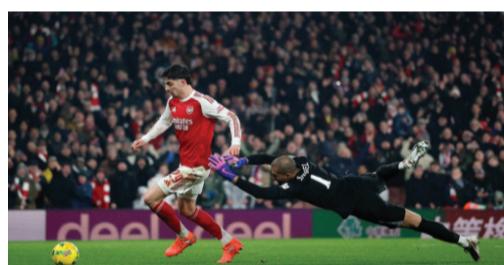
India's recent record backs up Dhoni's confidence. Since lifting the T20 World Cup in 2024, they have not lost a single bilateral series or tournament. In this period, India have won 32 matches and lost just five, underlining their dominance in the shortest format. Zooming out further, since August 2023, India have won 49 of their 63 T20Is, losing only three. They currently sit atop the ICC Men's T20I Team Rankings and boast the format's top performers, with Abhishek Sharma ranked No.1 batter and Varun Chakaravarthy the leading T20I bowler.

India enter the 2026 edition as both hosts and defending champions, chasing something no men's team has achieved before.

Carabao Cup: Arsenal boost treble hopes as Chelsea win books final spot

LONDON. (Agency)

Arsenal are quietly putting together a season that could turn very special. On Tuesday night at the Emirates, they did just enough to get past Chelsea and book their place in the Carabao Cup final, winning 1-0 on the night and 4-2 on aggregate. No fireworks, no chaos — just control, patience and a late moment that settled everything. The win keeps Arsenal firmly in the conversation for a treble, and even a possible quadruple if they stay alive in the FA Cup too. They are still competing on multiple fronts, and this result ensures at least one trip to Wembley is locked in. Chelsea made things awkward, but they never really forced Arsenal out of their comfort zone. Speaking after the match, Mikel Arteta was satisfied with both the result and the manner of it, while Chelsea head coach Liam Rosenior pointed to progress despite another



defeat. "We are so happy. I think overall, over the two games, we deserved to be through," Arteta said in his post-match press conference. "It was a long match. We expected that. We wrapped it up at the end in a beautiful way, with Kai scoring the goal in the manner that he did and the reaction from the crowd." The match itself followed a familiar pattern. Arsenal were happy to keep the ball, manage the tempo and wait for Chelsea to make mistakes. Chelsea, to their credit, stayed organised and competitive but struggled to turn possession into clear chances. Kepa Arrizabalaga was rarely tested, with Enzo Fernandez's first-half effort from distance the only moment that briefly asked a question. The breakthrough finally arrived deep into stoppage time. Declan Rice picked out Kai Havertz with a cross, the substitute showed composure to round Robert Sanchez, and the empty net did the rest. It was a neat end to a tie that Arsenal had largely controlled across both legs. Rosenior, still early in his tenure, focused on the positives. "I think everyone can see a difference in our performances," he said. "That's really pleasing. Obviously, losing the game is not what we wanted. I've been in for less than a month, we've had eight games."

Pakistan announced on Sunday that while they will participate in the T20 World Cup, they will not take the field against India in



Colombo. The decision followed the ICC rejecting Bangladesh's request to move their World Cup matches out of India citing security concerns, after which Bangladesh were replaced by Scotland in the tournament. Kapil also pointed out that while the boycott may trigger emotional reactions initially, the global cricket audience will eventually move on, leaving Pakistan isolated with the fallout.

"Emotions and spectators will be impacted,

but in the long run, no one will miss them. People will move on," he said.

The ICC has already expressed concern over Pakistan's stance and urged the PCB to reconsider, highlighting the potential long-term damage to the sport. As per tournament regulations, both teams must be present at the toss to avoid a walkover. Sources indicate India will travel to Colombo as scheduled, with captain Suryakumar Yadav expected to attend the toss. If Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha fails to appear, India could be awarded two points, though further disciplinary action remains uncertain. Beyond sporting implications, the financial cost could be significant. A walkover in the India-Pakistan clash, the most commercially valuable fixture in world cricket, could reportedly result in advertising losses of up to Rs 250 crore for the host broadcaster.

For Kapil Dev, however, the biggest loss would be unseen. In attempting to make a political statement, Pakistan risk sidelining their own cricketers and setting back a generation that deserves exposure at cricket's biggest stage.

IND v SA, T20 World Cup warm-up: Now or never for Sanju Samson

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

India will take on South Africa in their only warm-up match ahead of the T20 World Cup 2026 in Navi Mumbai on Wednesday, February 4. A warm-up for this Indian side? Really?

After all, this is a team that just rolled through a five-match T20I series against New Zealand, stacked with match-winners and brimming with confidence. So why the need for one final dress rehearsal before they begin their title defence against the USA in Mumbai on February 15? Because even the most ruthless winning machines have loose screws. And India, for all their depth and dominance, still have a couple of selection calls to iron out before the real business begins. Let's start with the most uncomfortable one: Sanju Samson. Once again, the wicketkeeper-batter finds himself in familiar territory — waiting, watching,



and fighting to hold on. His returns from the T20I series against New Zealand did him no favours: just 46 runs across five matches, including three single-digit scores. It is, unflatteringly, the lowest tally by an Indian opener who featured in every game of a five-match bilateral T20I

series. SAMSON VS ISHAN KISHAN

And the timing couldn't be worse. Because Ishan Kishan has come charging in from the outside lane. A late entrant into the T20 World Cup squad, Kishan made sure he didn't arrive quietly. Against New Zealand, he piled up 215 runs at an average north of 50 and a staggering strike rate of 231.18, capping the series with a match-winning hundred in Thiruvananthapuram on Saturday, January 31. If Samson needed breathing room, he didn't get it. His relationship with selection has long been complicated. #JusticeForSamson has trended often enough to feel like a recurring calendar event. And you don't need to rewind too far to understand why. At last year's Asia Cup, India brought Shubman Gill back into the T20I set-up and asked Samson to shift to the middle order — effectively.

