



India-US statement on trade deal next week, agriculture safeguarded: Sources

The much-awaited statement is likely to lift the secrecy that has shrouded the trade deal ever since Trump unilaterally announced that a trade deal with India had been reached. There was no mention of the deal in PM Modi's post.

New Delhi. (Agency)
With finer details of the India-US trade deal still under wraps, both sides are expected to issue a joint statement shedding light on the agreement next week, sources said. The much-awaited statement is likely to lift the veil of secrecy that has shrouded the trade deal ever since US President Donald Trump unilaterally announced that a trade deal with India had been reached, and tariffs were reduced to 18% from 50%. However, there was no such mention of a deal in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's post, leading to uncertainty and criticism from the opposition. Several of these aspects are likely to be cleared as senior officials from Trump's team visit India next week. Sources said that after the joint statement, the finer details of the trade deal, whose

negotiations dragged on for a year and saw India-US ties hit an all-time low, would be made public.

Crucially, India's sensitive sectors --

reaching the trade deal. Apart from the fact that PM Modi did not massage Trump's ego by calling him directly to seal the deal last year, as said by US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick last month. India has consistently kept agriculture and dairy outside the scope of its trade deals with other nations, be it with agreements signed with New Zealand, the UK or the European Union. The same approach has been maintained in its proposed deal with the US. The issue has been a political hot potato in the recent Budget session of Parliament, with the opposition accusing PM Modi of compromising India's interests.

What has added to the confusion is US Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins's statement that the trade deal would "improve access of American farm products" to India's massive market.



agriculture, dairy and fisheries -- have been safeguarded, sources said. These sectors, red lines for India, are believed to have been a key factor behind the delay in

Scared of Epstein files? Priyanka Gandhi jabs PM Modi over Lok Sabha no-show

Priyanka Gandhi's remarks came after Union Minister JP Nadda, speaking in the Rajya Sabha, described Rahul Gandhi as "naive." She said the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha should be allowed to speak freely.

New Delhi. (Agency)
MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday took a sharp swipe at the government over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's absence during the Lok Sabha proceedings, questioning whether it was avoiding issues raised by the Opposition. Reacting to Union Minister JP Nadda's remark in Rajya Sabha today describing Rahul Gandhi as "naive," Priyanka Gandhi said the Leader of the Opposition should be allowed to speak freely in Parliament. "Is this a way to talk about anyone? He should be allowed to speak. What are they scared of — that he will quote from a book? Or are they scared of the Epstein files? Or that we will question them about the India-US deal due to which farmers will suffer?" she asked. The Wayanad MP was referring to reports circulating from Epstein files that made references to PM Modi and his official visit to Israel. The government has rubbished the

claims as baseless and contemptible. Earlier in the day, as Parliament resumed amid protests, the Rajya Sabha witnessed fiery exchanges amid repeated disruptions and the controversy surrounding the

allegation that democracy is in danger. You must understand this within the party as well. In a democracy, things should be done democratically. Don't let the party become hostage to a naive child." Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge countered by accusing the government of suppressing debate and preventing Opposition leaders from speaking in the Lok Sabha. Stressing that Parliament includes both Houses, Kharge questioned why matters of national interest could not be freely discussed. "How can you run the House like this?" he asked.

As tempers flared, Congress members staged a walkout from the Rajya Sabha. Today's Rajya Sabha standoff unfolded against the backdrop of continuing protests in the Lok Sabha, where the Congress claims Rahul Gandhi has been prevented from completing his speech during the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address.



cancellation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled address in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. In his remarks, Nadda accused the Opposition of deliberately stalling proceedings. "You did not let the House function. I strongly condemn the

Air India probes crew compliance after Boeing 787 fuel control switch issue

New Delhi. (Agency)
Air India said on Thursday it was investigating if its crew followed all compliance procedures when a Boeing jet took off from London with a possible fuel-switch defect, only to be later grounded in India. Reuters is the first to report the airline's investigation of Sunday's incident, after reporting that Britain's aviation authority had privately asked Air India for details of all maintenance actions before the decision to take off.

Britain has given Air India a week's deadline to submit a complete response, or face regulatory action against it and its fleet of 33 Boeing 787s. Authorities have said pilots in London had observed the fuel control switch did not stay latched in the 'run' position on two attempts, but was stable on a third. The crew decided to fly to India, where the pilot reported a possible "defect" on landing, forcing the grounding of the plane for checks.

In a statement, Air India said it will be "following its safety investigation protocol and take appropriate action," in response to a query from Reuters whether the pilots had flagged concerns to British authorities before takeoff. It did not elaborate on possible action.

ISSUE REPORTED ON LANDING IN INDIA

A source with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters Air India's investigation would question the crew why they did not report the incident in London, and if they felt it was safe to fly, why they reported it later in India. India's civil aviation authority did not immediately respond to queries from Reuters. Fuel switches, which regulate the flow of jet fuel to a plane's engines, were at the centre of last year's crash of an Air India Dreamliner in the western state of Gujarat that killed 260 and triggered a tight scrutiny of the airline. After Sunday's incident, Air India and Indian authorities have said there were no issues with fuel control switches on the airline's Dreamliner fleet. Britain's watchdog has sought a "comprehensive root-cause analysis" of the incident and a "preventive action plan," however, to avert any recurrence across Air India's Boeing 787 fleet, Reuters reported on Wednesday.

Five Tejas Mk1A aircraft ready, nine await US-made engines, says HAL

New Delhi. (Agency)
State-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has said that five Tejas Mk1A fighters fitted with GE F404 engines are ready for delivery, while an additional nine aircraft are awaiting engine supplies from the United States. The defence PSU added that "major" contracted capabilities have been incorporated in the five fighters, even as questions persist over pending certifications and delivery timelines that are yet to be formally communicated.

In a statement issued on Thursday, HAL said, "HAL confirms that five aircraft are fully ready for delivery, incorporating major contracted capabilities in accordance with

the agreed specifications. An additional nine aircraft have already been built and flown. Upon receipt of engines from GE, these aircraft will be made ready for delivery." HAL in its statement also added that the supply position from the US manufacturer remains positive. Sources in the defence and security establishment said that while the five aircraft described as "ready" incorporate key contracted capabilities, not all contracted capabilities have yet received certification, with certain clearances still pending. The first to report that deliveries of the Mk1A were likely to miss their March delivery deadline due to pending certifications and operational clearances. In



addition to delays in the supply of US-made engines, sources said that integration and certification of the Israeli EL/M-2052 AESA radar have also had a bearing on programme timelines. The updated delivery schedule for

the Mk1A has not yet been formally communicated. Media reports have suggested that the Indian Air Force may undertake a review of the aircraft in May, following which fresh delivery dates could be worked out. The programme has already seen delivery timelines slip by more than two years. On Wednesday, HAL said it was "not in a position to comment" on reports suggesting that it had effectively lost its monopoly in fighter aircraft manufacturing following its reported exclusion from the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) prototype development phase, adding that it would keep stakeholders informed.

Farmers now get loans through e-KCC in just 5 minutes: CM Yogi

The Sikh Times

Lucknow, 5 February: Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said, "Digital governance has completely transformed the loan approval system in Uttar Pradesh. Earlier, when 'Annadata Kisan' went to take loans through the Kisan Credit Card (KCC), they had to wait anywhere between 25 days to one month. Today, the farmer is receiving loan facilities within just five minutes through e-KCC". CM also added, for the year 2026-27, our agricultural credit target of ₹3 lakh crore reflects a 13 percent increase compared to earlier years. This is good governance, and we must move forward with even greater strength in this direction. The Chief Minister was addressing the gathering on Thursday at Lok Bhawan during the release of the State Focus Paper in State Credit Seminar 2026-27. He said that today the government and Annadata Kisan (Farmers) are jointly thinking about how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be used in agriculture. Inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Central

Budget has announced an AI Agriculture Platform, and Uttar Pradesh is progressing

rapidly in this direction. On this occasion, the Chief Minister also honoured several Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) on the stage. The Chief Minister said, The models presented at the seminar are an inspiration for the entire state. The Kasya Milk Producer FPO, operated by different-abled persons and having 1,005 members, is a living example of this. In regions like

eastern Uttar Pradesh, which were earlier considered weak, differently-abled individuals have set a new benchmark through their hard work and capability. This is a great achievement, and all those involved deserve appreciation. Mentioning the mustard production company run by 750 women in Mathura, the Chief Minister added, "He personally visited their exhibition. The way women linked mustard oil production with processing and earned better profits is a lesson for the entire state. The government will extend full support to such initiatives at every level". CM Yogi also said, "The cooperative sector is also undergoing a major transformation. Under the vision of 'Sahkar se Samridhi ki Orie', digitisation, e-governance and transparent policies have ensured good governance and accountability in cooperative institutions". CM continues by saying, Uttar Pradesh is the first

state in the country to work with the World Bank in the field of agri-tech. Agriculture, MSMEs, women, agri-tech and youth entrepreneurship are among the top priorities of the government. Recalling the situation before 2017, the Chief Minister said, "The cooperative sector was dominated by mafias. The Reserve Bank had declared 16 district cooperative banks as defaulters and ordered their closure. Today, under our government, 15 out of these 16 banks have turned profitable, and efforts are underway to make the remaining one profitable as well". The Chief Minister said, there was a time when large-scale migration had taken place from Uttar Pradesh due to the collapse of the MSME sector. Handicrafts and exports had nearly come to a standstill, and MSMEs were on the verge of closure. Our government promoted it through the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative. Today, Uttar Pradesh is the first state in the country to provide ₹5 lakh security insurance to MSME units.

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News box

Traffic ACP suspends 2 zonal officers after surprise check during Surajkund Mela**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

The assistant commissioner of police (traffic east), Sanjay Kumar, suspended two traffic zonal officers on Tuesday after a surprise inspection revealed serious lapses in duty at key traffic checkpoints in the city.

The inspection was carried out on Feb 4 at multiple locations. Assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Narendra, posted as the zonal officer at the Ghata Power House, was found absent from his designated duty point. He was marked absent and suspended with immediate effect.

In another instance, ASI Azad, deployed as zonal officer at the Faridabad-Bandhwari Toll, was found sitting inside a booth instead of manning the checkpoint set up for heavy vehicle checking in view of the ongoing Surajkund Mela. Further verification showed that he was not carrying the mandatory govt-issued body-worn camera, amounting to serious negligence of duty. He was also suspended with immediate effect.

Officials said traffic police teams conduct regular surprise inspections to ensure compliance with departmental orders and traffic regulations. The Surajkund Mela, which draws a large number of visitors and vehicles, has led to the deployment of additional traffic personnel and checkpoints to manage congestion and ensure public safety. Senior officers said absence from duty points and failure to follow standard operating procedures could severely impact traffic regulation and public safety.

"Strict adherence to duty protocols, visible presence on the ground, and use of prescribed equipment are mandatory for all officers and staff. Any sort of negligence, indiscipline, or defiance of orders will not be tolerated at any level, and similar surprise inspections and stringent action will continue in the future," ACP Sanjay Kumar said.

Training held in Gurgaon for officials on Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

The District Election Office, Gurgaon, organised a training programme for electoral registration officers to streamline the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. The session was held at the PWD Rest House and attended by officers from South Haryana. State-level master trainer and Rohtak Tehsildar Sarla Kaushik conducted the session, explaining procedures related to special revision, new voter registration, corrections, disposal of claims and objections, and ensuring transparency and error-free electoral rolls. A total of 56 officials participated, including SDM Gurgaon Parmjeet Chahal, SDM Badshahpur Sanjeev Singh, SDM Pataudi Dinesh, SDM Manesar Darshan Yadav, SDM Sohna Akhilesh, OSD Simran from the divisional commissioner's office, CTM Sapna Yadav and election tehsildar Rajneesh Schrawat. The SIR began with house-to-house verification, checking of photographs, addresses, and deceased voters. In Haryana, election offices have already completed field verification, BLO mapping, and preliminary roll corrections. In Gurgaon district, officials have updated entries of shifted voters, started bulk correction of errors, and initiated school-level campaigns to register first-time voters (18-19 years). Claims and objections are being received continuously through both offline forms and the NVSP/ECI voter portal. The publication of draft electoral roll has been published and at present authorities have invited claims and objections. Haryana currently has approximately 2.03 crore voters. Gurgaon district has over 15.5 lakh voters. In between 2014 to 2019 nearly 1.6 lakh new voters were added in Gurgaon district while in between 2019-24 around 90,000 voters were added.

Booth level officers (BLOs) all over the state have started matching the names of voters with the voters' list of 2002, as a part of the pre-Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise.

Noida techie death sparks call for NDRF and QRT units to tackle highrise fires, crashes**Noida.(Agency)**

Weeks after the Jan 17 drowning of 27-year-old Yuvraj Mehta in a water-filled construction pit in Sector 150, members of a district residents' welfare association (DDRWA) on Wednesday flagged long-standing civic neglect and sought a dedicated quick response team for emergencies. The delegation met additional chief executive officers (ACEOs) Soumya Srivastava and Srilakshmi VS at the Greater Noida Authority and emphasised the need for a quick response team for the district. They also demanded helicopter support to deal with accidents in construction pits and fires in high-rise societies and nearby villages.

Currently, emergency response operations in Noida are handled by the SDRF and NDRF units stationed in Ghaziabad. On Jan 16-17 night, the SDRF team from Ghaziabad took at least 70 mins to reach the accident spot in Sector 150 after Mehta's first SOS call to his father at 12.04 am, while the NDRF unit took nearly 2 hours. Mehta, however, drowned, crying his lungs out as he waited to be pulled out. According to police, Yuvraj managed to stay afloat till around 1.30 am, after which his cries for help stopped. Statements recorded by a three-member special investigation team (SIT), probing why rescue operations began nearly two hours after the car fell into the trench, suggested that the agencies had offered differing explanations for the delay, citing equipment constraints, weather and poor visibility.

In Jan, Dadri MLA Tejpal Nagar had also written to chief minister Yogi Adityanath seeking the deployment of an SDRF or NDRF unit in Noida.

GNIDA officials told an RWA delegation that a recent joint meeting of all three authorities had discussed plans to house NDRF personnel in Greater Noida to enable faster emergency response.

Gang using GPS jammers to snatch cars busted, six held**Noida.(Agency)**

An inter-state gang, accused of stealing more than 200 four-wheelers over a decade using hi-tech equipment, was busted by the police.

DCP Noida, Yamuna Prasad, said the gang followed a well-organised modus operandi, including conducting detailed reconnaissance missions to identify vehicles in areas with minimal security. Once a target was selected, the gang broke the locks and installed GPS jammers in the cars to prevent the police from tracking them. On Wednesday, a team from the Sector 39 police station arrested six members of the gang, including the leader, and recovered four stolen cars from different locations. During interrogation, the accused revealed that stolen vehicles were sold on demand in Rajasthan, Haryana, and other states. Vehicles that could not be sold were dismantled, and their parts were sold in various auto parts markets



in Delhi. The proceeds were shared among gang members.