Pakistan shouldn't play vs India, was ICC sleeping before Former cricketer

Former Pakistan cricketer Kamran Akmal supports PCB's decision to boycott the India match in the T20 World Cup 2026, citing ICC's biased approach. Pakistan's government has denied permission to its cricket team to play against India in the tournament.

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Former Pakistan cricketer Kamran Akmal has slammed the International Cricket Council (ICC) for its alleged biased behaviour towards India and stated that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) should not go back on its decision to not play against them in the T20 World Cup 2026. The Pakistan

government has allowed its cricket team to take part in the World Cup but has denied permission for the team to play against their arch-rivals, India. The two teams are scheduled to face off on February 15 at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo. The ICC has revealed that it is yet to receive official confirmation of the boycott decision from the PCB and has warned that such a move could have serious implications for Pakistan's cricketing landscape. Amid the stand-off between the cricketing bodies, Kamran Akmal has backed the PCB's decision and questioned the ICC on whether it had turned a blind eye when India refused to travel to Pakistan in the past. "PCB should not back down. The ICC has told the Pakistan Cricket Board to reconsider its stance of boycotting the India game. Was the ICC sleeping when the Asia Cup was played under the hybrid model? Was the ICC sleeping when India said it would not play the Champions Trophy in Pakistan and would only play at a neutral

venue?" Akmal said on the Game Plan show. "How many times has Pakistan played in India despite the heightened tensions between the two countries? I have gone



myself. The ICC should have thought about these things three years ago. The two countries have not played a bilateral series for years now. Wasn't that also politics?" Akmal added. The former wicketkeeper-batter also referred to the controversial events involving the two teams during the Asia Cup 2025, claiming that India

disrespected Pakistan during the tournament. No IND vs PAK fixture to cost massive losses. "Shouldn't the ICC have thought of ending the politics then? The PCB's decision should be respected in the same way that we respected India's decision to play in a hybrid model. Things had reached extreme levels. During the Asia Cup, they refused to shake hands with our players and then refused to accept the trophy. They disrespected us," he said. India reportedly refused to shake hands with the Pakistan team throughout the Asia Cup 2025. Furthermore, India captain Suryakumar Yadav declined to receive the winner's trophy from PCB Chairman and Asian Cricket Council (ACC) President Mohsin Naqvi. The PCB chief remained adamant about handing over the trophy and eventually left the stadium with it after it was not accepted by the Indian team. Meanwhile, the absence of an India vs Pakistan fixture could result in losses amounting to nearly USD 250 million for all stakeholders involved.

After Budget and India-US trade deal, all eyes on RBI's repo rate decision

New Delhi.(Agency)

After the Union Budget 2026 and the historic India-US trade deal, all eyes are now on the three-day Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting that begins from Wednesday, with the key repo rate decision on Friday.

Economists believe RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra-led MPC is likely to pause any further policy rate cut. The Central Bank is rather set to undertake direct measures to tackle liquidity, bond stability and currency-related risks. The RBI has already lowered the repo rate by 125 basis points since February 2025 to 5.25 per cent. With inflation likely to move higher (even in the new base year series to be published starting February 12, there is little reason for moving in with further cuts, said analysts.

"With the current repo rate at 5.25 per cent, and with inflation anticipated at around 4 per cent (will wait to see if the new series changes the inflation view), the current real rate of 125 bps seems reasonable," according to a note by Yes Bank.

The RBI should stay on a pause and keep stance at "neutral" and retain its fire power in the event of any growth slump, it added. "We expect bond purchases to continue this quarter and in April-June 2026. With the FY27 Budget outlining a record high of borrowings, the central bank might prefer to be agile and nimble its money market related operations and keep borrowing costs in check," according to Radhika Rao, Executive Director and Senior Economist at DBS Bank. The RBI recently announced a series of liquidity-enhancing measures that will pump in more than Rs 2 lakh crore into the banking system to ease liquidity pressure. The Central Bank said it will use a combination of open market bond purchases, a foreign exchange swap, and a variable rate repo operation to ease liquidity conditions in the financial system.

Rupee dips after India-US trade rally; falls 22 paise to 90.54/USD

MUMBAI.(Agency)

The rupee depreciated 22 paise to 90.54 against the US dollar in early trade on Wednesday, following a sharp rally after India and the US agreed to a trade deal on suspected dollar buying by corporates and importers. Forex traders said despite the positive sentiment post the India-US trade deal, caution still remains as there is no signed or officially released trade agreement yet - no framework text or final documentation.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.35 against the US dollar, then lost ground and fell to 90.54, registering a loss of 22 paise over its previous close. On Tuesday, the Indian rupee emerged as the best-performing Asian currency, registering a record gain of 117 paise or 1.28 per cent in a single trading session to settle at 90.32 against the US dollar, after India and the US agreed to a trade deal. "After Tuesday's good news the rupee was back to its own self of weakening as RBI bought dollars towards the end to take the dollar up to 90.2650," said Anil Kumar Bhangali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director Finnex Treasury Advisors LLP.

Forex traders said investors are trading with caution as the India-US trade deal still awaits formalisation.

"Any sustained turnaround in FII flows will depend on greater clarity around the final structure and commitments within the deal," CR Forex Advisors MD Amit Pabari said. President Trump stated that India will end purchases of Russian crude over an undefined timeline, while increasing imports of US energy, including oil and coal, and potentially Venezuelan crude with US approval.

"Moving away from discounted Russian oil could prove challenging for India, given its long-standing commercial and strategic ties with Moscow, and may have implications for India's energy costs and external balance," Pabari added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.02 per cent lower at 97.41.

HAL Shares Tank 8% As L&T, Bharat Forge Enter Race To Build Fighter Jets

New Delhi.(Agency)

Shares of defence major Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd fell as much as 8.3% to hit an intraday low of Rs 4,100 on the BSE on Wednesday after Larsen & Toubro, Bharat Forge, and Tata Advanced Systems, were shortlisted to manufacture next generation fighter jets, with the state-owned firm missing out on the list. On the flipside, L&T and Bharat Forge were trading over a percent higher.

The final winner under the Advanced Multirole Combat Aircraft (AMCA) programme is expected to be selected within the next three months, after the shortlisted companies submit detailed commercial proposals for manufacturing prototypes of the next-generation fighter jets, was earlier reported. The shortlisting was carried out based on parameters such as technical expertise, manufacturing capability, order book position and financial strength. Bidders were required to demonstrate their ability to absorb the AMCA design, along with adequate experience in development, engineering, manufacturing, integration and testing. One of the eligibility criteria also discouraged companies with a large outstanding order book. As per the current plan, the selected company will partner with the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) to build five AMCA prototypes. The defence ministry has earmarked an indicative budget of Rs 15,000 crore for the prototype development phase. The eventual production order, however, is expected to be several times larger once the aircraft is successfully developed and inducted by the Indian Air Force. The AMCA programme is widely regarded as India's largest-ever military research and development initiative. The fifth-generation fighter jet is expected to form the backbone of the country's air combat capability from the mid-2030s. An initial batch of 120 aircraft is likely to be ordered.

It is not just safe haven demand or industrial demand alone driving gold and silver prices higher. A quiet shift in how people buy gold and silver is changing real-world supply and prices.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Gold and silver have been in a strong purple patch since 2025, and one of the less obvious reasons sits quietly on people's phones. As more investors buy gold and silver through apps, ETFs and digital platforms, the demand for actual physical metal has risen, helping push prices higher in the real world. Much like Virat Kohli's remarkable IPL 2016 season, when runs kept, gold and silver have stayed in form with only minor setbacks. Silver has seen a correction early in 2026, but the overall trend remained intact. In fact, if gold and silver had raced Usain

Bolt through 2025, they would have finished well ahead, with silver clocking in record time.

GOLD AND SILVER PRICES REMAIN STRONG International gold prices climbed more than 2% on Wednesday, building on their best single-day rise since 2008 in the previous session. Market action shows how firmly prices have rebounded after recent dips. Aamir Makda, Commodity and Currency Analyst at Choice Broking, said gold and silver have both recovered sharply from their recent lows. "Gold price has rebounded significantly from the bottom of 137,000 by about 12% in recent sessions and is currently trading near 153,000. On the other side, silver price is trading at 269,000 after hitting the dip of 225,805 in the previous session," he said. Makda said gold has pulled back from key retracement levels and is approaching important resistance zones. "Immediate resistance would be at 154,215. A breakout of this level will boost the upside momentum in gold price and the next resistance would be in the range of

160,000 to 167,000," he said. On silver, he said prices have moved above major levels and a breakout could open further upside. He expects a "moderately bullish trend in gold and silver this week".

IS SAFE HAVEN BUYING ONLY



DRIVING PRICES HIGHER?

While safe-haven buying and industrial demand still matter, they no longer explain the full picture. Abhishek Kumar, Sebi RIA and Founder of Sahaj Money, said the structure of demand has changed. "This rally has sustained due to global investment inflows in the past year. While

initial interest was driven primarily by safe-haven demand, the massive surge in digital platforms and ETF assets under management has significantly amplified the upward momentum," Kumar said.

He added that industrial demand, especially for silver from green energy and AI-related sectors, provides a base, but investor flows are now the main driver. "Industrial demand is a critical floor for silver, but the rapid influx of retail and institutional capital through liquid digital channels is now a primary catalyst," he said.

HOW DIGITAL BUYING OF GOLD, SILVER PUSHES PRICES HIGHER?

One of the key reasons app-based buying matters is that most regulated gold and silver ETFs are backed by physical metal. Kumar explained that digital buying is not just a paper transaction. Most regulated gold and silver ETFs are backed by physical gold and silver, which means the fund manager must purchase and store actual metal in a secure vault for every new share issued," he said.