Additional DCP Shavya Goyal said the gang continuously committed vehicle

thefts since 2013, expanding its network across several states. Besides Noida and Ghaziabad, their activities were also traced to Amroha and Rajasthan. Due to

their long involvement in vehicle thefts, the gang emerged as a major challenge for police agencies across multiple jurisdictions. The arrested accused were identified as Sameer alias Daud alias Kunja and Salim, residents of UP's Sambhal; Azad, a resident of Delhi; and Mohsin and Faisal from Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Sameer is believed to be the gang's kingpin. An officer said he faced 14 criminal cases in Delhi and Noida alone, with several more in Amroha. Co-accused Salim has 7 cases registered against while Azad has a criminal record of 38 cases across different police stations. Another accused, Salim, faces 4 cases, and Mohsin and Faisal faces 3 cases each. Police also revealed that all the accused were educated only between Class 5 and Class 9, but were drawn into organised crime in pursuit of quick money.

Ex-SP functionary, 9 others face FIR in Noida for embezzling Rs 1 crore**Noida.(Agency)**

An FIR has been registered against 10 people, including a former Samajwadi Party functionary, for allegedly embezzling over Rs 1 crore under the pretext of opening a grocery company. Three named accused — Anshul Yadav, Subey Yadav and Adesh Yadav, all residents of Sector 113 — and seven others have been charged with issuing threats and causing injury by hitting a man with a vehicle. One of the accused is the former metropolitan president of Samajwadi Party.

The case was registered at the Phase 3 police station on the orders of a court. The complainant — Yatendra Bansal alias Ricky, a resident of Vasundhara — alleged in his application to the court that he complained to the police, but no action was taken. Therefore, he "approached" the court.

The case was registered under sections 316(2) (criminal breach of trust), 115(2) (voluntarily causing hurt), 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace), 351(2)(1) (criminal intimidation), 281 (rash driving or riding in a public way) and 125(b) (endangering life or personal safety due to rashness or negligence) of the BNS. Yatendra said that he, along with his partner Himanshu, formed the company — Grocery Bazaar. The accused were also partners in this venture. As per the agreement, a grocery store was opened in the Phase 3 area, and Yatendra, Himanshu and Adesh were appointed directors. Yatendra invested more than Rs 1 crore in the venture. The "other directors and partners" took control of the store. When Yatendra and Himanshu demanded their money back, the accused threatened them. Anshul, Subey, Adesh and seven others together changed the company's name to New Noida Grocery Bazaar. On July 6, 2025, the accused allegedly attempted to kill Yatendra by hitting him with a vehicle. The complainant was "in a state of shock" since then.

Gurgaon shocker: Class 8 student raped, impregnated by neighbour**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

A 14-year-old girl was allegedly raped and impregnated by her neighbour in a rented accommodation located in an area under the jurisdiction of the Sector 10 police station. The survivor, a Class 8 student at a government school, is two weeks pregnant, according to people aware of the case. The 19-year-old accused, a native of Uttar Pradesh, worked as a helper in the same company as the survivor's mother. He lived alone in a rented accommodation near the girl's house. The man fled after finding out about the matter and was yet to be arrested. The incident happened sometime in January and came to light on Monday after the girl complained of acute pain and nausea. Initially, a private doctor treated her for the nausea but the pain persisted and she was taken to a government hospital, where doctors discovered the pregnancy and informed police. She is currently undergoing



treatment and recorded her statement before a magistrate late Tuesday evening. She also told police that the accused raped her twice on the same day. The accused was booked under Section 6 (aggravated penetrative sexual assault) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (PoCo) Act at the Sector 10 police station. An officer privy to the matter said that the girl was alone when the accused entered her home. "He knew the girl's family as they resided in the same

building, and the accused worked in the same company as her mother. He knew the survivor was alone at home. He threatened her of dire consequences if she told anyone about the rape, but the victim got pregnant," the officer added. The girl was provided counselling after the Child Welfare Committee was informed by police. The survivor has five siblings. Her father, a native of Bihar, works as a labourer in the area. According to people privy to the case, the girl's mother was initially reluctant to lodge a formal complaint and wanted to take her daughter to their hometown.

However, the family decided to pursue the case after being convinced by the police. "The victim is not aware of her condition. The accused is absconding and our teams are already raiding his possible hideouts. We will arrest him soon," a police officer said.

Court lets woman sell part of house inherited by sons to fund their studies**Ghaziabad.(Agency)**

A district court has permitted a woman to sell two-thirds of a residential property inherited by her minor sons after the death of her husband, allowing the sale to meet the children's education expenses. Hearing the matter under the Guardians and Wards Act, the court granted conditional permission, directing that the proceeds from the minors' share of the sale be deposited in a nationalised bank in their names until they attain the age of 18. District judge Vinod Singh Rawat also directed the applicant, Anjana Kumari, to execute a sale agreement with the prospective buyer and submit a proforma of the sale deed before the court within two months of the order. To ensure a fair valuation, the court ordered Kumari to submit copies of sale deeds of at least two nearby properties executed within the past

two years. "The entire amount received from the sale corresponding to the minors' share shall be deposited in a fixed deposit scheme in a nationalised bank in the names of the minors until they attain majority," the court said. In her application filed under Sections 29 and 31 of the Act, Kumari stated that she is the natural and legal guardian of her two sons, Harshit and Yojit. She told the court that her husband, Anil Kumar, had purchased the house in Dilshad Extension II on Sept 12, 2012, and died in an accident on March 1, 2018, after which the family's financial responsibility fell entirely on her. Kumari said that following her husband's death, the two children — Harshit, currently in Class VI, and Yojit, in Class III — became co-heirs to the property along with her. She submitted that there was an urgent need to sell part of the property to fund the boys' schooling

and related expenses. An affidavit filed by her mother-in-law, Omvati, supported Kumari's plea and stated that she had no objection to the proposed sale. Kumari's brother, who appeared as a prosecution witness, also told the court that he had no objection to the property being sold. The court noted that key documents, including Anil Kumar's death certificate, the inheritance certificate in the names of Kumari and the two minors, and a list of the deceased's family members, were placed on record. Observing that the children were studying at DAV Public School in Rajendra Nagar and that their education involved significant expenditure, the court said Kumari had made out a case for relief. "The petitioner has no source of income and seeks permission to sell the property to meet the exigencies of the minors' education.

New elevated corridors planned to clear gridlocks on 3 key roads in Gurgaon**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

GMDA is planning to explore the feasibility of constructing three elevated road corridors — which together cover over 16km — in old Gurgaon to ease congestion at some of the city's most traffic-choked junctions and arterial stretches. The proposed elevated corridors include a 7.4km stretch from Rajiv Chowk to Atul Kataria Chowk via Old Railway Road, Sector 5/6 Road and Sheetla Mata Road. Another elevated road has been planned from Atul Kataria Chowk to the Dwarka Expressway via Dundahera along Old Delhi Road, with a length of 5km. The third corridor, spanning 3.7km, is proposed from Mahavir Chowk to IFFCO Chowk via the MDI University flyover on MG Road. The authority invited a request for proposal (RFP) to appoint a consultant who will conduct feasibility studies and prepare detailed project reports (DPRs) for the three corridors. A GMDA official told TOI, "The consultant will be tasked with a detailed mobility assessment

before finalising the design and the alignment. The objective is to decongest old Gurgaon and also improve connectivity towards Delhi. These are high-traffic routes and we are looking at elevated corridors as a long-term solution. In the older part of the city, the surface roads are already constrained, the area is densely populated and there is limited space for widening or upgrades at ground level. That is why we are exploring the elevated road option to ease congestion and provide smoother connectivity."

The study will include a comprehensive traffic assessment across all modes — including pedestrians and non-motorised transport — to understand existing circulation patterns and pinpoint what exactly is causing repeated gridlocks. The data will be analysed to identify bottlenecks, road capacity issues, junction constraints, mixed-traffic conflicts, parking pressure and gaps in pedestrian infrastructure, the official added. One of the most critical

links under the plan is the elevated corridor proposed along Old Delhi-Gurgaon Road from Atul Kataria Chowk to Dundahera, near the Haryana-Delhi border. The stretch is a daily lifeline for thousands of commuters, particularly officegoers headed to Udyog Vihar. It also serves residential areas such as Palam Vihar and Sectors 21, 22 and 23, where residents frequently depend on this route for access to workplaces, schools and hospitals. Officials said this corridor is being examined because it functions as a major connector between Delhi and Gurgaon, but remains heavily congested.

The consultant will prepare the feasibility report till Dwarka Expressway along the Old Delhi-Gurgaon Road. GMDA will take up the portion that falls in Gurgaon, while the part beyond the border will have to be pursued with the Delhi govt," the official said, suggesting that inter-state coordination may be required if the corridor is to deliver full benefit.

In Delhi, the stretch passes through Kapashera and Samalka before being connected with Dwarka Expressway. It is lined with commercial establishments and sees encroachments, with street vendors occupying portions of the road and public transport and para-transit vehicles competing for limited space. Officials said an elevated facility here could help separate through traffic from local movement, easing pressure on the existing carriageway that currently struggles with traffic and frequent stoppages. Another corridor being examined runs from Rajiv Chowk to Atul Kataria Chowk, passing through Old Railway Road, the Sector 5/6 dividing road and Sheetla Mata Road — a belt that witnesses heavy daily movement due to the presence of courts, govt offices, hospitals, educational institutions and dense commercial hubs. Traffic here is often slowed down by narrow sections, roadside activity and closely spaced junctions. The third proposed

corridor — from Mahavir Chowk to IFFCO Chowk via the MDI University flyover.

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Corporate Office:
5, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg,
Press Area, ITO, New Delhi
Editor-in-Chief
Gurcharan Singh Babbar
Mob: 9654077232, 9971359517
Website: www.thesikhtimes.in
Email: sikhthetimesindia@gmail.com
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NEWS BOX

Nike Faces Federal Probe Over Allegations Of Discrimination Against White Workers

MINNEAPOLIS. (Agency)

The federal agency for protecting workers' civil rights revealed Wednesday that it is investigating sportswear giant Nike for allegedly discriminating against white employees through its diversity policies. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission disclosed the investigation in a motion filed in Missouri federal court demanding that Nike fully comply with a subpoena for information.

The EEOC sought the company's criteria for selecting employees for layoffs, how it tracks and uses worker race and ethnicity data, and information about programs which allegedly provided race-restricted mentoring, leadership, or career development opportunities, according to court documents.

In a statement, Nike said the company has worked to cooperate with the EEOC and the subpoena "feels like a surprising and unusual escalation." "We have shared thousands of pages of information and detailed written responses to the EEOC's inquiry and are in the process of providing additional information," Nike said in a statement sent to The Associated Press.

EEOC Chair Andrea Lucas has moved swiftly to target diversity and inclusion policies that she has long criticized as potentially discriminatory, tightly aligning the agency with one of President Donald Trump's top priorities. Nike appears to be the highest profile company the EEOC has targeted with a publicly confirmed, formal anti-DEI investigation. In November, the EEOC issued a similar subpoena against financial services provider Northwestern Mutual. "When there are compelling indications, including corporate admissions in extensive public materials, that an employer's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion-related programs may violate federal prohibitions against race discrimination or other forms of unlawful discrimination, the EEOC will take all necessary steps — including subpoena actions — to ensure the opportunity to fully and comprehensively investigate," Lucas said in a statement. The disclosure comes two months after Lucas posted a social media call-out urging white men to come forward if they have experienced race or sex discrimination at work.

Google's Annual Revenue Tops \$400 Billion For First Time, AI Investments Rise

United States. (Agency)

Google parent Alphabet on Wednesday reported blockbuster earnings, its revenue climbing as it invests massively in cloud computing services enhanced with artificial intelligence.

The tech giant said revenue jumped 18 percent year-on-year in the quarter, and overall annual revenue topped \$400 billion for the first time at the company founded by Larry Page and Sergey Brin in 1998.

But Alphabet said it will nearly double its investments this year in the technology arms race gripping Silicon Valley. The company expects capital expenditures between \$175 billion and \$185 billion in 2026, double its 2025 spending, to meet customer demand for AI products. Despite Alphabet relentlessly investing in computing infrastructure for AI, demand outstrips supply, according to chief executive Sundar Pichai. "We've been supply constrained even as we've been ramping up our capacity," Pichai said on an earnings call.

Alphabet shares were down slightly more than one percent in after-market trades.

Gemini wins fans

Google's Gemini AI continued to grow quickly, ending the year with 750 million monthly users in an increase of 100 million from the previous quarter. "We expect Google to overtake OpenAI this year for the top spot in AI," said Emarketer analyst Nate Elliott. Alphabet brought in \$113.8 billion in the final three months of 2025, powered by its core search business and cloud computing, earnings figures showed. Alphabet reported profit of \$34.5 billion in the recently ended quarter as revenue from cloud computing soared 48 percent to \$17.7 billion. We're seeing our AI investments and infrastructure drive revenue and growth across the board," Pichai said.

"No Issues": Air India Re-Inspects Fuel Control Switch Across Boeing Dreamliners

Washington. (Agency)

The Fuel Control Switches (FCS) across all operational Boeing 787 aircraft in the Air India fleet were found to have no issues, the carrier said after UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) sought a response on how a Dreamliner passenger jet which was grounded on arrival in India for safety checks took off from London on Sunday with a possibly faulty fuel switch. The CAA's question also came months after the AI171 Dreamliner crash in Ahmedabad killed 260 people, where the role of fuel switches also came under question. It warned of possible regulatory action against Air India and its Boeing 787 fleet if the airline does not submit a complete response within a week.

Air India said it had completed precautionary re-inspections "in an abundance of caution following an observation reported by one of our pilots". Air India said on Monday it had grounded a Boeing Dreamliner after a pilot reported a possible "defect" with the fuel control switch, which controls the flow of fuel to the plane's engines, on landing. The Air India spokesperson said it will fully adhere to the CAA's guidance to circulate procedures for the operation of the FCS to all crew members. "Air India will respond to the UK regulator accordingly.

Iran and US agree to hold nuclear talks Friday in Oman as Trump delivers blunt warning to Khamenei

CAIRO. (Agency)

Nuclear talks between Iran and the United States will take place Friday in Oman, the Iranian foreign minister said, as tensions between the countries remain high following Tehran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests last month.

The announcement Wednesday by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi came after hours of indications that the anticipated talks were faltering over changes in the format and content of the talks. U.S. President Donald Trump, meanwhile, sent a blunt warning to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei ahead of the talks. "I would say he should be very worried," Trump said of Khamenei in an interview with NBC News. Turkey had been working behind the scenes to host talks in Istanbul with regional countries taking part and discussions focused on issues like Iran's ballistic missile program and other concerns.

Early Wednesday, a regional official said Iran was seeking a "different" type of meeting focused exclusively on the issue of Iran's nuclear program, with participation limited

to Iran and the United States. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media. A similar series of talks had been hosted last year by Oman, a sultanate on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula that long as served as an interlocutor between Iran and the West. Those talks ultimately broke down in June as Israel launched what became a 12-day war on Iran that included the U.S. bombing Iranian nuclear sites.