AI panic sinks global tech stocks: Should Indian IT employees be worried

New Delhi.(Agency)

If you are trying to figure out why India's top IT stocks are suddenly falling together, the answer lies thousands of miles away in the United States, where an overnight wave of AI panic slammed global tech markets and sent shockwaves straight into India's IT sector. Shares of domestic IT giants Infosys, TCS, LTIM, HCLTech and Tech Mahindra were down between 5% and 8% in morning trade. Wipro slipped nearly 5%. The Nifty IT index crashed nearly 7%. The trouble began when Anthropic, one of the fastest-growing AI companies in the world, released a new set of enterprise AI tools designed to handle work that global firms often outsource to Indian IT companies. These tools claim to take over document reviews, compliance checks, back-office processing, and data-heavy operations work. These are exactly the kind of high-volume tasks that keep thousands of IT professionals busy every day. Once the

announcement hit US markets, investors quickly sold software and outsourcing stocks. Infosys and Wipro's American Depository Receipts (ADRs), which are shares traded in the US, fell sharply. By the time Indian



markets opened, the mood was already set and the selling pressure intensified.

ARE IT JOBS AT RISK AMID AI BOOM?

This hit the Indian IT sector at a time when it was already in a delicate position. Deal ramp-ups have been slow. Clients in the US and Europe

have been cautious with new spending. Several large deals announced last year are still stuck in transition. Valuations were stretched, demand signals were weak and one sharp global trigger was enough to push stocks lower. But behind the market chaos sits a much more immediate concern. What happens to jobs in the sector?

The anxiety is not unfounded. TCS has already reduced over 30,000 roles in the last six months to manage costs and realign itself for an AI-heavy future. Amazon is cutting thousands of

corporate jobs worldwide. Meta is trimming staff in its Reality Labs division. Global tech companies are learning to operate with smaller teams as automation improves. The fear is that Indian IT firms will eventually follow the same path.

Addressing those who left Zomato voluntarily or were asked to move on, Goyal acknowledged that the company may not have been the right place for everyone at the time. I know that for many of you, Zomato didn't have the environment, or the leadership you needed at the time," he said. At the same time, he pointed out the emotional bond many employees had with the company.

"But I know for sure, that you loved being at Zomato, and it is quite possible that you never felt like home anywhere else since you left."

The message struck a personal tone, suggesting that leaving the company did not erase the shared history or the work done together.

ETERNAL TODAY: MORE ORGANISED, LESS CHAOTIC

Goyal explained that Eternal, the parent group housing multiple businesses, is very different from what it was earlier. He admitted that the company was chaotic in its early years but said both the organisation and its leadership have matured. "We are more organised, a little less chaotic, and hopefully, I've learned a few things along the way too," he wrote. According to Goyal, the company already has more than 400 employees who are currently in their second or third stint with the group. Many of them, he said, are now doing the best work of their careers. "Maybe because they've grown, but also because the company has grown," he added. There is so much to build at Eternal," Goyal said, stressing that the group needs people who understand the company's culture and standards. "We need people who already know what good looks like here, and who care enough to fight for it." He added that former employees, who have seen the company from the inside and then grown elsewhere, are best placed to help shape its next phase.

A GROWING FAMILY OF BUSINESSES

Eternal today is not just about food delivery. Goyal described it as a family of companies, each working on different but connected problems.

Musk's net worth soars past \$800 billion after SpaceX-xAI deal

Musk's net worth reached roughly \$852 billion, almost \$578 billion higher than the world's second-wealthiest person, Google co-founder Larry Page, whose net worth is estimated at \$281 billion.

New Dey

US entrepreneur Elon Musk's net worth surged past the \$800 billion mark after SpaceX acquired his artificial-intelligence firm xAI, making him the richest person in history by a wide margin.

Musk's net worth reached roughly \$852

billion, almost \$578 billion higher than the world's second-wealthiest person, Google co-founder Larry Page, whose net worth is estimated at \$281 billion. The merger took the combined value of the company to \$1.25 trillion and added about \$84 billion to Musk's fortune, according to reports. Before the merger, Musk owned about 42 per cent of SpaceX which was valued at \$800 billion and roughly 49 per cent of xAI, which was valued at \$250 billion after a recent private fundraising round. Post-merger, Musk's stake in the combined entity touched 43 per cent, worth about \$542 billion and SpaceX became Musk's largest holding by a wide margin, the reports said.

Musk also retains about 12 per cent of Tesla, valued at approximately \$178 billion, along with Tesla stock options, estimated at \$124 billion. Further, in addition to these, Musk also receives a

shareholder-approved Tesla pay package up to \$1 trillion in additional Tesla stock, before taxes over the next decade and the cost of unlocking restricted share, if performance targets are met. He crossed several wealth milestones in the past four months such as \$500 billion, \$600 billion and \$700 billion, driven by SpaceX valuation gains and a Delaware Supreme Court ruling that restored his Tesla options.

Musk earlier said that SpaceX's Starship will begin delivering the much more powerful V3 Starlink satellites to orbit in 2026, with each launch adding more than 20 times the capacity to the constellation as the current Falcon launches of the V2 Starlink satellites.