A White House official, who spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to discuss the talks publicly, confirmed the talks would happen in Oman. The official said several Arab and Muslim leaders urged the Trump administration on Wednesday not to walk away from talks even as Iranian officials pressed to narrow their scope. The official added that the White House remains "very skeptical" that the talks will be successful but has agreed to go along with the change in plans out of respect for allies in the region. Alan Eyre, a

former U.S. diplomat once involved in past nuclear negotiations with Tehran, similarly offered a skeptical opinion of talks succeeding. "Opting for indirect talks is the



diplomatic equivalent of a surgeon taking a hit of ether and then putting on gloves before a difficult surgery," Eyre wrote on X. Eyre hopes talks will go beyond nuclear ones. Tensions between the countries spiked after Trump suggested the U.S. might use force against Iran in response to the bloody crackdown on nationwide protests last month that killed

thousands of people or if Iran conducted mass executions of detained demonstrators. The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency reported Wednesday that over 50,000 people also had been arrested over the protests. Trump also has been pushing Tehran for a deal to constrain its nuclear program. Iran's reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian on Tuesday said he had instructed the foreign minister to "pursue fair and equitable negotiations" with the U.S., in the first clear sign from Tehran it wants to try to negotiate. That signaled the move is supported by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say on all matters of state and previously dismissed any negotiations.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the U.S. hoped to discuss a number of concerns beyond the nuclear issue, including discussions on Iran's ballistic missiles, support for proxy networks across the region and the "treatment of their own people.

US wants to create critical minerals trading bloc with its allies to counter China

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

The Trump administration announced Wednesday that it wants to create a critical minerals trading bloc with its allies and partners, using tariffs to maintain minimum prices and defend against China's stranglehold on the key elements needed for everything from fighter jets to smartphones.

Vice President JD Vance said the U.S.-China trade war over the past year exposed how dependent most countries are on the critical minerals that Beijing largely dominates, so collective action is needed now to give the West self-reliance. "We want members to form a trading bloc among allies and partners, one that guarantees American access to American industrial might while also expanding production across the entire zone," Vance said at the opening of a meeting that Secretary of State Marco Rubio hosted with officials from several dozen European, Asian and African nations. The Republican administration is making bold moves to shore up supplies of critical minerals needed for electric vehicles, missiles and other high-tech products after China choked off their flow in



response to President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs last year. While the two global powers reached a truce to pull back on the high import taxes and stepped-up rare earth restrictions, China's limits remain tighter than they were before Trump took office. The conference, however, is an indication that the United States is seeking to build relationships when it comes to issues it deems key national

security priorities. While major allies like France and the United Kingdom attended the meeting in Washington, Greenland and Denmark, the NATO ally with oversight of the mineral-rich Arctic island, did not. A new approach to countering China on critical minerals Vance said some countries have signed on to the trading bloc, which is designed to ensure stable prices and will provide members access to financing and the critical minerals. Administration officials said the plan will help the West move beyond complaining about the problem of access to critical minerals to actually solving it.

"Everyone here has a role to play, and that's why we're so grateful for you coming and being a part of this gathering that I hope will lead to not just more gatherings, but action," Rubio said. Vance said that for too long, China has used the tactic of unloading materials at cheap prices to undermine potential competitors, then ratcheting up prices later after keeping new mines from being built in other countries. Prices within the preferential trade zone will remain consistent over time, the vice president said.

From foreign bureaus to sports desk, Washington Post layoffs under Bezos strain a storied news brand

World. (Agency)

The Washington Post laid off one-third of its staff on Wednesday, eliminating its sports section, several foreign bureaus and its books coverage in a widespread purge that represented a brutal blow to journalism and one of its most legendary brands. The Post's executive editor, Matt Murray, called the move painful but necessary to put the outlet on stronger footing and to weather changes in technology and user habits. "We can't be everything to everyone," Murray said in a note to staff members. He outlined the changes in a companywide online meeting, and staff members then began getting emails with one of two subject lines — telling them their role was or was not eliminated. Rumors of layoffs had circulated for weeks, ever since word leaked that sports reporters

who had expected to travel to Italy for the Winter Olympics would not be going. But when official word came down, the size and scale of the cuts were shocking, affecting virtually every department in the newsroom. "It's just devastating news for anyone who cares about journalism in America and, in fact, the world," said Margaret Sullivan, a Columbia University journalism professor and former media columnist at the Post and The New York Times. "The Washington Post has been so important in so many ways, in news coverage, sports and cultural coverage." Martin Baron, the Post's first editor under its current owner, billionaire Jeff Bezos, condemned his former boss and called what has happened at the newspaper "a case study in near-instant, self-inflicted

brand destruction." And former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called the layoffs "part of a broader reprehensible pattern in which corporate decisions are hollowing out newsrooms across the country." In an speech to members of the Washington Press Club Foundation, Pelosi said: "A free press cannot fulfill its mission if it is starved of the resources it needs to survive. And when the newsrooms are weakened, our republic is weakened." Journalists pleaded with Bezos for help. Bezos, who has been silent in recent weeks amid pleas from Post journalists to step in and prevent the cutbacks, had no immediate comment. The newspaper has been bleeding subscribers in part due to decisions made by Bezos, including pulling back from an endorsement of Kamala Harris, a Democrat.

Massive Washington Post cull as one-third of newsroom laid off in 'strategic reset'

World. (Agency)

It is a grim day for journalism as The Washington Post on Wednesday confirmed sweeping layoffs, formally beginning a cost-cutting push that had loomed over the newsroom for weeks. Internal warnings, union alerts and mounting public scrutiny had all pointed to this moment. The cuts signal the most dramatic narrowing of the paper's editorial vision since it was bought by former Amazon chief Jeff Bezos in 2013. According to reports, nearly one-third of the Post's workforce has now been laid off across the company. Ishaa Tharoor, son of Congress MP and author Shashi Tharoor, and Pranshu Verma, the Post's India bureau chief, were among those laid off. "I'm heartbroken for our newsroom and especially for the peerless journalists who served the Post internationally — editors and correspondents who have been my friends and collaborators for almost 12 years. It's been an honor to work with them," Tharoor wrote. Verma also shared the news on X, writing, "Gutted for so



many of my talented friends who are also gone. It was a privilege to work here the past four years." "Serving as the paper's New Delhi bureau chief was an honor," he added. Though Bezos has not publicly addressed the job cuts, reports, however, say he has been pressing to return the publication to profitability, drawing criticism from journalists who have questioned both his strategy and intent. In a column published earlier, senior fact

checker Glenn Kessler wrote, "Bezos is not trying to save The Washington Post. He's trying to survive Donald Trump." Inside the newsroom of one of America's most influential publications, the mood had been tense for weeks. On Wednesday morning, employees were instructed to "stay home today" as layoff notifications were sent out, confirming long-held fears. An employee, quoted by The Guardian, captured the mood of the

newsroom accurately: "It's an absolute bloodbath." In an internal memo, Matt Murray, the executive editor of The Washington Post, told staff: "These moves include substantial newsroom reductions impacting nearly all news departments." The cuts are expected to fall heavily on the sports desk, the Books section and the Post's flagship daily podcast, Post Reports. The international desk is being significantly scaled back. However, Murray said about 12 international bureaus will continue, with a focus on national security coverage. The Metro desk — long central to the paper's self-description as "For and About Washington" — is being restructured and sharply downsized. According to staff affected by the decision, Metro will shrink from more than 40 journalists to roughly a dozen. Murray elaborated on the changes during a newsroom-wide Zoom call, describing the layoffs as a "strategic reset" driven by what he called "difficult and even disappointing realities".

NEWS BOX

Manipur Assembly convenes first session after new govt formation

Imphal. (Agency)

The first Assembly session of the new BJP-led government in Manipur is set to commence on Thursday. Y. Khemchand was sworn in as the Chief Minister yesterday, along with four others, including two Deputy Chief Ministers.

Governor A K Bhalla, invoking Clause (1) of Article 174 of the Constitution of India, has summoned the 7th Session of the Twelfth Manipur Legislative Assembly to meet at 4 pm today.

Being the first session of the year, the Governor is expected to address the House. A BJP leader has expressed confidence that the floor test of the new government will not face any hurdles, citing the support of 51 members in the 60-member Assembly. The BJP, which holds 37 seats, is backed by four other political parties: the National People's Party (6 MLAs), Naga People's Front (5 MLAs), Janata Dal (United) (1 MLA), and two Independent members who have also extended their unconditional support.

Periyar Tiger Reserve to host Media—Literature Conclave on Green Writing, Human—Wildlife Conflict

Thekkady (Kerala). (Agency)

In a significant initiative linking environmental communication with on-ground conservation challenges, the Periyar Tiger Reserve (East Division), Thekkady, will organise a regional-level conclave of media professionals and literary activists on February 15, 2026. The conclave will focus on promoting green writing while examining practical, field-level strategies to address the growing issue of human-wildlife conflict.

The programme aims to bring environmental sensitivity to the forefront of journalism and literature, encouraging responsible narratives that reflect ecological realities.

Journalists, writers and cultural activists will engage in detailed discussions on integrating environmental consciousness into news reporting and literary expression, alongside sharing realistic solutions to conflicts between local communities and wildlife.

The event is being jointly organised by the Periyar Tiger Reserve (East Division) in association with Mozhi, a collective of local literary and cultural activists, the Idukki Press Club, and ECCO (Eco-friendly Collective of Journalists).

The organisers noted that the conclave is intended to serve as a platform for meaningful dialogue between conservation practitioners and communicators shaping public opinion.

Adding a literary dimension to the conclave, seven books authored by members of the Mozhi collective and published by Payal Books will be formally released during the programme, highlighting the role of literature in environmental awareness and social engagement.

The conclave will be held at Bamboo Grove, Thekkady, beginning at 10 am. The Deputy Director of the Periyar Tiger Reserve (East Division) has extended a warm invitation to media professionals, writers, literary figures and environmental communicators to attend the event and actively participate in the deliberations.

Three coaches of Chennai-New Jalpaiguri Express derail in Odisha, no casualties

Bhubaneswar. (Agency)

Three coaches of the Chennai Central-New Jalpaiguri Express derailed near Jakhapura railway station in Odisha's Jajpur yard on Thursday, officials of the East Coast Railway (ECR) said. Fortunately, there were no casualties or injuries reported following the incident. Senior railway officials rushed to the site and are closely monitoring the restoration work and safety measures.

"A minor derailment involving Train No. 22611 Chennai-New Jalpaiguri (MAS-NJP) Express occurred at 8:51 am on Thursday while the train was passing through Jajpur Yard (JKPR). An AC coach and two General coaches derailed within yard limits. The train was moving at a very slow speed at the time of the incident," the ECR said in a statement.

Passenger train operations remain unaffected. Passengers are being suitably accommodated, and the affected coaches are being detached. Additional coaches will be attached to the train as needed to ensure passenger convenience, officials said.

No rehabilitation possible at Kogilu Layout: Government to Karnataka HC

Court seeks report on temporary rehabilitation provided to residents

BENGALURU. (Agency)

Recording the submission of the state government that no rehabilitation can be permitted at Kogilu Layout, given that toxic effluent is stored in the land, the Karnataka High Court on Wednesday said that the court is prima facie persuaded to accept that in-situ rehabilitation in the given facts may not be feasible.

Appointing lawyer Vidyulatha BV as amicus curiae to assist the court in the matter, a division bench of Chief Justice Vibhu Bakru and Justice C M Poonacha sought a report from the Karnataka State Legal Services Authority on temporary rehabilitation provided to the residents of Kogilu Layout, whose houses were demolished by the GBA, to verify the same as the petitioner's counsel alleged that the rehabilitation centres were found locked when the residents visited and there are 800 affected persons. The court passed the order



after hearing the public interest litigation filed by Zaiba Tabassum, Rehana and Areefa Beguma, who were among the residents evicted from Fakir and Wasim Colonies.

On the last date of hearing, the state government informed the high

Evicted people have put up temporary sheds and are continuing to reside on the government land. Meanwhile, the state government reiterated that the 2013 satellite images show that no one was residing in Fakir and Wasim Colonies.

Disputing the state's claim that only 167 families were affected due to the demolition, the counsel for the petitioners contended that over 800 people were affected and that they are required to be rehabilitated. The rehabilitation centres established by the state were found locked when they visited. The displaced people lacked food and shelter, which is a violation of fundamental rights, the counsel argued.

Meanwhile, the Advocate General K Shashikiran Shetty filed the affidavit detailing the facilities, including food and accommodation, provided to the affected residents.

Metro fares likely to go up again in Bengaluru

At present, the minimum fare for journeys up to two km is Rs 10, while trips beyond 25 km attract the maximum fare of Rs 90.



Maintenance) Act, 2002. The same framework allows for annual fare revisions until a new FFC is constituted.

Until then, the automatic annual fare formula must be implemented, the official added. The FFC report stipulated that the annual fare increase should be calculated using the prescribed formula or capped at 5% per annum, whichever is lower, for each fare slab, with fares rounded off to the nearest rupee.

At present, the minimum fare for journeys up to two km is Rs 10, while trips beyond 25 km attract the maximum fare of Rs 90. Bengaluru already has the costliest Metro fares in the country, and a further hike would make commuting more expensive.

Everything was aligned, except one final step... Full details of NCP merger talks revealed

Pune. (Agency)

Almost all aspects of the merger between the two Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) factions had been finalised, except one. However, the entire process came to a halt following the untimely death of Ajit Pawar in a plane crash, senior party sources have said. Revealing detailed information about the discussions held on the proposed merger of the two factions of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), the sources told UNI that only holding talks with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was still pending, as the NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar faction) had demanded a share in power.

But the death of Deputy CM Ajit Pawar in a plane crash on January 28 has put a halt to the process, sources said.

Discussions on the merger between the NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar faction) and the Ajit Pawar faction began in January last year. Several rounds of talks were held between then state president of the Sharad Pawar faction, Jayant Patil, and late Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar. According to sources, the negotiations had reached their final stage.

As per the merger proposal, Sharad Pawar was willing to retire from active politics and hand over complete control of the united NCP to Ajit Pawar. This included granting him full decision-making authority along with the post of national president of the party. In return, Sharad Pawar had sought key ministerial positions in the state government and important organisational posts within the

party.

The Sharad Pawar faction had demanded ministerial berths for Jayant Patil, Shashikant Shinde and Rohit Pawar. It was also agreed that while Ajit Pawar would hold the national president's post, the state unit president would be from the Sharad Pawar faction. Additionally, several crucial organisational positions at the state level were to be allocated to the Sharad Pawar group.

Although Sharad Pawar has publicly stated that Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis had no role in the merger process, sources insist that finalising the merger without discussions with the BJP would have been impossible.

With the BJP leading the National Democratic Alliance at the Centre and the Mahayati government in the state, the decision to include the Sharad Pawar faction in power rested entirely with the BJP.

As per the talks between the two NCP factions, Ajit Pawar was to hold final discussions with the BJP leadership before completing the merger process. However, his untimely death brought the entire exercise to a standstill.

Currently, while the Sharad Pawar faction appears eager to move ahead with the merger, several senior leaders in the Ajit Pawar faction are apprehensive.

Having lost a strong and decisive leader like Ajit Pawar, they fear their position in a united NCP may weaken, leading them to create hurdles in the merger process.

FUEL to Host Annual Conclave & Future Skills Summit on Feb 6

Pune. (Agency)

Friends union for Energising Lives (FUEL) will host the FUEL Annual Conclave & Future Skills Summit on February 6th at the FUEL Campus in Pune.

The conclave is envisioned as a high-impact national forum bringing together policymakers, government leaders, industry and HR leaders, CSR heads, academicians, and youth representatives to deliberate on the future of education, employability, and workforce readiness in India, said Dr. Ketan Deshpande, Founder President, FUEL Group of Institutions here on Wednesday. Addressing a press conference here, Dr Deshpande said that the conclave will be graced by Rajendra Arlekar, Governor of Kerala, as the Chief Guest, highlighting the importance of values-driven leadership and collaborative governance in strengthening India's education and skilling ecosystem.

The conclave will also be honoured by the presence of Chandrakant Patil, Minister for Higher & Technical Education, as the Guest of Honour, reaffirming the State's commitment to future-ready education, skills, and

youth empowerment. He said that a key highlight of the conclave will be the Roundtable Discussion, bringing together senior HR and CSR talent leaders to share insights on emerging hiring trends, workforce expectations, leadership competencies, and industry-academia alignment. The roundtable will feature participation from Geetanjali Kathale Chakraborty, Shradha Mehta, Neha Mukhija, Satish Konjeti, Tina R. Krishna Pandya, Gowri Madhusoodhanan, Aswin Kumar, Nidhin Hershal, Pramod Pandey, Abhishek Ranjan, Kalyan Jodave, and Khurram Naayaab.

The conclave will focus on key themes such as Future Skills, Industry 5.0, human-centric education, employability, leadership preparedness, and CSR-led skilling initiatives.

The agenda includes an inaugural session, keynote addresses, focused discussions, and a Recognition of Excellence, honouring individuals and institutions contributing significantly to education, skills development, CSR, and youth empowerment.

No 'guilty mind', no crime: Why Gujarat High Court quashed this dowry suicide case

The Gujarat High Court noted that the deceased had been battling psychotic depression since 2013, long before her marriage and attempted suicide on previous occasions.

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

Holding that "mens rea (guilty mind) to instigate" is a must in cases of abetment to suicide, the Gujarat High Court recently quashed and set aside an FIR of dowry harassment in the case of the suicide of a Surat-based woman against her husband and his family.

The court considered that the parents of the deceased woman had admitted that she had been diagnosed with "psychotic depression" since before her marriage and had attempted suicide on previous occasions due to her mental health. Justice V K Vyas of the Gujarat High Court was hearing an application filed by the husband and in-laws of the deceased woman, imploring the court to quash and set aside the 2024 FIR lodged at

Katargam police station for abetment to suicide and dowry harassment, among other sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Dowry Prohibition Act.

Advocate Medha Pandya, appearing for the applicants, had submitted to the court that the parents of the deceased woman and the accused-applicants had arrived at a settlement and that the mother of the deceased had also filed an affidavit in support of the submissions made by the applicants.

The common oral order of the court, pronounced earlier in January this year, stated, "It is settled that to attract Section 107 of the IPC, the accused must have mens rea to instigate the deceased to commit suicide. The act of instigation must be of such

intensity that it is intended to push the deceased to such a position under which he or she has no choice but to commit suicide. Such instigation must be in proximity to the



act of committing suicide."

The court noted the submissions of the applicant-accused, stating, "...it prima facie appears that the deceased was suffering from mental illness and was undertaking

Nagpur hospital removes rare 14-kg ovarian tumour from 22-year-old woman

Nagpur. (Agency)

Doctors at Lata Mangeshkar Hospital, affiliated with N.K.P. Salve Institute of Medical Sciences, have successfully treated a rare medical case involving the removal of a 14-kilogram ovarian tumour from a 22-year-old woman.

The patient was admitted to the hospital's Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology after complaining of progressively increasing abdominal pain over the past three months. She had earlier consulted multiple doctors before approaching Lata Mangeshkar Hospital, located on Hingna Road in Nagpur.

Following admission, the patient underwent detailed investigations, including ultrasonography and MRI scans. The tests revealed a massive ovarian tumour occupying nearly the entire abdominal cavity and exerting pressure on surrounding organs. Based on these findings, doctors decided to perform a staging laparotomy. A team of specialists from the obstetrics and gynaecology department conducted the surgery successfully. During the operation, a large tumour weighing approximately 14 kilograms, originating from the right ovary, was completely removed.

Frozen section analysis of the tumour indicated that it was a borderline ovarian tumour, a rare condition characterised by low or uncertain malignant potential.

Such tumours are uncommon in young women and may have a risk of recurrence later in life. Considering the patient's age, the medical team opted for a fertility-preserving surgical approach.

The patient showed significant improvement following the procedure and was discharged from the hospital in stable condition.

Batting for one nation, one budget day

The best indicator of the importance of the announcements made by the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her budget speech for 2026-27 is in page 24 of a document titled 'Implementation of budget announcements of 2025-26'. In her last year's budget speech, the FM had made a grandiose announcement with loud thumping of desks, of a scheme to 'make India a global hub for toys manufacturing'. Page 24 tells us that mere 'inter-ministerial consultations have been completed' in a full year since that announcement. So, the FM's announcements of new schemes for manufacturing everything from seaplanes and sports goods to shipping containers and biopharma products in this year's budget can be dismissed easily as hollow rhetoric. Recall that the Prime Minister had announced 'Make in India' to double our manufacturing base with much hoopla in 2014, when manufacturing was 17 percent of the gross value added. Forget doubling, manufacturing has fallen to 13 percent of GVA now. The lesson is clear—to boost manufacturing, the government has to get out of the way, not get in the way with schemes and announcements. The annual budget exercise must be a dreary display of government finances, how and how much it plans to raise money from and spend on. Every budget faces demands to lower taxes, spend more on welfare and keep debt/deficit low, which is always an impossible trinity. GST is the largest source of tax revenues for the Union. But the Union budget has no role in it. The GST rates that determine the amount of revenues are set by the GST Council outside of the annual budget show. Recall that the GST rates were cut and rationalised in September 2025, leaving a ₹1.3-lakh-crore hole in the Union government's finances. The FM had no room to tinker with corporate and personal income taxes, which account for 60 percent of tax revenues, to fill the GST hole next year. So, she resorted to raising transaction taxes in the stock market and basic excise duties on petroleum and sin goods to fill half the GST hole. On the expenditure side, the FM surprised with a 40 percent increase in allocation for MGNREGA (new and old), perhaps to quell the opposition's fierce attack. Capital expenditure continues to be the charm offensive for the Modi government with an allocation of nearly a quarter of the total spend for next year, the highest ever. Overall, the government is projected to spend over ₹53 lakh crore, while it earns only over ₹36 lakh crore. This is not new and governments over several decades have always spent more every year than they earned. The gap was financed with debt, which has accumulated so much over decades that more than a whopping 40 percent of what the Union government is expected to earn next year goes in interest payments. This year marks a milestone in India's budget history when the government shifts focus on reducing accumulated debt from just annual deficits. Global ratings agencies and investors evaluate a nation's debt-to-GDP ratio before assigning ratings and making investment decisions that impact a nation's currency, borrowing ability and foreign investment. Laudably, the FM has promised to reduce the Union government's debt-to-GDP ratio from the current 56 percent to 50 percent by 2031. But what matters to ratings agencies and investors is not just the Union government's debt-to-GDP, but that of the Union and all states combined. States collectively spend ₹63 lakh crore, much more than the Union. States have an accumulated debt of ₹104 lakh crore, half the Union's. However, the catch is that while the Union government's debt-to-GDP is falling, states' is rising rapidly. Regardless of what the FM wishes in the budget, the nation's ratings and currency strength depend on how well the states manage their finances. Even once well-managed states like Tamil Nadu and Punjab have seen debt levels increase 10-fold in the last 15 years while their GDP grew only four-fold, thus leading to an alarming rise in their debt-to-GDP ratio. The way for states to reduce their debt levels, similar to the Union, is either to increase revenues or decrease expenditure or both. The biggest source of revenue for states is GST, which is outside the sole control of the state or the Union government. So, the only remaining option for states is to reduce expenditure to control its debt levels, which is beyond the realm of the Union government.

A Budget boxed in by fiscal arithmetic

Revised estimate for income tax collections is about 9% less than the budgetary projection

EVERY Union Budget is, first, a constitutional ritual. The government cannot spend a rupee without Parliament's consent; the Budget is the annual moment when citizens (through their elected representatives) authorise the executive to tax, borrow and spend. That is why budgets invite outsized expectations. This year, those expectations have been even louder: with the US administration's unpredictable tariff actions rattling global trade, many commentators have called for a "1991 moment"—a big-bang reset. But the truth is less dramatic and more sobering. India's room for manoeuvre is limited not by lack of imagination, but by the hard constraints of fiscal arithmetic. And that is the right place to begin any serious evaluation of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's record ninth consecutive Budget. Ask most households what they want from the Budget and you'll hear a familiar refrain: lower taxes. Yet India's tax-to-GDP ratio is only around 20%—far below Germany's nearly 35% and other European economies. Those higher ratios, crucially, finance universal social security systems. India does not offer that breadth of coverage. The uncomfortable implication is this: we want European-quality public services with a much narrower tax base. The narrowness is not anecdotal. The Economic Survey (2017) famously noted that India has only about seven income-tax payers per 100 voters. That single statistic should shape Budget debates more than any rhetorical flourish. In a democracy of 1.4 billion people, a small sliver is carrying the direct-tax burden—while the majority expects visible public goods and welfare support. There is a genuine fairness issue here, but also a basic feasibility constraint. It is true that the burden of indirect taxes such as GST is more widespread. But indirect taxes, although easier to collect, are inherently regressive and hurt the poor much more in relative terms, than the rich. On the expenditure side of the Budget, we find that a large fraction of spending is effectively pre-committed: interest payments, salaries, pensions and major subsidies (food and fertiliser). That leaves a relatively small slice for the growth-promoting portion i.e. capital expenditure. Much of the growth momentum in recent years has come increasingly from publicly funded capex, which was raised again in this budget to ₹12.2 lakh crore out of the total outlay of ₹53.5 lakh crore. Overall spending rises by only about 7%, which means that the FM is trying to protect investment spending even while keeping total spending growth contained. This implies that there isn't much discretionary fat left to trim or reallocate. So any call for sweeping tax cuts, large new welfare promises and big new sectoral packages collides with arithmetic.

On the deficit, the government has stayed close to its medium-term promise: fiscal deficit ratios of around 4.4% and 4.3% (this year and next) are broadly aligned with the glide path announced earlier. In today's global environment, that discipline matters: credibility helps keep risk premia down for dollar loans and stabilises expectations. For the next year, the combined borrowing needs of the Centre and states are massive, and hence interest rates won't come down despite heroic monetary easing by the Reserve Bank of India. If rates stay high and sticky, private investors postpone capacity expansion. When the cost of capital remains high, even a well-intentioned public capex push struggles to "crowd in" private investment. Budgets also reveal the

policy risks becoming only a carousel of announcements. One welcome feature of this Budget's narrative is the ambition to capture 10% of the global market for tradeable services—explicitly including tourism, healthcare and medical tourism, creative content and design, alongside IT. This is a sound strategic horizon. India's comparative advantage lies increasingly in services, and services exports can absorb skilled labour at scale. This will require relentless follow-through with standards, visas and connectivity for tourism; accreditation and trust for healthcare; and, above all, a massive, continuous pipeline of skill formation. Where the Budget does well is also in the architecture for MSMEs. Working capital constraints and payment delays are silent killers of small firms. Strengthening bill discounting through TReDS (Trade Receivables Discounting System)—and making it the settlement platform for purchases from MSMEs by CPSEs (Central Public Sector Enterprises)—directly targets liquidity stress where it hurts most. One missed opportunity was to link GST invoicing/filing with UDYAM registration to automatically penalise chronic payment delays. This reform would have improved trust and cash flow without large fiscal cost. One troubling omission is in not engaging with a central structural problem: the workforce share in agriculture remains high—and in some measures appears to be rising—even as agriculture's GDP share declines. That is the signature of distress, not transformation. Rural wages have stagnated for long. The non-farm economy has not created enough secure jobs to pull labour out of low-productivity agriculture. A Budget cannot speak of Viksit Bharat without addressing this employment paradox. At the same time, the proxy for unemployment insurance i.e. the rights-based employment guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been replaced by the Budget-constrained VB-G-RAM-G, in which 40% of the burden will now be on state finances. Finally, it is worth pondering whether the annual Budget presentation ought to get this festive IPL-like status. Should it not just be a routine, almost boring affair, like in most developed economies? The FM could use Budget day to deliver a candid 'State of the Economy' speech and set long-term goals. Some of the recent big economic reforms, such as the corporate tax cut of 2019, have happened outside the Budget. All said and done, this is a Budget of cautious pragmatism, and so unanswered questions. Its fiscal stance is defensible: with limited fireworks, conservative signalling and continued capex support. There is emphasis on skills and capability-building for the future.



government's beliefs about future revenues. This financial year, tax revenue till November has only grown at 3.3%, much below projections of the 2025-26 Budget. When tax buoyancy undershoots, governments typically respond by compressing expenditure—often by cutting healthcare or education spending, or delaying capex because it is the easiest line item to squeeze without immediate political backlash. Fiscal discipline is maintained but by sacrificing growth impulse. The Budget has caught the global fashion of industrial policy: sectoral thrusts, targeted incentives and "strategic" bets (biopharma, electronics, frontier manufacturing). The world is indeed picking winners. But India's experience suggests that picking winners works only when the ecosystem is built: logistics, standards, testing labs, contract enforcement, skilled technicians, predictable regulation and patient finance. Production-linked incentives have worked only for some sectors. The better way is to invest in the fundamentals that raise productivity across sectors: reliable power, ports and freight, dispute resolution, ease of exit, and a deep domestic bond market. Without these, industrial

Sweet solution: Take Haryana's laddoo model to scale

The Haryana experiment — where fortified laddoos significantly improved vitamin D levels among schoolgirls — stands out for its simplicity and effectiveness

THE quiet success of vitamin D-fortified laddoos in a government school in Haryana offers an important lesson for public health policy: solutions do not always need to be expensive, imported or disruptive. Sometimes, they simply need to be locally rooted, scientifically sound and thoughtfully delivered. Vitamin D deficiency is one of India's most under-acknowledged health challenges, particularly among adolescent girls. Despite abundant sunlight, widespread deficiency is prevalent due to factors such as lifestyle changes, social norms limiting outdoor activity and poor dietary diversity. This deficiency has long-term consequences for bone health, immunity and overall well-being. Against this backdrop, the Haryana experiment—where fortified laddoos significantly improved vitamin D levels among schoolgirls—stands out for its simplicity and effectiveness. The strength of the intervention lies in its cultural familiarity. Laddoos are not perceived as supplements or medicines but as food. This ensures compliance, avoids stigma and integrates nutrition



seamlessly into daily routines. By using biofortified mushrooms, the initiative also demonstrates how local

research institutions can contribute practical solutions to everyday problems. This pilot success must be scaled up with caution as well as commitment. Nutritional interventions must be backed by transparent data, regular monitoring and clear quality standards. Fortification should complement, not replace, broader strategies such as encouraging safe sun exposure, improving midday meals and strengthening adolescent health services. There is also a larger policy message. India's fight against malnutrition has often focussed on calories and protein, while micronutrient deficiencies receive episodic attention. This imbalance weakens outcomes. Addressing "hidden hunger" requires sustained investment in food science, school-based interventions and decentralised innovation. The Haryana model can be woven into existing schemes, turning schools into frontline spaces for preventive healthcare. Nutrition, after all, is about building futures.