It will enable launches "every hour carrying 200 tons per flight" and ultimately lifting millions of tons to orbit and beyond, Musk has shared his plan.

Why Anthropic's new AI tools rattled Wall Street's tech giants, hit Indian IT stocks

PANIC ON WALL STREET

Late last night, the Nasdaq slipped sharply as global investors reacted to a new set of enterprise AI tools released by Anthropic. These tools were not just another AI update. They were positioned to handle work that multinational companies typically outsource to Indian IT service providers.

Tasks like document processing, compliance checks, operational analysis and other high-volume back office functions suddenly looked more automated than ever. The moment Anthropic's announcement landed, US investors cut exposure to traditional IT services. The sentiment hit the ADRs of Infosys and Wipro almost instantly, and by the time Indian markets opened, the selling had already gathered momentum.

WHY DID INDIAN IT STOCKS FALL?

Indian IT stocks were already trading at stretched valuations. Deal ramp-ups were slow, global clients were cautious, and discretionary tech spending in the US and Europe was still weak. With so much nervousness already built into the system, even a small negative cue could have

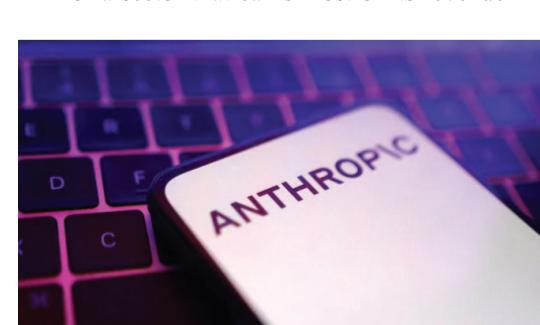
triggered a fall. What arrived instead was a global shock, and it landed directly on a sector that depends heavily on overseas demand. Investors reacted immediately. For a sector that earns most of its revenue

adapt to the new AI era.

Companies have been ramping up investments in cloud, automation and AI led services, but the market wants clarity on whether these shifts are happening fast enough to protect future revenue.

The irony is that this sector remains one of India's most globally competitive industries. Indian IT firms have the talent, scale and client relationships needed to integrate AI into their offerings. What they need now is a clear narrative that reassures investors that the next decade of outsourcing will still have India at its core. Volatility is here for a while. Every new AI announcement from global players will test market nerves.

Today's fall was a reminder that sentiment around tech is extremely fragile and that Indian IT will remain highly sensitive to global news flow. This story matters because it marks a new phase in how markets view technology. AI is no longer a distant buzzword. It is influencing stock prices, investor decisions, and long-term sector expectations in real time.



from global clients, especially in the US, any sign that AI might replace traditional outsourcing creates fear. The fear may not reflect immediate reality, but markets always move ahead of fundamentals.

INVESTORS WORRIED ABOUT AI BOOM

The panic does not mean the Indian IT model is obsolete. It does mean investors want to see how fast Indian firms can

Amruta Khanvilkar

Thinks Actors Get Good Roles Only When They 'Produce Or Direct'

Amruta Khanvilkar got real about the casting process in the industry, highlighting how dramatically it has changed since she started out nearly two decades ago. According to the actress, who was most recently seen in Netflix's series *Taskaree: The Smuggler's Web*, factors such as social media popularity and follower counts greatly influence who should and should not be featured in a project. But she isn't too concerned about her online presence and doesn't let it affect her. "Casting is not in an actor's hands," she told *Hindustan Times*. She shared that casting an actor solely based on followers "does not make sense". Amruta asked, "How would one know if they lost a role because the other person has more social media followers?" The 41-year-old mentioned that the only way to have complete authority is to either direct or produce the specific project. Amruta explained, "If an actor wants complete control, the only way is to produce or direct. Otherwise, all you can do is focus on your craft and stay authentic."

Amruta Khanvilkar Calls The Industry "Unpredictable"

She further shared that she had now learned not to dwell on missed opportunities. Calling the industry unpredictable, she said,

"If I lost a role, it was never meant to be. You win some, you lose some. That's the nature of this industry." The *Raazi* actress mentioned that, as actors, they should avoid being "bothered" about why they lost a role, because they might never know why makers make certain casting decisions. "Having said that, you can't live with regret," she added.

Amruta Khanvilkar Discusses The Boon Of OTT Platforms

Besides discussing changes in the casting process, Amruta also credited OTT platforms with transforming the industry for actors like her. She said that streaming services have now opened doors to a newer form of storytelling and more room to experiment than traditional media. "In long-format storytelling, especially, the writing becomes crucial. The arc, the timeline, the way characters evolve over seasons, all of that matters," she said.

She highlighted that makers are now more open to experimentation, not just with content but also with casting. And one of her favourite things about this transformation is the evolution of women-centric roles. Amruta shared that she values working with filmmakers who avoid casting female actors in typical roles. "I love it when makers treat characters as characters, not as genders. A woman can be nurturing and still be fierce. She can be in her jeans and shirt and completely k—s, and that should feel normal," she explained.