Transition from brawn to brain power needed

A single sector-driven growth model has trapped Punjab in stagnation

developmental outcomes. The governments strive to deliver what the people prioritise or would be happy with. You enjoy free bus rides, you will get those; you want your homes lit free, you will have them. If these lead to a debt-GDP ratio that is the second worst in the country, so be it. This is not to suggest that we are regressive. It is just that our attitude, orientation and worldview need to be realigned with today's matrix of economic evolution. We are capable of delivering the best. Sir Malcolm Darling, a British administrator, has described the Punjabis as "the finest specimen of men I have ever seen." A confirmation of this comes from the Government of India's latest report on Good Governance Index. It has ranked Punjab as number one among all states in human resource development. What then has gone wrong? To put it simply, the society has failed to transform itself from brawn to brain or, from somatic dynamism and valour—that led Punjabis to achieving glorious heights and distinctions in 'physical' professions like defence, agriculture, transport and sports—to a 'thinking- and knowledge-driven' people, innovating and comprehending the imperatives of modern knowledge metamorphoses.

Secondly, society's attitude towards markets and commerce, religion, law and crime, government and establishment, women and history, to name a few, influences outcomes. Economics and finance are today's main measures for growth. But a substantial rural part of Punjabis has a poor sense of commerce and fiscal and money matters. Compare Punjabis with Parsis, Gujaratis and Marwaris to know the difference. We are still consumed by an agrarian ethos, a single sector-driven growth in the historical bind of 'uttam kheti, madhyam vyapar, nakhid chakri' (a proverb highlighting the social hierarchy of professions: agriculture is best, trade/business is medium and

working for others (service/jobs) is low). This traditional thought process is mainly behind the prevalence of the production of low-value, soft-farm commodities and survival on around ₹75,000 crore inducted in the economy as MSP annually. The share of agriculture may have declined to about 25% in the GDP, but nearly 45% of the population still survives on its income, with a fast-degrading ecology. Our aspiration is



the Swaminathan pricing formula, little appreciating that it would only enhance the average rural household income to a maximum of ₹45,000-50,000 a month from the existing ₹31,500.

Our service sector—46% of the economy—is characterised by low-value transactions like transport, restaurants, retail trade, real estate, entertainment, etc., with a poorly paid workforce. Industry and FDI, despite our two years' consecutive ranking as 'top performer' by the DPIIT, continue to elude the state. There is negligible surplus capital with Punjab or individuals for

setting up new manufacturing units or the much-needed futuristic knowhow. What is the way out? A crusade to upgrade the human capital in knowledge and skills of the modern development matrix is needed. A campaign as massive as the one undertaken to eliminate illiteracy by ensuring 100% enrolment and adult education is needed. The endeavour should be extended to all sectors of economy and society. In agriculture, for instance, switch over to precision agriculture and field management, micro-technology and knowledge-driven crops, etc. It will enhance incomes as well as conserve the ecology. The displaced workforce should be simultaneously skilled in other professions, ensuring equity and social justice. There is tremendous scope within the allied sectors. For example, even sub-arid Haryana, with almost no freshwater body, has a higher share in fisheries production and productivity per kg/hectare than the land of rivers, Punjab. The push requires a huge R & D effort, extension and dissemination mechanism, strengthening of infrastructure, IT and AI backbone. We need handholding by the Central government, private investment and active involvement of corporates. At the same time, we must activate our universities, research institutions and administrative systems and mobilise such social intermediaries as deras, gurdwaras, NGOs and self-help groups to create local-level learning platforms for equitable access. Their effective role during flood relief activities reaffirms their reach, resources and capability. The challenge is to marshal them. The cost of non-action would be devastating as Punjab is at a tipping point. As historian Arnold Toynbee cautioned—civilisations die not by murder but suicide. The choice is ours, Punjabis.

Union Budget's rail, EV push will reduce pollution, says Sirsa

The Budget places strong emphasis on doubling farmers' incomes through targeted schemes and market-linked interventions.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Delhi Minister for Industries, Food & Supply and Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa on Wednesday said that investments in high-speed rail corridors and promotion of electric vehicles announced in the Union Budget will play a key role in reducing pollution in the national capital while strengthening connectivity and infrastructure.

Highlighting green mobility initiatives, Sirsa said the focus on seven high-speed rail corridors, including the Delhi and Varanasi ones, along with an allocation of Rs 5,000 crore for the electric vehicle sector, will help reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality in the capital. He said the Centre has enhanced Delhi's public borrowing limit to Rs 21,000 crore, which will help

accelerate infrastructure development in the capital. "The Budget places strong emphasis on doubling farmers' incomes through targeted schemes and market-linked interventions. Women-led Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) will be connected to markets with a dedicated allocation of Rs 100 crore, while the Bharat-VISTAAR AI platform will provide real-time, customised advisory services to farmers, improving productivity and income security," he said.

Highlighting the women-centric nature of the budget, Sirsa said, "Allocation for women has been increased by 11 percent, with nearly Rs 5 lakh crore earmarked for women-focused schemes. Under Lakshmi Didi 2.0, women associated with Self-Help Groups will be provided collateral-free loans of up to Rs 5 lakh."



Romance matters for POCSO bail: Delhi HC

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi High Court has held that the romantic nature of the relationship and the girl's age being close to 18 years are relevant considerations at the stage of bail in a case lodged under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, even though the consent of a minor has no legal value.

Justice Vikas Mahajan made the observation while granting bail to a man accused in a case under the POCSO Act, noting that the case *prima facie* appeared to arise out of a romantic relationship rather than an incident involving violence, coercion or brutality. According to the prosecution, Singh was arrested in August 2023 in an FIR lodged for taking the girl, aged around 14 years, to Agra and establishing physical relations with her. The court, however, noted that during the investigation, the minor stated that she had accompanied the accused to Agra of her own will.

The court further noted that since no school records were available, a bone age ossification test was

conducted, which assessed her age to be more than 14 years but less than 17 years. The bench referred to an earlier order of the High Court, wherein it was held that in cases of sexual assault under the POCSO Act, wherever the court is called upon to determine the age of the victim based on a bone age ossification test, the upper age given in the reference range should be considered as the age of the victim.

"Undoubtedly, the prosecutrix was a minor at the time of the incident and, therefore, her consent for sexual relations, if any, will have no value in the eyes of law. However, taking her age as 17 years, it *prima facie* appears that the prosecutrix was of sufficient maturity and intellectual capacity, and her romantic involvement with the petitioner is one of the considerations which tilts the balance in favour of the petitioner for the purpose of granting bail," the bench said.

Al Falah chairman, under lens after Red Fort blast, quizzed on NAAC accreditation

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi Police Crime Branch, on January 27, took Al Falah Group founder and chairman Jawad Ahmed Siddiqui into four-day custody to question him in connection to the FIRs it had lodged, accusing Faridabad-based Al Falah University of falsely claiming accreditation by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), senior officers said on Wednesday. "Siddiqui was taken into custody for four days on January 27 and questioned over accreditation claims, as well as BEd and engineering degrees allegedly offered by the university," a senior Delhi Police officer said. Siddiqui was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on November 18 last year on charge of money laundering after the university came under the radar of the security agencies following the November 10 blast outside the Red Fort that claimed nine lives.

Three doctors working at the university-affiliated Al-Falah School of Medical Sciences & Research Centre

have emerged as suspects in the terror module probe, prompting the Union government to order a forensic audit of all university records. One of the doctors, Umar Nabi, is suspected to be the person driving the car, which exploded near the Red Fort. According to police, Umar was an alleged leader of the terror module that included at least two other Al Falah staff members – doctors Shaheen Ansari and Muzammil Ganai. Ganai was arrested on October 30, 2025, with the police claiming to have recovered 350 kg of explosive materials from his rented residence in Faridabad. Later, Ansari was also taken into custody.

The ED had told a Delhi court last November that Al Falah University generated proceeds of crime amounting to Rs 415 crore by dishonestly inducing students to enrol using false claims. In January, the ED had attached immovable properties worth Rs 139.97 crore belonging to the university while filing a chargesheet against Ansari under money laundering charges.



Disappearance of 807 people in city in just 15 days frightening, says AAP

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal stated that such a large number of people going missing in such a short span is not normal but "deeply frightening."

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has alleged that law and order in the national capital has slipped into a state of alarming collapse. The party said that disappearance of 807 people from Delhi in just 15 days, an average of nearly 54 people every day, has raised serious questions about public safety and policing in the city. AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal stated that such a large number of people going missing in such a short span is not normal but "deeply frightening."

Sharing a media report on X, Kejriwal stated: "In Delhi, 807 people have gone missing in just 15 days, and most of them are women and children. These circumstances are not normal; they are extremely frightening."



become so unsafe?"

Meanwhile, the AAP appealed to the people of Delhi to remain cautious. "All four engines of the government have failed to ensure the safety of your

children. Therefore, take care of yourself and your children. Delhi's law and order is in the ICU," the party said.

"Every day, murders are taking place in broad daylight in Delhi. Criminals commit killings openly on the streets and escape, and it makes no difference to Delhi Police's boss Amit Shah. The four-engine government is busy with 'four-hundred-twenty' politics, and the people of Delhi are being forced to live under a shadow of fear," the party said.

"Between January 1 and January 15, 807 people went missing. This means 54 people went missing every single day. Such terrifying figures are emerging from Delhi, but the BJP, which has turned law and order into a plaything, is sleeping."

'Environment treated as secondary concern, not survival infrastructure': Experts say Union Budget fails to prioritise clean air for Delhi

New Delhi.(Agency)

Despite Delhi-NCR reeling under chronic air pollution, the Union Budget 2026-27 has failed to prioritise clean air, said experts during a panel discussion organised by the Impact and Policy Research Institute (IMPRI), a think tank for policy research at Saket, Wednesday.

The panellists included environmentalist Ashish Kothari; economist Prof Krishna Raj of the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC); Soumya Dutta, convener of South Asian People's Action on Climate Crisis (SAPACC), and Prarthana Borah from Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW).

Kothari said air pollution or environment did not find any explicit mention in Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget speech, but large sums were being channelled towards coal, nuclear power and carbon capture technologies. Dutta pointed out that allocation for the Coal Ministry has

increased sharply this year, reversing a declining trend seen over the past few years. He also criticised the continued push for carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS), calling it "a clear anti-climate action, anti-people and anti-clean air action". According to Dutta, CCUS allows coal and oil use to continue

indefinitely while addressing only carbon dioxide, and not toxic co-pollutants. "Coal burning and oil burning is also the biggest source of air pollution in the country. Studies now show around 2.1 million premature deaths every year because of air pollution, and India loses

between 8 to 10 per cent of its GDP because of it," he said.

Prof Raj said that while the Budget speaks of aligning economic and environmental policies under sustainable development goals, "the gap between economic and environmental policies is increasing". He flagged inadequate allocations to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), noting that only Rs 123 crore has been earmarked for the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

"Most of the ministry's budget goes towards salaries and routine expenditure rather than conservation and pollution control," he added.

Borah said industrial growth is being aggressively supported in the Budget, but without parallel investments to ensure cleaner production. Citing emissions inventories, she said 21-35 per cent of India's air pollution can be attributed to industry, yet direct budgetary support for air pollution control remains modest.

A close associate of Pannun based in Canada hired Baljinder and Rohit alias Keerath to carry out the act, sources informed. Baljinder works as an ambulance driver in Delhi, while Rohit is his associate.

The mastermind, a resident of Tilak Nagar, had gone to Canada a few days before January 26 and was in direct contact with Pannu.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Police Special Cell ahead of Republic Day registered an FIR against Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun for allegedly issuing threats to create unrest in the national capital on January 26. The case was registered under Sections 196 (promoting enmity), 197 (imputations prejudicial to national integration), 152 (acts endangering sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India), and 61 (criminal conspiracy) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Pannun had also released a video on social media claiming that his "sleeper cells" had put up pro-Khalistan posters in Rohini and Dabri areas of the national capital.

Delhi NCR hospitals cheer Budget announcement on promoting medical tourism

The NCR with its dense cluster of large corporate hospitals, international airports, and long experience in handling overseas patients is already an established centre for international healthcare.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The medical and healthcare industry in Delhi NCR has welcomed Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement in the Budget on promoting India as a hub for medical tourism services through "a Scheme to support States in establishing five Regional Medical Hubs in partnership with the private sector".

The NCR with its dense cluster of large corporate hospitals, international airports, and long experience in handling overseas patients is already an established centre for international healthcare.

The region now finds itself in a unique position to benefit from the Budget announcement, Dr Vinay Aggarwal, senior physician and former president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), said.

Dr Aggarwal said 20-25 large corporate

hospitals in Delhi NCR together generate an estimated monthly revenue of Rs 1,400-1,500 crore – and "around 7-8% of their business comes from foreign patients, which is a significant contribution."

These large facilities can handle complex and high-value procedures that attract international patients, Dr Aggarwal said. Patients come from countries in the Middle East, Africa, South and Central Asia, the CIS, and even some developed nations. Until recently, Bangladesh used to be a major source country too, he said. International patients come for advanced cancer care, organ and kidney transplants, cardiac interventions,



covered by insurance, including cosmetic surgery, hair transplants, and dental care.

"Advanced interventions, including robotic surgeries, also draw patients," Dr

Aggarwal said.

A centralised system could be transformative for medical tourism in the region, Dr Aggarwal said. "Information about hospitals and their capabilities will percolate through a single portal, allowing hospitals to showcase their facilities globally," he said. Approvals and documentation will be brought onto a single platform, and hospitals will be able to list their services in a way that would help patients make informed choices.

"Medical tourism at Fortis is driven by a combination of clinical excellence, cutting-edge medical technology, internationally trained specialists, and transparent pricing," Dr Ritu Garg, Chief Growth Officer, Fortis Hospital, said.



Connaught Place assault victim's father calls for probe into friend's role

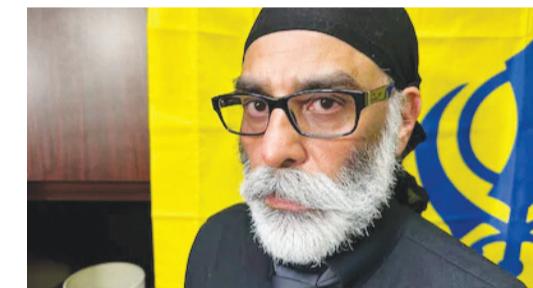
NEW DELHI: The father of 36-year-old businessman Shivam Gupta, who was allegedly assaulted by three delivery boys with a helmet in Connaught Place last month and later died, has demanded an investigation into the role of his son's friend, alleging that he was present throughout the incident and repeatedly misled the family.

Anil Kumar Gupta, father of the deceased, told media that his son had gone out with his friend Pankaj on January 2. "They had a party, but I had no knowledge of where they went or who took them there. I only found out when I saw the CCTV footage. When I asked Pankaj how he knew, he said the police had called him. How would the police get Pankaj's number?" Anil said. In the footage, Pankaj is clearly seen with Shivam.

"He kept misleading me. He knew everything about the attack. The footage showed that Pankaj was with him. Every time he met someone, he gave different statements to everyone," the father added. The incident took place on the intervening night of January 2-3. Shivam had gone to Connaught Place with a friend. An altercation reportedly broke out between him and some delivery boys near E-Block, during which he was attacked with a helmet.

Two Sleeper Cell Members Linked To Khalistani Terrorist Pannun Arrested In Delhi Over R-Day Threats

A close associate of Pannu based in Canada hired Baljinder and Rohit alias Keerath to carry out the act.



New Delhi.(Agency)

Two sleeper cell members linked to Canada-based Khalistani terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun of Sikhs for Justice were arrested in Delhi.

The development came after attempts were made at two locations in the national capital to disturb public order by writing pro-Khalistan slogans ahead of Republic Day celebrations on January 26.

The arrests by the Delhi Police were made in connection with the case. According to the sources, Pannu allegedly lured them with Rs 2 lakh to write "Khalistan Zindabad" in Delhi. The entire conspiracy was orchestrated from Canada.

A close associate of Pannu based in Canada hired Baljinder and Rohit alias Keerath to carry out the act, sources informed. Baljinder works as an ambulance driver in Delhi, while Rohit is his associate.

The mastermind, a resident of Tilak Nagar, had gone to Canada a few days before January 26 and was in direct contact with Pannu.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Police Special Cell ahead of Republic Day registered an FIR against Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun for allegedly issuing threats to create unrest in the national capital on January 26. The case was registered under Sections 196 (promoting enmity), 197 (imputations prejudicial to national integration), 152 (acts endangering sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India), and 61 (criminal conspiracy) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Pannun had also released a video on social media claiming that his "sleeper cells" had put up pro-Khalistan posters in Rohini and Dabri areas of the national capital.

NEWS BOX

Has Samson lost opener's battle to Kishan Aakash Chopra gives his verdict

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Former India cricketer Aakash Chopra believes that Ishan Kishan sealed the deal for the opener's slot at the T20 World Cup. His comments come right after Kishan's explosive knock against South Africa in Wednesday's warm-up match, where he hit a rapid fifty. Chopra added that there was no doubt Kishan's performance had swung the contest decisively in his favour, stating that Sanju Samson had lost the battle for the opening spot.

Playing their second warm-up game at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai, captain Suryakumar Yadav confirmed at the toss that India would try Kishan as Abhishek Sharma's opening partner. Kishan repaid that faith in style, smashing 53 off just 20 balls, including seven sixes. He retired out in the sixth over, allowing Tilak Varma to spend some valuable time in the middle. "Absolutely, I mean, sealed the deal, completely—no questions asked," Chopra told the broadcasters after the match. Samson, who was primed for the opener's spot in the T20 World Cup, endured a torrid series against New Zealand, managing just 46 runs from five matches at an average of 9.20, with



a top score of 24. In contrast, Kishan earned the opportunity to open after a sensational T20I series against the Kiwis, where he smashed 215 runs at a strike rate of 231.18. **WILL SAMSON GET A CHANCE?**

Chopra said that since Samson is the only batter unlikely to feature in the starting XI, he could be called upon to bat anywhere when the need arises.

"Someone could get injured, someone could wake up with a fever in the morning, or there could be a loss of form—then you'd want to push him in, and that can happen."

"It's also possible that he doesn't even get to bat at his natural position, because he's the only batter who might have to bat anywhere. So today was an opportunity—if he had scored runs as well, it would've been perfect," Chopra added.

I quite like it: Nasser Hussain backs Bangladesh, Pakistan over World Cup boycott

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Former England captain Nasser Hussain has launched a sharp critique of the International Cricket Council and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) over the chaotic build-up to the T20 World Cup 2026. Speaking on the Sky Sports Podcast alongside Michael Atherton, Hussain alleged that the ICC's preferential treatment of powerful boards, particularly India, has deepened the imbalance in world cricket.

Hussain's comments come in the aftermath of the BCCI terminating Bangladesh fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman's contract with his Indian Premier League franchise. The move triggered a chain of events that saw Bangladesh refuse to travel to India for their World Cup fixtures, ultimately leading to their exit from the tournament.



The situation escalated further when Pakistan announced their decision to boycott their group-stage match against India, plunging the tournament into further uncertainty just a week before its scheduled start. Questioning the ICC's consistency, Hussain asked whether the world body would have taken such a hard line if India had been the team unwilling to travel, citing government restrictions or security concerns. "If India, a month before a tournament, said 'our government does not want us to play in a country for a World Cup', would the ICC have been so firm and said, 'You know the rules, bad luck, we're knocking you out?'" Hussain asked. He followed it up with a broader warning about the long-term damage such an imbalance could cause. "The only question all sides ask for is consistency. Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India must be treated the same."

Man City brush aside Newcastle to reach League Cup final



City's final date with Arsenal is set for March 22 at Wembley after the Premier League leaders knocked out Chelsea on Tuesday.

MANCHESTER. (Agency)

Manchester City will face Arsenal in the League Cup final after ending Newcastle's reign as holders with a first-half blitz in their 3-1 victory on Wednesday. Pep Guardiola's side were already in pole position after winning the semi-final first leg on Tyneside in January and they finished the job in ruthless fashion at the Etihad Stadium. Omar Marmoush struck twice in the first half of the second leg before Tijjani Reijnders put the result beyond doubt. Anthony Elanga reduced the deficit after the interval, but City's 5-1 aggregate win sent them back to the League Cup showpiece for the first time since 2021. City's final date with Arsenal is set for March 22 at Wembley after the Premier League leaders knocked out Chelsea on Tuesday. Reaching the final was a welcome tonic for Guardiola following the

frustration of blowing a two-goal lead in a 2-2 draw at Tottenham on Sunday that delivered a major blow to their title challenge. With a crucial trip to Liverpool looming this weekend, City trail Arsenal by six points in the Premier League title race. The League Cup was the first silverware of Guardiola's City reign when they beat Arsenal in the 2018 final, with current Gunners boss Mikel Arteta then working as the Spaniard's assistant. City went on to win the competition for the following three years, but haven't lifted the League Cup since 2021.

"We will travel to London again, they will wait for us there. They never travel to the north (for finals) but I am really happy to be back. Five (League Cup) finals in 10 years is a big milestone," Guardiola said. "It will be good. You have to live this experience. The first title we won here was in the League Cup. "When you win something, it helps to win more. It's a pleasure to play against Arsenal, the best team right now in Europe and maybe the world." Newcastle boss Eddie Howe added: "Really annoyed with the first half display. We pride ourselves on being really

organised and tactically we want to be able to handle any problem the opposition gives us. "That first half we weren't good enough individually and our duels were off and it gave us huge problems." Guardiola used sarcasm and statistics this week to defend City against claims the club's success has been due to the financial muscle of their Abu Dhabi-based owners. The City manager pointed out six English clubs have spent more than his side over the past five years, but he knows he will never win over the critics. Slick City Guardiola's only way to silence the outside noise -- and mounting suggestions that City are a team in decline -- is with silverware. And after finishing last season without a trophy for the first time in eight years, Guardiola would love to end City's barren spell at Arsenal's expense. Marmoush put City ahead with a stroke of luck in the seventh minute. He raced into the Newcastle penalty area and when Dan Burn made a last-ditch tackle, the ball bounced off the Egypt forward and looped into the net. James Trafford preserved City's lead, saving from Joe Willock and Anthony Gordon in quick succession. Marmoush struck for the second time in the 29th minute, heading home from virtually.

Tilak Varma gets angry at Arshdeep Singh: Don't take videos without permission

LONDON. (Agency)

India batter Tilak Varma appeared visibly annoyed with Arshdeep Singh after the fast bowler filmed him without permission inside the Indian dressing room. A video of the incident went viral following India's T20 World Cup warm-up match against South Africa, showing Tilak eating his food and sternly asking Arshdeep to stop recording him. Tilak, however, had an impressive outing on the field, marking his return to the Indian side with a fluent 45-run knock against a strong Proteas line-up. He scored his runs off 19 balls, hitting three boundaries and three sixes. The knock was particularly significant as Tilak is returning from a minor surgery and needed time in the middle.

The left-hander missed India's recent T20I series against New Zealand after undergoing emergency surgery for testicular torsion. The exchange between Tilak, Arshdeep and Ishan



From Jatinder Singh to Monank Patel: Indian-origin captains eye defining T20 World Cup

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Suryakumar Yadav is the Indian captain for the T20 World Cup, and the spotlight will undoubtedly be on him. But beyond India's campaign, there is another compelling Indian connection in the tournament—players of Indian origin leading several associate teams on the world stage.

The T20 World Cup 2026, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, will see associate nations such as the Netherlands, USA, Nepal, Namibia, Oman, UAE and Canada arrive with renewed belief and a clear intent to challenge the established powers of the game. Having qualified through demanding regional pathways, these teams are no longer content with mere participation and will be eager to make a lasting impact. In recent years, associates have steadily narrowed the gap with full-member sides. The Netherlands have built a reputation for upsetting higher-ranked teams at ICC events, backed by a strong domestic structure and players with county and franchise experience. USA and Canada benefit from expanding domestic leagues and increased international exposure, while Nepal draw strength from passionate

support and a strong spin tradition. Namibia, meanwhile, have been impressed with tactical discipline and adaptability across conditions. Teams like Oman and UAE bring valuable experience from



multiple ICC tournaments and are adept at handling pressure. With T20 cricket's inherent unpredictability, these sides will be targeting shock results. For Indian fans, the presence of Indian-origin captains adds an extra layer of intrigue—players keen to prove they belong at the very top level of the game. Monank Patel's rise to international cricket has been anything but straightforward. Born on May 1, 1993, in

Anand, Gujarat, the Indian-origin batter came through the age-group system in India, representing Gujarat at the Under-16 and Under-19 levels and even playing alongside Jasprit Bumrah during his junior days. Yet, despite the promise, the pathway stalled. After securing a green card in 2010, Monank migrated permanently to the United States in 2013, a move that nearly ended his cricketing ambitions as he seriously contemplated quitting the sport. Cricket, however, found its way back. After settling in the US, Monank rebuilt his career from scratch and made his international debut in 2019 in both ODIs and T20Is. Since then, he has been the backbone of USA's batting, scoring 2,288 ODI runs at an average of 34.66, including three centuries and 18 fifties, along with a T20I century against the Bahamas. Appointed captain in 2021, he led USA to their historic win over Pakistan at the 2024 T20 World Cup, earning Player of the Match honours. His strong showings in Major League Cricket with MI New York, including a career-best 93 in 2025, further underline his big-game temperament.

Sanju Samson's fate sealed Job's not finished with T20 World Cup 2026 in sight

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

The road ahead as India moves into the T20 World Cup 2026 cycle does not look particularly encouraging if you are Sanju Samson. After a lean run in the lead-up to this phase, the direction from the Indian camp appears largely settled. Ishan Kishan has emerged as the preferred opener alongside Abhishek Sharma, a call underlined by form and one that is difficult to contest given his returns since rejoining the Indian T20I side. Clarity at the top of the order, however, rarely brings clarity for everyone else. For Samson, it raises an uncomfortable but inevitable question. Does this moment represent the end of his time in India's T20 plans? The answer, at least for now, is not quite so definitive.

He may not have the starring role he once hoped for, but this does not have to be the



end of the road. In cricket, and in sport more broadly, influence is not always dictated by who starts. Sometimes, it is shaped by those waiting just outside the frame who are asked to make an impact.

Change in role for Sanju Samson

With the batting unit more or less settled, what Samson needs to do next is fairly

clear. He may no longer be competing for a permanent spot in the XI, but his place in the squad still demands readiness rather than resignation. In practical terms, that means preparing for situations rather than selections. Just because this Indian team appears settled and in form does not make it immune to disruption. Injuries, niggles, or sudden loss of form have a way of altering plans even in the most stable setups.

The 2023 Cricket World Cup offered a reminder of how quickly equations can change. When Hardik Pandya was sidelined mid-tournament, it opened the door for Mohammed Shami, who went on a remarkable run despite India falling short in the final. Samson's situation is not identical, but the lesson holds.

Delhi look to break final curse, aim for 2024 revenge in battle of best friends

WPL 2026 Final, RCB vs DC Preview: In the battle of best friends, Jemimah Rodrigues' Delhi Capitals will be up against Smriti Mandhana's Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the summit clash on Thursday in Vadodara.

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Delhi Capitals know this territory inside out. They know what it feels like to step onto the WPL final stage—and the pressure that comes with it. On Thursday, the Capitals will play their fourth consecutive final, facing Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) at Kotambi Stadium, Vadodara. Yet, DC's record in finals reads like a nightmare—they have lost all three previous title clashes. This

season, however, has been different. Unlike 2023, 2024, and 2025, when DC dominated the league stage and qualified directly for the final, this year has been a roller-coaster. At one point, the Capitals were on the verge of elimination. They fought back, though, staging a seven-wicket win over Gujarat Giants in the Eliminator, powered by a brilliant bowling performance.

Now, all eyes are on the Capitals to break their final curse. After years of heartbreak at the last hurdle, this is their chance to finally finish on the right side of history and lift the coveted WPL trophy. If you remember the 2024 final between RCB and DC, you know how heartbreak struck the Capitals. After opting to bat first, DC raced to 64 for one in 7.1 overs, powered by Shafali Verma and Meg Lanning's ice-and-fire combination. But from there, RCB staged a remarkable comeback, bowling DC out for 113 and cruising to lift the trophy.

Two years later, the Capitals have a chance to settle the scores. After being hammered by

Smriti Mandhana's side in Navi Mumbai, DC struck back with a win in Vadodara.

Now, back at the same venue, the Capitals have



an opportunity to rewrite history, avenge past heartbreak, and finally fulfill the dreams left unachieved in the era of Meg Lanning. This final isn't just about a trophy—it's about redemption, resilience, and finishing what was once left unfinished.