Sai Pallavi

In Talks For *Kalki 2* After Deepika Padukone Exit, CONFIRM Makers: 'She'll Be Perfect'

Speculation around casting changes in big-budget franchises is nothing new, but the latest buzz around *Kalki 2898 AD* has clearly struck a chord with fans. With anticipation for the sequel building, fresh rumour suggests a key role may see a new face, even as the makers remain tight-lipped. Sources close to the film have now confirmed to *Hindustan Times* that Sai Pallavi is being considered for an



important part in the sequel, following Deepika Padukone's exit from the project. While nothing has been officially announced, the development has renewed interest in what lies ahead for the ambitious sci-fi universe created by director Nag Ashwin.

A representative associated with the film told HT that discussions are still at a preliminary stage. "Nothing has been finalised yet. But yes, the makers are looking at Sai to play SUM-80 after

Deepika's exit. They think she'll be a perfect fit for the role," the source said.

At the same time, they dismissed reports claiming that Sai Pallavi has already been signed on or that filming is set to resume soon. "All these are just rumours because nothing has been finalised yet. Please wait for official confirmation."

Deepika Padukone's exit from the sequel first came to light in September 2025. Around the

same time, she also stepped away from *Spirit*, directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga. Reports claimed that she had shot for nearly 20 days for the *Kalki* sequel before leaving due to a fee-related issue. Neither Deepika nor the makers have commented on these reports. In the first film, Deepika played SUM-80, also called Sumati, a pregnant test subject in Project K and the prophesied mother of *Kalki*. Her character was central to the story.

In the Telugu version, the role was dubbed by Sobhita Dhulipala. After escaping from Supreme Yaskin's lab, SUM-80 is protected by Amitabh Bachchan's character, Ashwathama.

Produced by Vyjayanthi Movies, the sequel is expected to continue exploring these storylines, making the casting of SUM-80 a crucial decision. With Sai Pallavi now reportedly in the mix, fans are eager to see how the role may evolve, should the casting be confirmed.



Sonam Kapoor Wishes Waheeda Rehman On Her Birthday With A Sweet Post



A legendary actress Waheeda Rehman celebrates her 88th birthday, celebrities have been pouring in warm wishes through heartfelt posts on social media. Sonam Kapoor also joined in, taking to Instagram Stories to share a special message for the iconic star. The actress posted a solo picture of the veteran star, keeping the message simple yet meaningful. Alongside the photo, Sonam wrote, "Happy birthday Waheeda ji." The post reflected Sonam's admiration for the timeless actress whose contribution to Indian cinema continues to inspire generations.

Jackie Shroff also shared a video montage on Instagram featuring pictures and clips of Waheeda Rehman. The clip also included a snippet from the iconic song *Aaj Phir Jeene Ki Tamanna Hai* from the 1965 classic *Guide*, which starred Dev Anand. In his caption of the post, Jackie simply wrote, "Warm wishes, Waheeda Rehman Happy Birthday."

Over a career spanning five decades, Waheeda Rehman has appeared in more than 90 feature films. Her contribution to cinema earned her several accolades, including the National Film Award, India's civilian awards, the Padma Shri in 1972 and the Padma Bhushan in 2011.

Sonam Kapoor's Casual Day Out

Coming back to Sonam Kapoor, the actress has been constantly making headlines for her pregnancy. She is expecting her second child with her husband, businessman Anand Ahuja. On Monday, Sonam stepped out for a casual appearance where she even interacted with the paparazzi outside a store. Acknowledging the photographers, the actress was striking some quick poses when one of them asked, "Health kaise hai aapki (How's your health)?

Smiling at him, the actress replied, "Sab theek hai (Everything is fine), thank you." Later, Sonam also obliged some fans' requests, posing for a selfie one of them.

Sonam Kapoor's Second Pregnancy

Sonam announced her second pregnancy last year in November by sharing a post on Instagram. Sharing a series of pictures where she revealed her baby bump, the actress simply wrote, "Mother," subtly expressing her excitement. In the photos, she wore a hot-pink pure wool suit featuring oversized padded shoulders. The post confirmed her due date is Spring 2026. Sonam and Anand got married in May, 2018, in a traditional ceremony. Four years after tying the knot, the couple welcomed their first child, son Vayu, in August 2022.

Mahima Chaudhry's Daughter

Arina Clicks Photos With Sidharth Malhotra, Shanaya Kapoor



It was a night of glitz and glamour in Mumbai on February 1, as captured in a recent post by Mahima Chaudhry's daughter, Arina. The star kid attended a launch event with her mother, which saw Bollywood's biggest names in attendance. Celebrities spotted at the event included Salman Khan, Twinkle Khanna, Akshay Kumar, Wamiqa Gabbi, Sidharth Malhotra, Arjun Kapoor, Isha Koppikar, Diana Penty, and Lulia Vantur. Also lighting up the red carpet were Rohit Saraf, Mrunal Thakur, Mahima Chaudhry, Rakul Preet Singh, Jackky Bhagnani, and several others.

Now, Arina has shared exclusive glimpses and special moments from the glamorous evening. Taking to Instagram, she posted a carousel of pictures featuring several celebrated Bollywood personalities.

Arina was seen posing with Sidharth Malhotra in one photo, while another showed her interacting with Shanaya Kapoor. As expected, social media users bombarded the comments section of the post with their sweetest reactions. The Internet community also talked about Arina's resemblance to her mom.