CAN RCB BREAK THE TABLE-TOPPERS CURSE?

The WPL final hasn't been kind to teams finishing at the top of the table. Just ask the Capitals, who have fallen short every time they reached the final as table-toppers. This year, it's RCB who claimed the top spot.

After winning their first five games and securing a place in the top three, their eight-wicket win over UP Warriorz confirmed their position at the summit. Smriti Mandhana's side now enjoy a week-long break before the final. But breaks can be a double-edged sword—they can disrupt momentum. Meg Lanning herself has noted that rest periods don't always help teams maintain rhythm.

Now, RCB have an opportunity to break the "table-topper curse" and prove they are more than capable of converting dominance into a title. With confidence high and a chance to rewrite WPL history, the final presents a golden moment for RCB to end the streak of top-of-the-table disappointments and lift the trophy.

Gen Z employee responds to manager's email on 'strict office rules' for virtual meeting, netizens all hearts on the viral post

New Delhi.(Agency)

A Gen Z employee's response to an official instruction to report to work at 6:30 am for a virtual meeting has gone viral. The employee's response saying that they would not be physically attending a virtual meeting has won many hearts online and sparked a debate on rigid workplace rules. Sharing a post about the conversation between two employees on X, a user said the Gen Z employees are not the heroes we deserved but the heroes we needed. The post contains a screenshot which allegedly shows an authority asking an employee to be physically seated in the office by 6:30 am for the 7:00 am virtual meeting and failure to do so will be treated as insubordination. The screenshot further said that continued non-compliance may result in disciplinary action, including suspension, as per company policy. In response the employee said that they won't be physically appearing for a virtual meeting. The employee said they will be attending virtually as the meeting format suggests. The employee said that threatening suspension over location rather than attendance feels less like policy and more like PowerPoint abuse. The employee said, "I am online." The Gen Z employee's response has garnered widespread praise on social media with several users praising the employee for his sharp and on-point response. One user wrote, "You want him to come to the office by 6:30 for a virtual meeting. If the employer wanted him in the office so badly, why didn't they make it a physical meeting?"

"This reminds me of a past manager who told me and my coworkers that although we started work at 8 and worked remote, we should still come into the meeting 15 minutes early, just as we would if we had to travel through traffic," a user wrote.

Sun Pharma to invest 500 crore in Assam to set up manufacturing unit

Guwahati.(Agency)

Leading drug maker Sun Pharmaceutical will invest 500 crore to set up a manufacturing plant in Assam, generating direct employment for over 500 people, Chief Secretary Ravi Kota said. Senior officials of the pharma company held a meeting with the chief secretary on Wednesday and discussed various aspects of implementing the project.

"Held a meeting with representatives of Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Limited... to review the company's proposal for setting up pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities in Assam," Kota said in an X post on Wednesday night. From the company, senior vice president Rahul Awasthi and associate vice president Ranjit Mohapatra met Kota. "The proposal involves establishing drug formulation manufacturing units in the state to cater to the Indian market, with a planned investment of over Rs 500 crore to be implemented in two phases," the chief secretary said. The project is expected to generate direct employment for more than 500 people in a phased manner after commencement of operations, he added. "Key aspects such as land requirements, availability of water and power, connectivity, and access to skilled manpower were discussed," Kota said.

The company also outlined its focus on sustainable manufacturing practices, including efficient water use, increased adoption of renewable energy and responsible waste management, in line with environmental and regulatory standards, he added.

Oberoi Realty wins bid for 11-acre land in Mumbai for Rs 5,400 cr

New Delhi.(Agency)

Oberoi Realty has emerged as the highest bidder for an 11-acre land in Mumbai with a bid value of Rs 5,400 crore. In a regulatory filing, the company said it had participated in the bids invited by Railway Land Development Authority (RLDA) for the grant of a lease for the development of 45,371 sq metre (about 11 acres) of railway land in Bandra East for 99 years, with Floor Space Index (FSI) potential of 19.50 lakh sq ft. The financial bids were opened by RLDA on Wednesday. "The company's bid at Rs 5,400 crore has emerged as the highest," it said. Oberoi Realty said the communication from RLDA with respect to the next steps in the process is awaited. Last month, the company reported a marginal increase in consolidated net profit to Rs



622.64 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2025.

Its net profit stood at Rs 618.38 crore in the year-ago period. Total income rose to Rs 1,561.74 crore in the third quarter of this fiscal, from Rs 1,460.27 crore in the corresponding period of the preceding year.

Silver ETFs sink up to 15%, gold ETFs remain relatively steady

Silver ETFs witnessed aggressive one-day selling, with losses ranging from over 10% to nearly 15% during morning trade. The fall was much steeper than what was seen in gold ETFs.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Silver exchange traded funds (ETFs) saw a sharp sell-off on February 5, with some funds falling by double digits in early trade as silver prices slipped again after a short-lived recovery. The sudden drop came after precious metals had rebounded for two sessions following a steep correction earlier this week.

HEAVY SELLING HITS SILVER ETFS
Silver ETFs witnessed aggressive one-day selling, with losses ranging from over 10% to nearly 15% during morning trade. The fall was much steeper than what was

seen in gold ETFs, highlighting how volatile silver can be during market swings. At the time of writing, MCX silver was trading at around Rs 2,46,397, down 8.35% or Rs 22,453. In comparison, gold prices were relatively stable. MCX gold was quoted near Rs 1,52,000, lower by just 0.68% or Rs 1,046. The sharp difference in price movement explains why silver-focused funds faced heavier pressure.

WHY ARE SILVER PRICES UNDER PRESSURE?

According to the Augmont Bullion Daily Report, gold and silver gave up their recent gains as fresh selling and high volatility returned to the precious metals market. Investor sentiment was also shaken after China's gold ETFs recorded record daily outflows, with nearly \$1 billion pulled out of major bullion-backed funds following the recent correction. Market experts say that silver tends to react more sharply than gold during corrections.

widely used in industrial applications as well as investment products, price swings often become exaggerated during uncertain periods.



TECHNICAL OUTLOOK FOR MCX SILVER

Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, said MCX silver futures are currently trading in the Rs 2,50,000-Rs 2,60,000 range after a sharp fall from record highs near Rs 4,20,000. He said that while the long-term trend remains positive, prices have slipped below key moving averages,

pointing to short-term weakness.

Strong buying interest is seen in the Rs 2,35,000-Rs 2,50,000 zone, which acts as an important support area. If prices manage to hold above this band and recover steadily, silver could move towards Rs 3,00,000-Rs 3,25,000 in the coming sessions. However, a clear break below support may trigger further downside pressure.

GOLD REMAINS RELATIVELY STEADY

Gold ETFs also moved lower in line with MCX gold, but the decline was limited compared to silver. According to Ponmudi R, MCX gold is trading between Rs 1,49,000 and Rs 1,55,000 after correcting from record highs of around Rs 1,80,000-Rs 1,81,000. He added that the broader bullish structure in gold remains intact, with strong support in the Rs 1,45,000-Rs 1,48,000 area. A sustained move above Rs 1,55,000-Rs 1,60,000 could help gold regain upward momentum in the medium term.

Sensex falls 400 points: Are IT stocks down today and do investors need to panic

New Delhi.(Agency)

Dalal Street took a breather on Thursday after a three-day rise that followed the announcement of the India-US trade deal. Early trade saw selling pressure across many sectors, pushing benchmark indices lower. At around 10 am, the S&P BSE Sensex was down 448.57 points at 38,369.12. The NSE Nifty50 also slipped, falling 144.95 points to 25,631.05. The fall was close to half a percent, showing a clear pause after the recent rally.

TOPGAINERS IN EARLY TRADE

After the opening bell, Hindustan Unilever Ltd led the gainers on the Sensex, rising 1.17%. Trent Ltd followed with a gain of 0.92%. NTPC Ltd moved up 0.57%, while State Bank of India Ltd was higher by 0.52%. Infosys Ltd also opened in the green, adding 0.26%. On the losing side, InterGlobe Aviation Ltd saw the sharpest fall, dropping 2.68%. Bharat Electronics Ltd declined 2.19%. Eternal Ltd was down 1.61%, Asian Paints Ltd fell 1.30%, and Axis Bank Ltd slipped 1.16%. GLOBAL TECH SELL-OFF ADDS PRESSURE

The weakness in Indian markets came a day after a sharp fall in global technology stocks. On Wednesday, the IT index in India had slumped about 6%, marking its biggest single-day fall in nearly six years. US stocks also ended lower on Wednesday. Technology shares were under pressure as investors grew cautious about high valuations and questioned whether the strong AI-led rally on Wall Street had reached its peak. Shares of Alphabet fell nearly 2% ahead of its quarterly results. After market hours, the stock recovered about 2% after the company said it was stepping up spending to deepen its push into artificial intelligence. Advanced Micro Devices saw a sharp fall of 17% after forecasting quarterly revenue that fell short of expectations. The company also indicated that competition in the AI space remains tough, especially against Nvidia. Nvidia shares dropped 3.4%, while the broader semiconductor index fell 4.4%. This global sell-off in technology shares once again raised concerns that Indian IT stocks could face pressure, given their close link to US clients and markets.

HOW BROAD WAS THE FALL IN INDIAN MARKETS?

The weakness was not limited to large-cap stocks. The Nifty Midcap 100 fell 0.97%, while the Nifty Smallcap 100 declined 1.47%. Market volatility also rose, with India VIX up 1.59%.

Google's annual revenue tops \$400 billion for first time as AI investments rise

New Delhi.(Agency)

Google parent Alphabet on Wednesday reported blockbuster earnings, its revenue climbing as it invests massively in cloud computing services enhanced with artificial intelligence.

The tech giant said revenue jumped 18 percent year-on-year in the quarter, and overall annual revenue topped \$400 billion for the first time at the company founded by Larry Page and Sergey Brin in 1998. But Alphabet said it will nearly double its investments this year in the technology arms race gripping Silicon Valley. The company expects capital expenditures between \$175 billion and \$185 billion in 2025, double its 2025 spending, to meet customer demand for AI products. Despite Alphabet relentlessly investing in computing infrastructure for AI, demand outstrips supply, according to chief executive Sundar Pichai. "We've been supply constrained even as we've been ramping up our capacity," Pichai said on an earnings call. Alphabet shares

were down slightly more than one percent in after-market trades. Gemini wins fans Google's Gemini AI continued to grow quickly, ending the year with 750 million monthly users in an increase of 100 million from the previous quarter. "We expect Google to overtake OpenAI this year for the top spot in AI," said Emarketer analyst Nate Elliott. Alphabet brought in \$113.8 billion in the final three months of 2025, powered by its core search business and cloud computing, earnings figures showed. Alphabet reported profit of \$34.5 billion in the recently ended quarter as revenue from cloud computing soared 48 percent to \$17.7 billion. "We're seeing our AI investments and infrastructure drive revenue and growth across the board," Pichai said. Google's core search and advertising business remained the primary revenue driver, generating \$82.3 billion, up from \$72.5 billion a year earlier. YouTube advertising revenues also grew strongly to \$11.4

billion from \$10.5 billion. The cash flowing in from online advertising gives Alphabet an advantage when it comes to investing in AI infrastructure. Google said it now counts over 325 million paid subscriptions across consumer services, including Google One and YouTube Premium. The cloud division, which competes with Amazon Web Services and Microsoft Azure, has become a key growth engine for Alphabet.

Keeping Chrome

Alphabet continues to benefit from a US court ruling late last year that spared the Internet giant from having to sell off its Chrome browser to address monopoly concerns. Google recently notified the court it will appeal the federal judge's ruling that it held an illegal monopoly on online search, court records show. Despite the robust growth, Alphabet's experimental "Other Bets" division, which includes autonomous vehicle unit Waymo.

IndiGo shares down nearly 4% as CCI orders detailed probe for unfair business practices

CCI ordered a detailed probe against IndiGo for unfair business practices, nearly two months after it cancelled thousands of flights due to operational issues, causing hardships to passengers.

New Dey

Shares of InterGlobe Aviation declined nearly 4 percent on Thursday morning trade after the Competition Commission ordered a detailed probe against IndiGo for unfair business practices. The stock dropped 3.65



percent to Rs 4,782.45 on the BSE. At the NSE, the stock declined 3.63 percent to Rs 4,780.30 apiece.

The Competition Commission on Wednesday ordered a detailed probe against IndiGo for unfair business practices, nearly two months after the country's largest airline cancelled thousands of flights due to operational issues, causing hardships to

passengers. After taking into consideration data related to airlines and those provided by the aviation regulator DGCA, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) has prima facie concluded that IndiGo has abused its dominant position. In a 16-page order, CCI said that by cancelling thousands of flights, which constituted a significant portion of the scheduled capacity, IndiGo effectively withheld its services from the market, creating an artificial scarcity, limiting consumer access to air travel during peak demand. "Such conduct by a dominant enterprise may be viewed as restricting the provision of services under Section 4(2)(b)(i) of the Act," the regulator said. Section 4 of the Competition Act pertains to abuse of dominant position.

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A slow reset, not a shock: What the EU-India FTA means for liquor companies

New Delhi.(Agency)

Domestic liquor makers are not panicking, but complacency is no longer an option. The EU-India FTA does not overturn India's alcohol market overnight; it subtly but decisively resets its direction. Protectionism thins, preparedness gains currency, and comfort zones contract as comparison and competition move centre stage. For domestic producers, especially in spirits, wines and beer, the issue is not survival, but relevance. Those investing in quality, brand equity, and supply-chain rigour may find competition acts as a catalyst rather than a threat. Those dependent almost entirely on tariff insulation, however, may discover that these walls are becoming more permeable than permanent. The EU-India Free Trade Agreement is best read as a strategic recalibration rather than a disruptive shock. Its architecture with phased tariff reductions, minimum import price thresholds, and category-specific safeguard signals intent without upheaval.

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GUARDED OPTIMISM

The Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) has broadly welcomed the agreement, recognising the government's effort to balance trade ambition with domestic realities. Yet its reservations are telling. Concerns around dumping, under-invoicing, and misuse of rules of origin point to a deeper unease: liberalisation without enforcement risks eroding competitiveness by stealth. CIABC's focus on strict rules of origin, particularly for GI-linked categories such as Cognac underscores fear of regulatory arbitrage rather than fair competition. The risk is not European producers playing by the rules, but third-country products exploiting loopholes and distorting the market. Importers, however, strike a different note. For players like Aristol co-

founder Sumit Sehgal, the FTA represents a cultural inflection rather than a price war. Lower duties, from this lens, are



about market maturity—enabling better wines, sustainable margins, and long-term investment in consumer education. Imports are framed less as disruptors and more as ecosystem builders. Both perspectives hold merit. Together, they reveal the agreement's real fault line. The challenge lies not in tariffs alone, but in the broader regulatory ecosystem that surrounds them.