"No doubt Arina is super cute," read a comment. "So elegant, so poised—each one shining in their own way. Beautiful energy, beautiful moment," a fan wrote. Meanwhile, one of them commented, "She can be a great model."

Salman Khan, Akshay Kumar, Aamir Khan And Ajay Devgn Come Together For The Cover

The highlight of the launch was the unveiling of *Variety India*'s inaugural cover on February 1. The cover features Akshay Kumar seated on a couch, with Salman Khan, Aamir Khan, and Ajay Devgn standing behind him.

Variety described the quartet as "Unshakable. The superheroes that broke the rules of stardom," a line that perfectly captures their decades-long influence on the Hindi film industry.

Healthy Habits to inculcate in Your kids



Many parents complain that their children don't listen to them, whether it's brushing their teeth before bed or eating veggies!

But what they don't understand is that unless they instill little habits like these from a young age, children won't get into a set routine. We list down the top three healthy habits every parent must make their child follow.



study higher, as it will drastically elevate their language skills. Every night, set aside sometime and read to your kids. Eventually, make them develop the habit of reading on their own.

21 questions to ask your kids instead of 'How Was Your Day?'



Most of us are guilty of asking our kids, 'How was your day?' after they return from a long day at school. And when we get common answers like, 'Good' or 'Fine', we obviously feel disappointed and sometimes dejected. So how can we make our kids more forthcoming about sharing details of their day. Or atleast get a full sentence out...

- 1) What is the best place at the school?
- 2) What was the funniest thing you heard today?
- 3) Did you help someone today?
- 4) Did someone help you?
- 5) Who sat with you in the class? Would you have preferred someone else?
- 6) What made you laugh?
- 7) What bored you in school?
- 8) During lunch break, whom did you play with?
- 9) Who is the funniest person in the class?
- 10) Who is the most grumpy kid in the class?
- 11) If you were your teacher, what would you do?
- 12) What was the word your teacher used most today?
- 13) Did anyone cry in the class?
- 14) Did your ma'am teach something that you couldn't understand?
- 15) Anything you look forward to tomorrow?
- 16) What is the hardest rule you have to follow in school?
- 17) What made your teacher happy?
- 18) What made your teacher mad?
- 19) Did you learn any new words today?
- 20) Which is the part of your school you like the least?
- 21) Did you use the school washroom? Do you feel safe going there?

With the sweltering summer approaching fast, fun-loving Surtis have already started making plans for a much deserved family vacation for the year. And if a pet is one of your family members too, you'd never want to leave him behind.

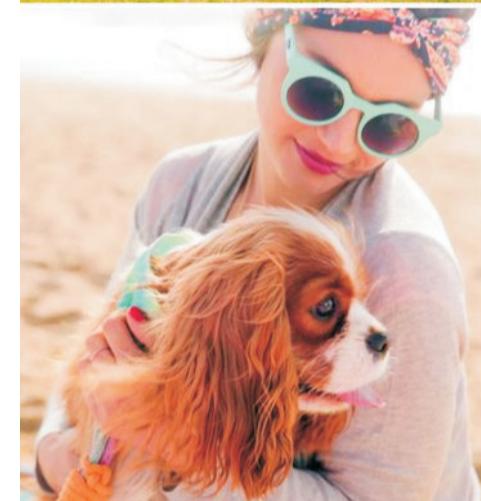
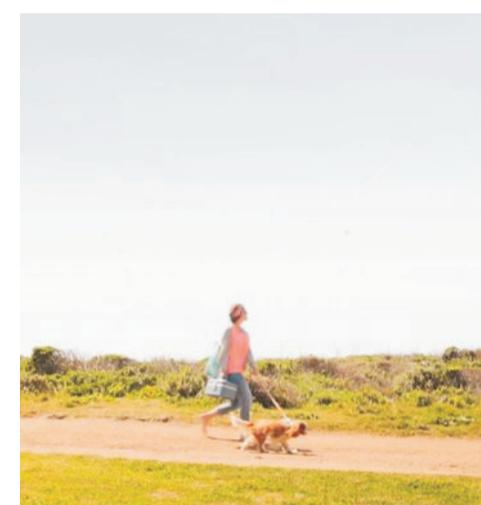
Here's how to make sure you and your four-legged companion make the most out of a holiday.

Travel safely

The safest and the most comfortable way for pets to travel is inside a carrier or crate. Never leave your pet unattended in a parked car. Temperatures shoot up inside a closed vehicle during summer and that can give your pet a fatal heatstroke. Always keep them on the back seat and don't allow them to stick their head out of the window. Give them plenty of rest stops and carry sufficient amount of food and water. On a beach trip, make sure you get them a shady spot and never let them drink sea water as salt tends to make them sick.

Check with the airline in advance

If travelling by airplane with your pets is the only option, call the airline in advance and check if they allow pets in the cabin. Check if they have any special pet health and immunisation requirements and if they require a specific type of carrier. If your pet is flying in



How to have a fun pet-cation

the cargo hold, make sure you use direct flights, travel in the same flight as your pet, and choose a flight that will accommodate temperature extremes.

Make hotel reservations carefully

The words 'pet-friendly' have a very broad definition in the hotel world. Call them directly and ask: What is the charge for bringing a pet? Will there be a cleaning fee that may or may not be refundable? Are there weight restrictions, breed restrictions? May I leave them unattended in the room while I'm

gone for the day?

If you can't carry your pet along

The best way to ensure pet safety when you can't take them along is to have someone watch your pet in your home. If it's difficult to find a potential dog baby-sitter, make sure you find a comfortable, responsible and reliable 24 hour home care. Look for a foster home or a dog care centre to leave your dog while on vacation. Visit the centre at least twice to check if its clean and safe, the caretakers are reliable and whether they will be able to meet the needs of your dog.

Tip

Always, have two ID tags on your pet's collar: the normal ID tag plus a tag with the information of where you are staying (hotel, friend's address, etc.). Also, keep an updated photo of your pet in case you do get separated, so you can locate him more easily.

Must do's

Get an early summer check-up done for your pet and make sure your dog's vaccinations are up to date before your trip. Fleas, ticks and the mosquitoes which carry heart worm disease are more prevalent in warmer months.

Ask your veterinarian for an effective preventive to keep these parasites off your dog.

While making a travel plan, don't visit places where animals are kept in cages and enclosures or used for entertainment. Animals can suffer tremendously when they are kept in captivity and live in an almost constant state of discomfort and anxiety.

Avoid festivals and temple ceremonies that continue to feature elephants. Choose a beach, hill station, park, garden or a historical place instead.

"Parents must educate their children about how to behave with animals. Animals are just like human beings and feel as much pain as we do. They are innocent like babies and exhibit all the emotions that we do — be it joy, sadness or jealousy. Pets have an incredible ability to brighten your day and fill your house with positive energy. Not once have I come home and not had my dog Zorro jumping in joy to see me," she says, adding, "Bringing dogs home just to use them as security guards is inhuman. If you want security, just pay for guards; don't abuse helpless animals."

What the law says

The following area punishable under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960:

- Beating, kicking, overriding, torturing or causing any pain or suffering by the pet owner or any other person.
- Caging or confining in an enclosure that is too small to allow reasonable movement.
- Using a short leash or a very heavy chain.
- Keeping the animal constantly confined or tied for extended periods, thereby denying it the opportunity to exercise.
- Failing to provide sufficient food, water and proper shelter.
- Placing an animal in circumstances that are likely to endanger its life, or cause its death from starvation or thirst. This means abandoning an animal in unfamiliar territory or in sickness or old age.
- Maiming or injuring an animal in any way, or performing any surgical or invasive procedure without anaesthesia. This can include ear or tail docking.
- Inadequate health care. This includes lack of timely and appropriate veterinary treatment.
- Using an animal for the purpose of animal fights/contests (cockfights, oxen races, dog races) or baiting.
- Over-breeding dogs or keeping pups for sale in poor conditions.

Celebs that are animal right advocates

Amitabh Bachchan: Senior Bachchan brought worldwide attention to the plight of Bijlee, an elephant who collapsed after being physically and psychologically traumatized, in June. If it was not for the actor's appeal via social media outlets, which generated worldwide support, this former working elephant would not have been rescued and cared for.

Madhuri Dixit-Nene: Recently, the Dhak Dhak girl rescued seven puppies that were drenched in rain and struggling for their lives. Madhuri interrupted the shoot of her show, and stayed with the puppies until help arrived.

Trisha Krishnan: She recently sent a letter to the mayor of Chennai, urging him to scrap a proposed round-up of approximately 30,000 dogs from the streets, who would then be imprisoned in pounds.

Raveena Tandon-Thadani: The actress shares her home with two Indian community dogs rescued from the streets and one dog adopted from an animal shelter. She has also helped find homes for several other street dogs.

John Abraham: He pushed for enforcement of the ban on Jallikattu and spoke out against Mumbai's 'dancing' monkeys. Now, John is urging the Ministry of Environment and Forests to help animals who are abused in India's circuses.

Pets have rights too

not given enough exercise. This can also lead to skin problems and ailments like kidney or liver failure.

While many of us feel that a whack or two is OK to discipline our pets, Santosh says that such methods of training are outdated. "Beating is just not required. Positive reinforcement, wherein you spend time with your pets and reward good behaviour, works best," he says, adding, "You don't need professional trainers. There are several videos online that you can refer to train your pet. You will cherish this experience and it is a great way to bond."

What to do if you witness abuse

So what do you do if you witness abuse? If reasoning it out with the owner is not an option, the best thing to do is to call in the experts. Santosh, whose team rescues and rehabilitates abused animals, says that on an average, he receives 4-5 cases a day. "We do not reveal the name of the complainant, so that there are no issues between neighbours. We counsel the owners and tell them that what they are doing is wrong and



against the law. If they are facing problems with caring for their pets, we give them options and even offer to take the pet away if they are unable to keep them. The last step is to approach the local police, if the owners do not mend their ways and are unwilling to give us their pet," says Santosh.

There's a reason dogs are called man's best friend. They get lonely when you are away and are happiest in the presence of their human family. Treating them with respect is something that must come naturally, and it all begins with education, feels Aindrita.