SHORT-TERM CALM, MEDIUM-TERM PRESSURE

In the immediate future, disruption is likely to be limited. As Brewers Association of

India (BAI) Director General Vinod Giri notes, tangible market effects may not materialise until after 2027. Beer, in particular, remains structurally insulated: bulky, low-value, and best produced close to consumption. Most global brewers already operate locally, rendering imports commercially marginal beyond niche trials. Wine offers a more layered outlook, though alarmism remains unwarranted. The €2.5 minimum import price effectively protects more than 80% of the domestic wine industry. European wines that benefit meaningfully from tariff reductions occupy the premium tier—a segment domestic producers have only recently begun to engage seriously.

The sharper pressure point will emerge in premium spirits. Categories such as Irish whiskey and vodka, already dominated by European brands, are positioned to gain disproportionately. Any price softening is unlikely to challenge mass Indian spirits, but it could intensify competition in the emerging premium and luxury segments where Indian brands are still finding their footing.

Drashti Dhami

Wishes Nakul Mehta's Son Sufi On His 5th Birthday

Actor Drashti Dhami recently took to her Instagram Stories to wish a long time friend Nakul Mehta's son Sufi on his birthday. Sharing an adorable picture, Drashti wrote, "Happy happy 5 Sufi." The image featured Sufi playing with Drashti's daughter Leela, instantly melting hearts online. Nakul Mehta shared Drashti's story on his Instagram and wrote a sweet message about their long friendship. He wrote, "Who would have imagined this world two decades ago." His words showed how special it feels for them to now be parents and watch their children grow up together.

A Friendship That Goes Beyond the Industry

Nakul Mehta and Drashti Dhami have been friends for a very long time. Their friendship is not just about the glamour of the TV world. They are seen travelling together, celebrating big moments, and supporting each other during important times in life. Their bond shows what true and lasting friendship looks like.

Both stars are now proud parents. Nakul recently welcomed his second child, a baby girl, with his wife Jankee Parekh. Drashti embraced motherhood with the birth of her daughter, Leela on October 22, 2024.

Celebrating Leela's First Birthday

Last year, on October 22, 2025, Leela turned one year old, also marking Drashti's one year as a mother. To celebrate this special day, Nakul wrote a sweet message saying, "Celebrating the little hooman turning 372 days." A week later, Nakul and Jankee joined Drashti for a small and warm late birthday celebration.

On October 28, Nakul, Jankee, and Drashti gathered at a cosy restaurant in Juhu to celebrate Leela's big day. Nakul shared glimpses from the evening on Instagram, featuring Jankee, their son Sufi, Drashti, and little Leela smiling together.

While Leela's face was covered with a red heart emoji, her playful gestures stole the spotlight. From birthday wishes to family moments spent together, Nakul and Drashti show that some friendships become stronger as time goes by.



ASSI Trailer Out

Taapsee Pannu

Shines In Anubhav Sinha's Investigative Courtroom Drama

Taapsee Pannu's ASSI trailer has finally released. Anubhav Sinha's upcoming investigative courtroom drama offers a gripping glimpse into a hard-hitting legal battle. The film is set to hit the big screen on February 20, 2026. The trailer shows Taapsee Pannu in a fierce and determined avatar. The trailer opens on

Alongside Taapsee, the film features Kani Kusruti, Revathy, Manoj Pahwa, Kumud Mishra, and Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, with special appearances by Naseeruddin Shah, Supriya Pathak, and Seema Pahwa.

What the makers said

Talking about the trailer Producer Bhushan Kumar shared, "At T-Series, we believe in backing meaningful, hard-hitting stories that need to be told. ASSI is a story that stayed with me from the moment I heard it, it reflects realities we see around us every day but often choose to look past. Anubhav has approached this film with immense honesty, and Taapsee has brought a rare sincerity and strength to her performance. For me, this isn't just about making a film; it's about starting a conversation. I'm proud that T-Series is backing a story that dares to ask uncomfortable questions." Reflecting on the trailer Director Anubhav Sinha added, "For me, my film has to hit the core of the story. With ASSI, it felt like a loud thud exactly where it should. That impact compelled me to make this film."

a gripping, unsettling note, introducing Taapsee Pannu as a lawyer who refuses to bow down in her pursuit of justice, while Kani Kusruti stands at the emotional core of the narrative, her character becoming the beating heart of the case. What follows is a fast-paced investigative journey that tears through the dark, deeply disturbing layers of society. More than just a courtroom clash, the drama challenges the conscience raising uncomfortable questions about morality, accountability, and the future we are shaping for the next generation.



Vicky Jain's Watch Joke Is The Highlight Of Laughter Chefs 3



Laughter Chefs Unlimited Entertainment Season 3 has amped up the excitement by welcoming back its much-loved original contestants from previous seasons. Among the most popular returns is the much-adored duo Ankita Lokhande and Vicky Jain, whose comeback has delighted fans of the show.

As is customary before an episode shoot, contestants were seen waiting outside the sets, smiling and posing for the paparazzi. Vicky Jain followed the ritual, but what truly caught viewers' attention was his light-hearted banter with the photographers.

While posing for the cameras, one of the paparazzi complimented him, saying, "bhai watch accha hai." Vicky responded politely with "thank you." Moments later, just before entering the set, he laughed and quipped, "pichli bar chasma diya tha..watch nahi," leaving the paparazzi in splits.

Vicky Jain's Stylish Look on Laughter Chefs 3

For the shoot, Vicky Jain opted for a sharp yet relaxed ensemble. He was seen wearing a brown tailored three-piece suit featuring trousers and a vest, layered over a reddish-orange long-sleeved collared shirt. Completing the look were dark sunglasses and a watch on his left wrist. Adding a casual twist to the semi-formal outfit, he paired it with white sneakers accented with red details.

Laughter Chefs 3 Gets a Major Revamp

Season 3 has undergone a significant transformation with the return of the iconic SAVAN team—Sudesh Lehri, Ankita Lokhande, Vicky Jain, Arjun Bijlani and Nia Sharma. Their re-entry has shifted the dynamics of the show, especially as the intense rivalry between Team Kaanta and Team Churri comes to an end. The OGs have brought renewed energy, emotional moments, and plenty of laughter to the season.

Team Concept Ends Mid-Season Amid Cast Exits

In a surprising move, the makers decided to scrap the team-based format midway through Laughter Chefs Season 3. This change followed the exit of contestants Gurmeet Choudhary, Debina Bonnerjee, Vivian Dsena, Eisha Singh and many others from the show. According to reports, the actors stepped away due to prior professional commitments and scheduling conflicts. Eisha Singh has already begun filming a new project, while Vivian Dsena is reportedly set to appear in an upcoming fiction show on Colors TV. Gurmeet Choudhary and Debina Bonnerjee are also said to be occupied with other work-related engagements.

'Felt So Enraged': Adnan Shaikh

Slammed For 'Aurat Ki Tarah Reh' Remark At Sapna Choudhary



The 50 has left the audience excited, with every episode building up the anticipation for the next. Yesterday's episode stirred a debate on social media, with Adnan Shaikh receiving heat following his distasteful comment towards co-contestant Sapna Choudhary. During the recent episode, Sapna got into a heated argument with Adnan and Faiz Baloch. During the debate, one of Adnan's comments sparked widespread backlash.

After Sapna slammed Adnan for cheating in the recent Arena task and hurled abuses at him during the argument, Adnan responded, "Tu mard logon ki tarah gaali kyun de rahi hai? Aurat hai, aurat ki tarah reh (Why are you abusing like men do? You're a woman, behave like a woman)." Soon after Sapna heard this statement, she fired back at Adnan, saying, "Tu mujhe yaad mat kara main aurat ya mard. Tu toh kuch bhi nahi hai. Roz dekhti hoon tumhare jaise mard main (Don't remind me that I'm a woman or a man. You're nothing at all. I see men like you every day)."

Now, clips of the fight are going viral on social media, with Reddit users hitting back at the social media star. "Such patriarchal and misogynistic remarks on national television in 2026? The standard of this reality show is below ground," one wrote while reacting to the clip. Another commented, "Aurat ho aurat ki tarah reh (You are a woman, behave like one). Wtf saying all this shi* in big 2026. I felt so enraged watching it. On top of it, girls were calming down Adnan. Are you for real?" "It's very disappointing how being a girl is used as a curse. Highly disappointed, especially with the other girls for tolerating this," a third fan wrote. One shared, "I was triggered when I heard him say that. How small is your mentality and how are you in real life, man? Absolutely disgusting behaviour. The level is definitely down below."

About The 50

The 50, produced by Banijay Asia, debuted on February 1, 2026, and streams on Hotstar while airing simultaneously on Colors TV. The show brings together 50 well-known personalities from television, film, and the digital space in a competitive setup focused on strategy, survival, and social dynamics.

What tour guides won't tell you

You need to carry your passport to any nightclub if you're planning to party hard in Sydney. Local beverages are more affordable in Oz Land. Tipping isn't recommended. Here's all that cricket fans and travellers need to know about Australia. Plane loads of Indian tourists visit Australia for cricket, annual vacation or honeymoon. We list a few must dos in and around major Australian cities Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. We also suggest some of the must dos and don'ts in and around these cities so that you save money and avoid all roadblocks while planning your holiday. Have an amazing Australian experience the

Aussie way.

Sydney, New South Wales

Trike Ride on Harley Davidson Bikes: How about soaking in Sydney while roaming across popular attractions like The Opera House, The Harbour Bridge, Central Business District and suburbs on an open Harley 'rickshaw'? Rather than riding pillion behind a burly rider, why not opt for a trike ride? There are several bike tour operators such as Troll Tours in the city offering a trike ride. This bike has three wheels instead of two, and a bigger seating

area at the back. Cafe and Pub Hopping: You've ogled at every Master Chef preparation; this is your chance to feast on them. Sydney is the food capital of Australia. Ample cafes, pubs and clubs run by celebrity chefs dot the city. Darling Harbour, Darlinghurst and Cowper Wharf Road have some of the best dine out spaces. There are ample Indian restaurants and other eateries have enough vegetarian options too.

Melbourne, Victoria

Colonial Tramcar Restaurant: This is a city



With a medley of steep red cliffs, swaying palm trees and the deep blue Arabian Sea, it isn't hard to imagine why Varkala is described as one of the most beautiful beaches in India. A more laid-back alternative to Kovalam, Varkala is fast catching up to its more popular cousin, thanks to its stunning beaches and an assortment of restaurants and hotels clustered around the North Cliff.

6 reasons to visit Varkala

Papanasham Beach

Synonymous with Varkala, this is the town's most popular beach. With waves lapping its sun-kissed white sands at one end and breaking against the imposing red cliffs on the other, Papanasham is quite a sight to behold. While swimming is allowed, visitors need to watch out (as with all the other beaches at Varkala) for strong underwater currents. Besides lounging about on the sands at Papanasham, visitors can try their hand at parasailing, scuba diving and paragliding, while anglers can go deep-sea fishing. The beach is lined with a surfeit of restaurants serving up fresh-from-the-ocean seafood and small shops hawking souvenirs. The panoramic bird's eye view from the top of the cliff (easily accessed via a winding path) is highly recommended. The beach also attracts a steady stream of the faithful: Hindus believe a dip in the water here can absolve sins, and the immersion of cremation ashes leads to salvation for the deceased.

Thiruvambadi Beach

If isolation is what you seek then this stretch of sand, also known as the Black Sand Beach, fits the bill to a tee. One of the quietest beaches in Varkala, this beach has, as the name suggests, black sand. Accessible by climbing down from the North Cliff, or driving down Thiruvambadi Road.

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Yoga at the beach

Yoga and Ayurveda have always been big draws in Kerala and Varkala is no exception. Most seaside resorts offer yoga sessions on the beach: the trick is identifying which type of yoga you'd like to practice and picking a resort that offers it. Hotel Green Palace hosts 'hatha yoga' classes by Haridas, a teacher trained in the Sivananda school. Sharanagati Yoghaus is a yoga retreat that offers

Sivananda yoga classes twice a day and Vipassana meditation sessions. The family-run Eden Garden hotel couples yoga with traditional Ayurvedic therapies.

Anjengo Fort

History buffs will find the 20-minute drive out of town to this fort, located in a fishing village, entirely worth the effort. This 17th century fort was initially used by the Portuguese as a depot for trading goods and arms, and later served as a signalling station and a trading depot for pepper and coir, for the British. Briefly besieged by the locals during a local rebellion in 1721, the fort also served as a British ammunition store during the Anglo-Mysore Wars in the 18th century. Soak in the gorgeous views from the ramparts and don't forget to check out the 130-foot tall lighthouse that once guided ships arriving from

Britain. There are some old churches and a cemetery nearby, while the beach remains clean and unspoiled.

Kappil Beach and Lake

Still flying under the tourist radar, serene and picturesque Kappil is the one of the few beaches in Kerala that hasn't been inundated by shops and



tour like no other. Nibble on gourmet fare for lunch or dinner inside an old tram refurbished as a Victorian rail bogey. Among the best tramcar restaurants, these trams take you on a three-hour journey around the city and its suburbs while you enjoy a three-course meal and sights of the city from your tram window. 12 Apostles, Great Ocean Road: The road and rock formations are hailed as an Aussie wonder worth a visit. The four-hour drive along the sea takes you to majestic rock and limestone formations named 12 Apostles. Some of the arches emerging out of the sea are as high as 45 metres. These formations change colour right through the day with the changing colours of the sun.

Adelaide, South Australia

Country Homes for Stay: Adelaide is an ideal city to experience both the bustle of Sydney and Melbourne, as well as the calm countryside that this place offers. Many locals rent out their country homes. Book one of these cottages and experience a staycation with an Australian family. Most of the houses have kitchen gardens from where you can source your basic ingredients. Do remember to go fishing with locals too. Winery Tour: Seppeltsfield and Jacob's Creek are two of the biggest vineyards of the region and close to the city. A wine educator takes you through the history of the vineyard and the region and offers professional wine-tasting sessions at each winery.

Checklist

Club rules

Your passport is a must for entry into any

club or a pub. Sydney has a lockout hour where the entry to a club closes at 1 am. The clubs would stay open till 3 am but no new entry or re-entry is allowed. Tipping is not the norm and not encouraged either.

House rules

Cabs are expensive. Trams and walking are the usual modes chosen by locals. Locals take their kitchen gardens very seriously. Don't run amok. Pluck only what's needed

Road rules

Australia enforces strict speed limits. Empty stretches are tempting but resist pushing the accelerator.

Local flair

Beer and wine of the state you are in will be more affordable. A South Australian beer will be cheaper in Adelaide than Melbourne and vice versa. The menus mention which states the beverages are from. Try local brews.

Right gear

Your bermudas or denim shorts are NOT swimming shorts. Wear proper swimming or surf gear that dries quickly rather than roams around in drenched lowers post a swim.

Safety first

Australia has strict traffic rules. Wear seat belts even while riding trike bikes. Seat belts on rear seats of cars are also a must

Civic sense

Smoking in public places is allowed in Australia but stubbing the butt on streets is an offence. While you will not be punished for smoking, you can be fined for littering! Always stub it in trays installed.